



SONG SPARROW

Spring 2021 Vol. 51 No. 1
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SPRING 2021 CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

- Mar. 11 Thu. Zoom Presentation:
Population Dynamics of
the Double-Crested
Cormorant
- Mar. 20 Sat. Hamilton Wetlands /
Las Gallinas Field Trip
- Apr. 03 Sat. Kennedy Park Walk
- Apr. 08 Thu. Zoom Presentation:
Impact of Climate
Change on Clear Lake's
Western & Clark's Grebes
- Apr. 10 Sat. Lynch Canyon Walk
- Apr. 17 Sat. Huichica Wetlands Walk
- Apr. 24 Sat. Putah Creek Walk
- May 01 Sat. Lake Hennessey Walk
- May 08 Sat. Hudeman Slough Walk
- May 13 Sat. Zoom Presentation:
West Coast Pelagic Trips
- May 13 Sat. Skyline Regional Park
- May 22 Sat. Newell Open Space Walk

For more info, to sign up for email alerts,
or to join our chapter, please go to:
<https://napasolanoaudubon.com>



Spring Walks & Activities

Watch your email inbox
and our website for more
walks and activities.

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TREE SWALLOW / BECKY MATSUBARA / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Spring Is A Time for Migration

By Tom Slyker

Tree Swallows have started to return to American Canyon Wetlands. An Allen's Hummingbird was seen there on February 16. Spring is coming and a new year of migration is under way. Were you aware that over half of the nearly 11,000 bird species on Earth participate in some form of migration? And each of these migrating species does it a little different than another.

Migration can be defined as a regular return movement of a bird species between geographically separated breeding and wintering ranges. Two types of migration have long been recognized. Obligate migration is considered to be "hard-wired," in that the birds seem pre-programmed to leave their breeding area at a certain time each year, and to return at another time. Timing, directions, and distances traveled are relatively constant from year to year. A good example is the Snow Goose that can be seen in many of the Wildlife Refuge sites in the Central Valley. They form large flocks in a few key wintering areas when their breeding grounds in the tundra are uninhabitable. I love to be at Colusa at dawn when many 100's of these birds fly-in with a cacophony of sound as they all honk to each other. Or, at Llano Seco where a flock of ~ 1,000 geese continuously shifted locations while a Golden Eagle slowly glided over the massed flock of birds. Then in the spring these birds fly north to gather in large breeding colonies. And this obligate migration cycle will be repeated every year.

The other form of migration for birds is facultative. It is considered to be

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President's Corner

By Mark Stephenson, NSAS President



Needless to say, it has been a crazy year with the Coronavirus pandemic turning our world upside down and topsy-turvy.

Despite all of the turmoil, our NSAS Chapter has been able to accomplish most of our goals. We have held our monthly speaker series meetings via zoom, with near record attendance. During the year, we have been educated and entertained by Dr. Matt Johnson on Barn Owls in our Vineyards, by Dr. Bruce Lyon on the intricacies of Golden-crowned Sparrows, by Matt Allshouse on Conservation Ranching, by Alvaro Jaramillo on Birding the Mediterranean Regions of the World, and by Dr. Wendy Schackwitz on Tricolored Blackbirds. All these programs have been recorded and are available on our website. We are looking forward to upcoming talks in the next months by Matt Rauzon and Meredith Elliott on Double-crested Cormorants, Dr. Floyd Hayes on the breeding habits of Western Grebes, and Lucas and my experiences on Pacific Coast Pelagic Trips.

In an effort to support your birding interests in the absence of official field trips, Tom Slyker has authored Birding Notes, and I have sent out Rare Bird Alerts to highlight potential birding excursions. Robin Leong and others also participated in this year's Virtual SF Flyway Festival. Now, with the aid of more folks being vaccinated, we are starting up our Spring Field Trips (with covid safety practices in place). Our long range trips which are coordinated by Carol Boykin, Wendy Cole, and Bruce Thomsen resumed in February with our trip to Consumnes River Preserve. As these trips are limited to only 15 participants, via covid regulations, they are only open to NSAS Chapter Members, so we encourage all National Members and friends to join our chapter for as little as \$25 for an individual, or \$35 for a family. Our very own Andrew Ford will also begin our local birding field trips as of April 3rd, in time for Spring Migration, so be

on the lookout for more information coming your way.

We are hopeful we can renew our College Intern Program in the Fall to support our education programs in our schools as they begin to open back up. We are looking for members who can support these endeavors, so if you have any spare time to lend a hand, please let us know! In May, we will also be honoring 2 High School Seniors with \$2,000 Scholarships.

We have continued with our Citizen Science Research projects including Bird Seasons Research at American Canyon Wetlands supported by Tom Slyker, Betty LaBastida, Carol Boykin, and Helena Kassel. Audubon's Climate Watch Research throughout Napa and Solano Counties with numerous volunteers, Lake Dalwigk Surveys headed up by Sally Baumer, and our Angwin Christmas Bird Count coordinated by Murray Berner. We continue to support Snowy Plover, Heron & Egret Nesting, and Shorebird Surveys in our counties, as well. We have also encouraged our membership to use eBird to log their daily bird sighting data as individual citizen scientists, and to participate in events such as "Feeder Watch," the "Great Backyard Bird Count," and the upcoming "Big Day" during Spring Migration. Thanks to the efforts of Holly Jessop, Tom Slyker, Sally Baumer, the Kassels, and many others and we have continued our Bluebird Box Project in numerous parks throughout our area. We have also helped support Wendy Schackwitz's Acoustic Recording Research of Tricolored Blackbird colonies throughout the state and will be supporting her efforts with Point Blue recording other endangered species including the Greater Sage and Sharp-tailed Grouses.

We have also attempted to keep our members informed regarding Bay Area Conservation Action with regular updates from Nancy Piotrowski and

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Board Meetings are open to members.

If you wish to attend, please call:
(707) 745-2362.

DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

Napa-Solano Audubon Society welcomes gifts of funds, stock, or property, and bequests in general, or in honor or memory of a loved one. Gifts may be directed to any NSAS project.

Unspecified gifts will go for Education, Conservation or other projects. Since NSAS is an all-volunteer organization, 100% of your donation goes to this chapter. **All gifts are tax-deductible.**

Robin Leong. We have weighed in on several important issues including: Highway 37 improvement planning; Endangered Species Regulations including design and placement of Wind Turbines to safely protect birds; banning the use of harmful pesticides; Stopping oil drilling in Suisun Marsh, Protecting Land under Governor Newsom's proposed 3030 Executive Order; and Support for utilizing USGS' Western Ecological Research Center's 20 years of data to guide the restoration of San Pablo Bay marshlands, to name a few.

We hope all of our members will continue to participate in our chapter in our birding, education, citizen science, and conservation activities, and will actively work to bring in new friends to join our ranks!

All the Best in Birding, Mark.
NapaBirder@gmail.com. ♦

A Whirlwind Birding Adventure to Southern California, the Salton Sea and Beyond

Article and photos by Mark Stephenson

Lucas and I, along with his friend Connor, decided to take a trip down south for the long President's Day Weekend. With only 4 days to cover the 1600 mile plus route we planned, that included a jaunt through LA to look for overwintering rarities, a stopover at the Salton Sea, and a side trip to the Palo Verde Ecological Reserve on the banks of the Colorado River, this was undoubtedly a whirlwind event. In LA, Lucas and Connor had identified six locations to visit on Friday, so we awoke at 2:30 a.m. in order to do the bulk of the driving during the dark. Our first stop was at Lacy Park where a Greater Pewee has been overwintering.



GREATER PEWEE

Sure enough along with a Red-naped Sapsucker, Red-whiskered Bulbul (a exotic resident population for more than 20 years), plenty of Mountain Chickadees and Allen's Hummingbirds, the Greater Pewee was pretty easy to locate, calling from the tops of a Sycamore Tree. Onto Heartwell Park where a Dusky-capped Flycatcher was conveniently flycatching in the exact corner of the park described in eBird! An early Black-throated Gray Warbler was also showing it's Spring Plumage to make this stop a success! Onto Carr Park in Huntington Beach where a Mexican Duck had been spotted associating with Mallard Ducks, it's close relatives. A surprisingly tame Long-billed Curlew and White-faced Ibis walked along, grazing in the grassy lawn of



DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER

this small park. Onto one of my favorite Long Beach birding locations Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve where a distant Reddish Egret, Horned Grebes, Black Brant, Thayer's Gulls, Caspian Terns, and a host of waterfowl, along with a Belding's Savannah Sparrow (an uncommon subspecies) made the trip worthwhile. We ended the day near Long Beach visiting neighborhood parks and locating an overwintering Black-throated Green Warbler, several Cassin's Kingbirds, and with a dusk stop at the Long Beach Marina, nice views of White-winged and Surf Scoters, a Long-tailed Duck, and over 400 Black Skimmers flying by looking for a safe spot to spend the night.



CACTUS WREN

Lucas enjoyed his first taste of Indian Food at his brother Graham's Long Beach Apartment and then we collapsed in bed by 9:00 p.m. after a "short" 18 hour day on the go! Up at 4:00 a.m., onto the Salton Sea where the Purple Sandpiper that had been

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May Election Update

Our Spring elections are just around the corner!

Officially, *all elective positions* are open for your consideration. If you've been considering running for President, Vice-President, Secretary or Treasurer, please let us know so we can put your name on the ballot!

We also have **non-elective positions** we need to fill:

Education Chair

Holly Jessop has moved out of our area. This position is for someone who will help coordinate our educational activities in our schools and community.

Communications Chair.

This position entails writing short articles for our Newsletter and promoting our activities to local news organizations.

Become a Board Member as a Director

If you or a friend are interested in just getting your feet wet, consider becoming a new Board Member as one of our Directors! *Please let us know if you have the time and energy to join our Board and we will submit your name for our May Ballot!*

If you are interested in any of the above, please contact me as soon as possible, at NapaBirder@gmail.com Don't be shy, and take the plunge!



Volunteering is a great way to meet new people & make a difference.

Calendar of Events

PROGRAMS

Note: Programs are held on the second Thursday of the month via Zoom. We encourage everyone to attend. You will be given the meeting connection details when you RSVP.

POPULATION DYNAMICS OF THE DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT

Thursday, Mar. 11, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

By Mark Rauzon and Meredith Elliott



Double-crested Cormorants are seabirds known to use urban structures as nesting habitat. The old east span of the SF-Oakland Bay Bridge and the eastern portion of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge have hosted the two largest colonies of this species in the region. Come learn what our research for the past three decades tell us about the population dynamics of this resilient species.

Mark Rauzon is a research associate with Point Blue and Geography Professor at Laney College in Oakland. **Meredith Elliott** is a Senior Scientist at Point Blue Conservation Science and supervises the Point Blue Marine Laboratory and the Access Monitoring Program for the Farallones and Cordell Banks National Marine Sanctuaries.

THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON CLEAR LAKE'S WESTERN & CLARK'S GREBES

Thursday, April 8, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

By Dr. Floyd Hayes



Dr. Floyd Hayes has been studying the impact of climate change on the breeding ecology and populations of Western and Clark's Grebes on Clear Lake for many years.

Dr. Hayes is a Professor of Biology at Pacific Union College and has traveled extensively with his students for research to countries throughout the world. He has worked as a biologist throughout the Caribbean and Pacific, a Fulbright Scholar to Paraguay in 2012, and has published results of field research in 15 countries.

WEST COAST PELAGIC TRIPS

Thursday, May. 13, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

By Mark & Lucas Stephenson

Mark & Lucas have been taking Pacific Coast Pelagic Trips over the last five years and have many photos and adventures to share about their times observing West Coast sea birds.

Mark Stephenson is a retired educator and our NSAS President. **Lucas** is his 15 year old son and avid birder & together they have observed birds extensively throughout California and beyond including more than 20 Pelagic Trips out of Bodega, Half Moon Bay, Monterey and Ventura with such notable Pelagic Ornithologists as Alvaro Jaramillo, Steve Howell, Debbie Shearwater, and David Pereksta.



**MASKS REQUIRED.
KEEP YOUR DISTANCE,
STAY SAFE, HAVE FUN!**

FIELD TRIPS

Note: All NSAS Field Trips will follow strict Covid protocols including social distancing, the wearing of masks at all times, a limit of 15 participants, and no carpooling. Field Trips will be taken at the participant's own risk and a signed Release of Liability Form per the National Audubon Recommendations, is required.

Bring: Covid form, water, snacks, day pack, and lunch.

HAMILTON WETLANDS & LAS GALLINAS WTP

Saturday, March 20,

8:30 am - 2:00 pm

Leader: Christina McWhorter and Mark Stephenson

Hamilton/Bel Marin Keys Restoration Project is returning this section of the Bay to their native salt marsh wetlands that were destroyed when levees were constructed in the 1850's and altered again when the old Hamilton AFB was created. We'll meet Christina at the nursery and she will review the restoration project for us, then we will continue out into the wetlands area to view the vastly increasing numbers of migratory shorebirds and waterfowl. After lunch for folks interested in making it a full day, we will continue to Las Gallinas to look for Bitterns, Rails, and Waterfowl at this amazing WTP.

DEL VALLE REGIONAL PARK AND MINES ROAD

Saturday, April 24;

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Leader: Robin Leong

Robin will use Jean Richmond's book, *Birding Northern California* to guide this trip as we go to Del Valle Regional Park. We will head south on Mines Road, a unique chaparral habitat with such notable species as Lawrence's Goldfinches, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and Greater Roadrunners. When Mines Road becomes San Antonio Road, we'll turn East on Del Puerto Canyon Road with a stop at Frank Raines County Park. The trip will end at HWY 5, where we head north for the 100 mile trip back to Napa.

Calendar of Events

WEEKLY WALKS

Andrew Ford is leader/organizer for all the weekly walks. He will send out email invites via an eblast, on the week of the trip with trip meeting locations etc.

Enrollment is limited to 12-15 people depending on Covid restrictions, on a First Come – First Enrolled basis. **NSAS Members will have priority.**

All walks are from 8:00 a.m - Noon.

Bring: Covid fom, water, snacks, day pack, with lunch optional following the walk.

For more information, contact Andrew: ajf51@humboldt.edu

Note: Walks will follow strict Covid protocols including social distancing, the wearing of masks *at all times*, a limit of 15 participants, and no carpooling. Walks will be taken *at the participant's own risk* and a *signed Release of Liability Form* per the National Audubon Recommendations, is required.

KENNEDY PARK, NAPA

Saturday, April 03

LYNCH CANYON

Saturday, April 10

HUICHICA WETLANDS

Saturday, April 17

PUTAH CREEK

Saturday, April 24

LAKE HENNESSEY

Saturday, May 01

HUDEMAN SLOUGH

Saturday, May 08

SKYLINE REGIONAL PARK

Sat., May 15

NEWELL OPEN SPACE

Sat. May 22

The 49th Angwin CBC

By Murray Berner

On January 1st of the new year, 32 birders covered what was left of the Angwin count circle. We found 137 species, near the recent average. The weather was ideal. Fire and drought created exceptional conditions throughout the circle. All of Lake Berryessa's Area 6 burned. The hills above Pope Valley and Chiles Valley suffered extensive damage. Fire did not spare the valleys where a great deal of riparian habitat burned, including the Napa River at St Helena. Canyons and park lands above the Napa Valley were often inaccessible. The count circle superimposed over the 2020 burn scars (see photo).



Most of the burned eastern part of the circle is remote. We have never enjoyed the number of personnel to venture into those hills. However, the effect on overall numbers and species is not as great as it might appear. The western part of the circle traditionally receives better coverage, and the damage there did modify our efforts.

The burn zone seems to be hosting lots of wintering birds, primarily sparrows. Secondary fire impacts included smoke-tainted grapes and widespread tree removal. One might have expected flocks of robins eating unpicked grapes. Not the case. The loss of natural fruits—toyon and madrone—might be the greater impact on the winter distribution of thrushes and finches. Without evidence, only in my mind's eye, loss of chaparral habitat inside the circle may be complete. We found one White-tailed Kite and missed Golden Eagle, possibly related to the fires. Much of the post-fire tree removal appears random and unnecessary; we shall see how far it goes and what might be the ultimate outcome in the years to come. ♦

Dear Birding Friends

By Carol Boykin

I miss seeing your smiling faces while we follow Andrew through hill and dale. If you follow Audubon News you will see that we have two field trips that filled up quickly; Hamilton Wetlands and Consumnes Preserve. I hope you will all be good and follow the rules. You know the 6 foot/mask thing. If you all behave, we will have more. Keep looking for our NSAS Field Trip e-mail blasts.

In the meantime we are on our own! These foggy mornings have put a tune in my head. Silhouettes, Silhouettes. Do you remember that song? I have older sisters so that is how I know it. I'm not old. But the point being, many Times that is the only way we can figure out what is that dark shape in the tree. Look at the shape of the bill. Is it long and skinny like a hummingbird, conical like a finch? How long is the tail? Is the bird flip flip flipping its tail? Is it a plump bird or just puffed up to keep warm? I miss having Andrew call out the names of the birds! But having to work to figure them out has made me and my friends better birders! Be sure to check out our NSAS Audubon Web Site found at <http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com> and get some of the field guides... and keep on birding until we meet again! ♦



**MASKS REQUIRED.
KEEP YOUR DISTANCE,
STAY SAFE, HAVE FUN!**

A Whirlwind Birding Adventure

(cont'd from page 1)

showing in the North Shore Marina was unfortunately no longer present. A two mile walk along the beach showed many Blue-winged, Green-winged, and Cinnamon Teal, along with Stilts, Avocets, Long-billed Dowitchers, Dunlin, Least, Western, and Spotted Sandpipers along with a very rare inland Red Phalarope twirling in a shoreline puddle. The 1st of many Verdin and Black-tailed Gnatcatchers called from the mesquite and occasionally showed themselves for photographs, along with several Bell's Sparrows. While birding in the Niland area we observed our first Inca Doves, Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, Gambel's Quails, and our only White-winged Dove, Phainopepla, and Lawrence's Goldfinch of the trip! After several stops along the Sea, we



LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER

reached the southern end near Sony Bono NWR and Obsidian Butte which brought Cattle Egrets, Burrowing Owls, a flock of Snow & Ross's Geese, and a few Neotropic Cormorants. This is an area we wished we had another day or two to explore as the American and Least Bitterns and many overwintering Stilt Sandpipers were missed due to lack of time to visit Unit One.

Our final birding day and highlight of the trip was spent at the Palo Verde Ecological Reserve on the banks of the Colorado River near the town of Blythe. The river yielded many duck species highlighted by Redhead, Goldeneye, and Ring-necked Ducks. In the fields and open areas we had great views of 2 Prairie Falcons, several Roadrunners,

and Chipping, Savannah, and Vesper Sparrows, and the illusive Common Ground Doves. Along the forest edges



BLACK-TAILED GNATCATCHER

we found Gray, Dusky, and Vermillion Flycatchers, several Crissal Thrashers, and deeper in the forest, both Ladder-backed and Gila Woodpeckers. As the day continued we heard a Bell's and Plumbeous Vireo calling from the thickets. One of the highlights of the day was locating a Curve-billed Thrasher in the mesquite thickets along the river. A bird that is common in the Arizona deserts, but very rare in California. The forest was chipping with Yellow-rumps but we also found many Orange-crowned Warblers, a few Black-throated Grays, and a Lucy's Warbler. Walking the agricultural fields and brushy edges did not yield the hoped for Longspurs or Spague's



VERMILLION FLYCATCHER

Pipits but hundreds of Horned Larks, along with more Vesper Sparrows, Gambel's Quails, and Common Ground Doves. On the trip home, we were able to stop off and find both a wintering Broad-tailed and Costa's Hummingbird,

perching by feeders in Mission Lakes as if on command from their eBird location maps. Several Cactus Wrens and Black-throated Sparrows were located at a rest stop near Cabazon! Surprising all of us, Connor spotted a single California Condor as we headed over the Grapevine and Lucas found a Golden Eagle soaring near the base of this incredible landform. In the end, we saw 203 species, which coincidentally was the 2nd most species seen in the U.S. during Cornell's Weekend "Big Back Yard Bird Count" described by Tom Slyker in the last edition of



BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD

Birding Notes! Our "Big Back Yard" had turned into half of the state! Our team was edged out by 3 birds by Logan Kahle, a Cornell graduate and SF Birder friend who also down South for the weekend! If only we had a few more minutes of daylight...! ♦

California Native Plant Sale

By the Napa Valley Chapter of the CNPS. Native plants create bird-friendly, bird-healthy gardens.

In-person sale: Saturday, April 10, 10am – 4pm

Online sale: Sunday, April 11-April 16.

Pickup on Saturday, April 17

For more information:
<https://chapters.cnps.org/napa/2021/02/27/cnps-spring-2021-native-plant-sales/>

Conservation Advocacy

Nancy A. Piotrowski, Ph.D.,
NSAS Conservation Chair

Requesting your feedback. About one to two times a month, I get phone calls or emails from local and national members, or individuals who are part of other groups interested in protecting wildlife or bird habit. These emails usually take the form of reporting on a problem in or near their neighborhood, or in an area of their town or county where there is wildlife habitat that is relevant to birds. Sometimes I will even get a report of an injured or deceased bird. Most of the time there is a time sensitive item of concern– an injured bird and “who do I call? Or requests to work on state or federal advocacy related to pressing bills up for a vote. Or requests for help with how to stop development in different stages of review by the town, county, regional, or state authorities, such as in a (draft) environmental impact statement (e.g., “...there is a meeting tomorrow – please send someone!”).

When these requests come, there is more work to do than any one person or even a few board members can do as a volunteer. So, in thinking about being in this role for a couple of terms, I have come to the conclusion that it might be good to offer some trainings, and to record them, and let that info be out there for you all to use. ***If this is of interest, let me know, identifying the key topics.*** I will see what comes back and plan accordingly, looking for invited speakers. That said, if you know someone good on a topic like these mentioned, let me know.

Finally, for 2021, we will learn more about the implementation efforts to protect 30% of California’s lands and waters by 2030. So, stay tuned!

To join our advocacy action list, or to submit feedback, email napiotrowski@yahoo.com. ♦



We Need You! Help Save Birds & Their Habitats.

Did you know?
Of the 314 North American birds identified by the National Audubon as either climate threatened or climate endangered, more than 170 commonly occur in California.

**Help us help them.
Join NSAS or volunteer.**

SNOWY PLOVER / BECKY MATSUBARA

Spring Is A Time For Migration

(cont'd from page 1)



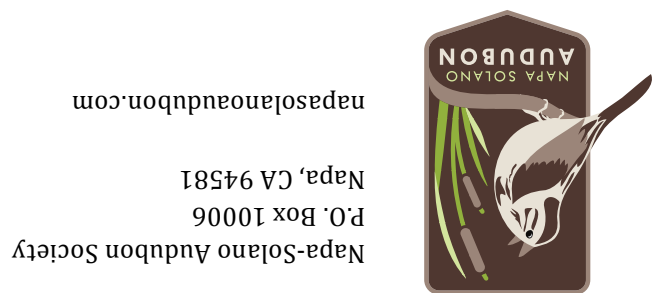
optional and is occurring in response to conditions at the time. Individuals may migrate in some years but not in others, depending on food supplies or weather conditions. The time of the outward migration, and the distance travelled, can be highly variable. A local example is the irruptive migration of Pine Siskins that has occurred this year along with the Salmonella outbreaks with all of these hungry migrants stopping at local feeders. The lack of food in their normal habitat has driven these birds south this year in much greater numbers than might normally occur.

And you may be wondering about that other half of the 11,000 bird species who don’t migrate at all. A local example is the Wren Tit. It is considered the most sedentary bird species in North America with average natal dispersal of ~ 400 meters. A Wren Tit might move ~ 4 football field lengths from where it was hatched but it will probably never travel much farther than that in its lifetime. Many other species like Mallards, Red-tailed Hawks, Great Horned Owls, and Turkey Vultures will disperse much farther distances from their home nest, but none of them will demonstrate migration with a regular return movement to a specific breeding range.

Since I have already exceeded my 300-word allotment for this article I’ll finish with a wish that everyone has a chance to get outside this spring and see some of the obligate and facultative migrants that will be traveling through the Bay Area on their way from wintering grounds to the south of us to their breeding areas in the North. *Have a wonderful SPRING birding season!* ♦

References

1. Newton, Ian, “The ecology of bird migration patterns”, 2011. BOU Proceedings – The Ecology & Conservation of Migratory Birds.



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Birding Relationships

By Robin Leong

If you have not realized, birding can often foster long-time, fun relationships.

Unfortunately, I lost a couple of friends I knew through NSAS; former president Myrlee Potosnak, and fellow Napa County Breeding Bird Atlas Surveyor, Bill Grummer. May they rest in peace.

Another long time relationship was meeting Clay Taylor, the Swarovski sales representative that came to one of the first San Francisco Bay Flyway Festivals 26 years ago. I got a e-mail, this year, from Bruce Webb his field representative requesting that I accompany them to shoot videos that were to be used for the virtual SF Bay FWF. Luckily, I was available. I met his digiscoping partner Steve Abbott at EcoThrift in Vallejo on a crisp morning. We toured some of the hotspots that we usually visit on field trips for the SFBFWF. One of our best birding experiences was jumping out of our cars at the parking lot at American Canyon Wetlands. I mentioned that this was a great place to watch perched raptors while we were setting up our scopes in the parking lot. Sure enough, a Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel were seen. Steve said checkout this Merlin. Soon a female American Kestrel joined the Merlin on a close by bare branch. As Steve started his video on the Merlin, a



MERLIN / MARK STEPHENSON

male Kestrel landed next to the female. They were so close that Steve could see all of them in the same view. In an instant, the Kestrel's were making whoopie and Steve recorded all of the action! I hope you got to see it by watching the virtual flyway festival. Bruce and I walked down the trail, when I heard an Anna's hummingbird. Bruce said, "Here it is, and I think it is building a nest!" Sure enough it was, and we watched it until Steve could join us. He recorded the Anna's hummer making a nest using his Swarovski scope and an iPhone. Not getting permission to go into Skaggs Island because of CoVid-19, we walked on the road. We found a perching Peregrine Falcon eating its quarry. Steve had work to do!

If you have a Facebook account, you can watch these amazing videos as they are archived at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/249115090062583/?ref=share> . ♦