



SONG SPARROW

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WINTER 2021 CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

- Nov. 20 Sat. Benicia State Recreation Area
- Nov. 27 Sat. San Pablo Bay Trail
- Dec. 04 Sat. Lagoon Valley
- Dec. 4-5 Sat. Sacramento Valley National & State Wildlife Refuges
- Dec. 11 Sat. CBC 4 Kids / Connolly Ranch
- Dec. 18 Sat. Contra Costa CBC
- Dec. 20 Mon. 74th Benicia CBC
- Dec. 25 Sat. Christmas Day, No Walk
- Jan. 01 Sat. 50th Angwin CBC
- Jan. 08 Sat. Eastern Solano County
- Jan. 13 Thu. The Effect of Climate Change on Birds

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



Winter Walks & Activities

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



NORTHERN FULMAR / DAWN BEATTIE

Do You Ever Wonder What Goes on Inside a Bird?

By Tom Slykar

Every time I learn a new fact about bird physiology I'm amazed. The fact that birds can fly is amazing. The fact that they fly means they have to limit their body mass so they can get off the ground. And limiting body mass means they have made some incredible evolutionary changes to keep their bodies in the air.

The most recent revelation for me is a bird's ability to shrink and swell the size of its brain depending on the season of the year. Brains are expensive organs to run. In humans they use ~ 10 times more energy than any other organ. Birds are attuned to this costly energy expense and evolution has enabled them to expand and contract the size of their brains. In the spring, when singing is required for finding a mate and defending a territory, the network of brain cells for singing makes up a sizable portion of the male songbird's brain. In the fall, atrophy occurs and most brain cells responsible for singing disappear. As the next spring approaches the bird will again expand the size of its brain to enable it to sing.

This revelation goes hand in hand with other amazing capabilities of birds. When getting ready for migration birds are capable of doubling their body weight with high energy fat in a short 2-week period prior to take off. To make room for this extra weight they will drastically shrink the size of their internal organs including their liver, kidney, and digestive system. And when they reach

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President's Corner

By Mark Stephenson, NSAS President



I had the good fortune to grow up for the first 10 years of my life in Penn Yan, a small farming community in upstate New York. We used to hike frequently throughout the forest covered hills of the area observing the birds and wildlife. My 4th grade teacher, Mrs. Thompson, taught a year-long unit she called the Jr. Audubon Birding Club. She introduced us to **John James Audubon**, the famous naturalist and painter, **Louis Agassiz Fuertes**, a NY ornithologist who was notably the greatest bird artist of the 20th Century, and **Roger Tory Peterson** famed artist and author of the Peterson Field Guide Series. She taught us how birds were classified in families, how to identify birds by their silhouette, and took us on school and community field trips. We kept a checklist of every bird seen by our class. Following 4th grade, my family moved to Ithaca, NY and my birding passion grew as I attended weekly seminars at Sapsucker Woods led by **Dr. Arthur Allen** founder of **Cornell's Laboratory of Ornithology**. I convinced my older brother **Tom Stephenson** (who has since become the author of a number of bird guides and apps) to come along with me in search of birds. We became passionate birders at an early age. In the early 60's, birds were abundant everywhere we looked. During spring migration we would see hundreds of warblers of every species, hawks by the dozens, orioles, thrushes, swallows, and sparrows. It seemed the countryside was filled with countless birds.

Last week, I celebrated with my son Lucas, when we found our 1st "Lifer" **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** and our first female **Black-throated Blue Warbler** observed in over 5 years in California. It was thrilling to finally see these birds that have become incredibly rare. Then last Saturday, walking through muddy fields at Point Reyes, we stumbled upon a flock of **Lapland Longspurs**. We have never seen more than 4 or 5 at a time, but this flock seemed to be running through the grass everywhere we looked. When they occasionally took flight we counted more than 30 individual Longspurs. It was truly a magnificent and overwhelming experience.

I share this as I have become very emotional about the vast number of birds that have vanished, literally billions, lost in the last decade. These losses are the result of vanishing habitat due to uncontrolled development, harmful pesticides, pollution, and extremes in weather brought on by climate change. However, I am heartened by recent conservation actions to fight Climate Change and set aside Open Space, Parks, and Wilderness Areas, to provide sanctuaries like Point Reyes and the National 30 by 30 Campaign to preserve 30% of all undeveloped land in our state and nation by 2030. I'm heartened by our Chapter's commitment to hire an Education Coordinator to go into our schools and share the enjoyment of birds with our students. I'm hopeful that some of these students will grow up to become biologists and strive to protect birds and wildlife. These are critical actions that potentially will help birds to hold their own. I can't fathom losing another species to extinction.

I want to thank our membership for their commitment to doing our part to protect birds and conserve habitats! Together we can make a difference! I hope you will join us for this year's bird walks, field trips, and speaker series to become more informed and to experience the wonder of birds! Please also consider sending in a donation in this year's Fall Fundraising Campaign to help us finance our many activities! ♦

Board of Directors

President Mark Stephenson (707) 246-2795	Field Trips Carol Boykin (707) 252-6194
Vice President Tom Slyker (707) 771-1918	Membership Patti Heidl (707) 552-4702
Secretary Helena Kassel (707) 812-4463	Programs Barbara Navolanic (707) 745-8454
Treasurer David Kassel (707) 812-4464	Director at Large Robin Leong (707) 643-1287
Conservation Nancy Piotrowski (415) 386-4923	Director at Large Mo Mosher (707) 567-6401

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.**



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper



Female Black-throated Blue Warbler

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.

THE EFFECT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON BIRDS

Thursday, Jan. 13, 2022, 7:00 p.m.
By Sam Veloz from Point Blue Conservation Science

FIELD TRIPS

THE DECEMBER TRIP TO THE SACRAMENTO VALLEY IS ALREADY FILLED

Be sure to sign up for our January trip as soon as you receive the invitation!



Holiday Gift Ideas!

Our stunning landmark atlas, *Breeding Birds of Solano County*, & Hermann Heinzel's field guide, *Birds of Napa County* are offered on our website for the holiday price of \$45/ea plus shipping.

You can also find our books at the following stores:

Vallejo: Alibi Bookshop

Napa: Copperfield's Books

Vacaville: Visit Vacaville/Nut Tree Plaza.

These beautiful books make wonderful gifts for the novice and experienced birders in your life.



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT FOR KIDS / CBC4KIDS AT CONNOLLY RANCH

Saturday, December 11, 9:00 am
Leader: Tammy Saunders
Where: 3141 Browns Valley Road

With Covid increasingly under control this year, we've resurrected our popular Christmas Bird Count 4 Kids. We invite all children ages 7 - 16 to bring their parents, a pair of binoculars (we have a supply of extra binoculars for those in need), a brown bag lunch, snacks, and water, and help us hunt for birds in Napa's local Parks on Saturday, December 11th.

We will meet at 9:00 a.m. at Connolly Ranch, register, review birding strategies, break into small groups, pass a binocular "Boot Camp" orientation, and bird several parks in the vicinity. We will reconvene at 11:30 a.m. to tally bird species observed, and to meet a special surprise guest. This half-day CBC4Kids is modeled on the traditional CBC geared largely towards adults and birding clubs, but this event is a less rigorous citizen science adventure, designed to be a fun birding adventure for kids. Parents and their youngsters will join birding team leaders in celebrating nature and the amazing birdlife found in our local Parks and Open Spaces.

Our new Education Coordinator, Tammy Saunders, will help organize this fun event. **All participants should preregister with Tammy at nsasedcoordinator@gmail.com**



Become a Member!

Call us or click the JOIN button on our website.

THE 74TH BENICIA CBC

Monday, December 20th, 2021
For details and how to participate, contact Robin Leong via email at robin_leong@netzero.net or 707-643-1287.

THE 50TH ANGWIN CBC

Saturday, January 1, 2022
Begin the New Year with the birds! For details and how to participate, contact Murray Berner by email: vireocity@hotmail.com

WEEKLY WALKS

Note: For everyone's protection, all participants are **required to be vaccinated and wear masks when in close proximity.** (Children under 12 not eligible for vaccinations are required to wear masks.) Walks will be taken at the participant's own risk. In accordance with National Audubon Recommendations, **participants must sign the Release of Liability and Covid Release Forms.**

All walks are from 8:00 a.m. - Noon and open to everyone. No size limit.

Andrew Ford is leader/organizer for all the weekly walks & sends out email invites via an eblast, on the week of the trip with trip meeting locations. **Contact:** ajf51@humboldt.edu or see our website and Field Trip eBlasts.

Nov. 20: Benicia State Recreation Area

Nov. 27: San Pablo Bay Trail

Dec. 04: Lagoon Valley

Dec. 11: Cancelled for CBC 4 Kids

Dec. 18: Cancelled for Contra Costa CBC

Dec. 25: Christmas Day, No Walk

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Jan. 08: Eastern Solano County



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

What Goes on Inside a Bird?

(Continued from page 1)

their migration destination, they can rapidly regrow their organs to provide capability to process foods needed to rapidly revive their depleted energy stores.

Another amazing organ is the salt gland. Unlike mammals, bird kidneys are unable to process substantial amounts of salt in their bodies. This is a significant problem for all birds that live at sea and swallow copious amounts of salt water as they feed. These sea birds have a salt gland situated near their eye socket that rapidly extracts salt from the blood and then flushes it down their beak. What's amazing is that this organ is only functioning in high salt conditions. As the amount of salt in the blood diminishes the organ will atrophy and disappear. However as soon as salt is present it regenerates itself and is active again. And this salt gland isn't present only in sea birds. Most birds have the ability to express this gland in high salt conditions, but the gland is rarely seen in these birds as there is no need to expend energy maintaining an unnecessary organ when elevated concentrations of salt are not present.

Makes you wonder what other amazing physiology adaptations have evolved to enable birds to survive! ♦

Welcome Tammy Saunders, our new NSAS Education Coordinator!



Tammy was selected from a number of strong candidates due to her past Natural History leadership experiences serving as a parks naturalist, leading bird walks, coordinating Audubon summer camp programs, and having a solid birding background. She grew up near Toledo, Ohio where she graduated from the University of Toledo in Interdisciplinary Studies and Environmental Education. She regularly birded the Magee Marsh on the shores of Lake Erie, home to one of the

best warbler migrations in the U.S. She served as a Naturalist and Program Specialist for the Toledo Metropolitan Parks, developing school programs, leading interpretive walks, and serving a culturally diverse community. Since moving with her family to the Bay Area in 2015, she has served as the Camp Manager for Richardson Bay Audubon's Summer Camp Program supporting their staff naturalists and helping coordinate a successful camp.

She has also served as a Science Educator for Mad Science, an after-school and community program for children and families. She now works part-time as a Park Ranger for Napa Parks and Recreation Department. We are excited that she will take over our school programs, coordinate our Christmas Bird Count 4 Kids, lead beginner bird walks, and provide some support for our Citizen Science Projects. We hope you get to meet Tammy in the near future at some of our NSAS activities. Welcome Tammy to NSAS! ♦



Christmas Bird Count:



The 74th Benicia CBC Monday, December 20th, 2021.

The Benicia Count was founded by Benician Emerson Stoner in 1930 — 91 years! But counts weren't done during WWII, the Korean War, and last year due to CoVid-19.

In 1971, Napa-Solano Audubon Society's President, Frank Beyer took over this count.

Why do a CBC? Before 1900, when families and friends gathered during Christmas, the tradition was to see how many birds could be shot in one day. This was changed by Frank Chapman in 1900 who countered this idea into observing how many birds can be seen or heard in 24-hours within a 15 mile diameter circle. Later, innovative ways to look at the data were developed. The counts were normalized to determine if species were increasing or decreasing, and if global warming was driving some species further north.

For details & how to participate: contact Robin Leong: robin_leong@netzero.net or 707-643-1287.



The 50th Angwin CBC Saturday, January 1, 2022.

Start the New Year off with a blast by participating in the Angwin CBC!

Birding opportunities are available throughout the count circle including the Napa Valley, Pope Valley, Lakes Berryessa, Hennessey, and Angwin. We have an excellent crew of experienced area leaders so everyone is encouraged to take part. The count is an important measure of local birdlife, and has gained added importance as a tool to monitor changes in numbers and distribution of birds in the wildfire burn zone that impacted about forty percent of the count circle in 2020. At present, National Audubon has given its blessing to conduct a more traditional count, with carpooling and compilation gatherings. We are waiting until Nov. 15th to make a final decision of holding our compilation dinner.

Current guidelines: <https://www.audubon.org/news/christmas-bird-count-compiler-announcements>

For details & how to participate: contact Murray Berner at vireocity@hotmail.com

Safety Protocols: For our safety, we ask that all participants be fully vaccinated, wear masks when indoors, traveling with others in cars, or in close proximity in the field. Thank you!!

Conservation Advocacy

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

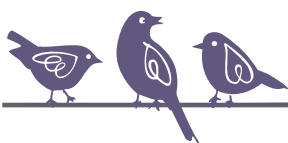
I wanted to write today a little bit about regional and state advocacy issues that touch our organization.

Four times a year, members from the NSAS board attend a meeting for the Bay Area Audubon Council (BAAC). The BAAC is composed of the eight Jurors in the Bay Area region. We get together to share notes on what is happening in our chapters. Additionally, we sometimes band together on advocacy issues as necessary.

I serve as the representative of that group to attend board meetings with Audubon California. We had our most recent meeting in October, with staff from Audubon California also attending. One new thing we have started to do is discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues in our meeting to learn more about how all the chapters are doing outreach. A number of the attendees talked about innovative work they were doing related to connecting with local organizations that did DEI work. *If you know of any groups in our counties that might be good for networking on this issue, please let us know.*

Another feature of the meeting was having Mike Lynes from Audubon California update us on issues he and his legislative action team were doing. He provided additional information on how our chapters can support with coastal response to oil spills in Southern California and ongoing natural resource damage assessments. He also told us about some ongoing legislative work related to these kinds of responses, such as the **West Coast Ocean Preservation Act**, continuing work with the **Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act**, and efforts to have healthy implementation of the **Migratory Bird Protection Act**. Additionally, we shared information on collaborative grants. Also, we discussed efforts to do migration studies in the area to enhance our understanding of migratory pathways.

If these topics are of interest to you and you might like to attend one of these meetings to learn about getting involved in advocacy, to join our advocacy action list, or to submit feedback, email napiotrowski@yahoo.com. ♦



Calling all Bird Heros

Join our efforts and make an impact today!
Contact Nancy: napiotrowski@yahoo.com.

New Bluebird Nesting Boxes in American Canyon

By Tom Slykar



SARAHSTIERCH

The City of American Canyon (CAC) runs a special program to educate “Citizen Volunteers” about the city’s activities and operations. The program, which is in its sixth year, involves these volunteers in every aspect of running the local government from the role of a city council member, to how the city water and sewage system works, to how the police and fire departments operate. And, at each session, the volunteers are encouraged to ask and answer the types of questions the department faces in its operations.

As part of this program the CAC Park & Recreations Department wanted to get the volunteers involved in a project similar to what might be an activity the department would sponsor.

Because of the pandemic they wanted the project to be outdoors. So, they contacted NSAS to propose a joint activity to make and install a dozen new Bluebird nesting boxes in the local area. For this project NSAS is providing the expertise to prepare the materials for building the boxes and CAC is purchasing the materials. And, on November 20th, the volunteers will assemble the boxes and will be installing six of these Bluebird homes at Veteran’s Park. In the spring, additional boxes from this project will also be installed at the American Canyon Wetlands and at the Newell Open Space.

CAC has been an active partner with NSAS on a number of projects involving Citizen Science and education of the public about the birds we live with, and we look forward to continuing our work with them on projects like this nesting box opportunity in the future. ♦

Napa-Solano Audubon Society
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Merlin[®]: A Valuable Resource for Beginning Birders

By Tom Slyker

Merlin is the stellar phone app from the The Cornell Lab of Ornithology that provides birders with a variety of tools for identifying birds in the field. For the beginning birder it helps to narrow down a possible ID of the bird you are seeing. The home page provides four options to ID birds.

Start Bird ID: Pressing this tab leads you to a series of five simple questions. Answering these questions enables Merlin to create a list of species that might match your answers. The list shows a series of pictures for each potential bird including adult and immature juvenile bird images. By touching the information button, you will access songs and location maps for each species. The anticipation is that this information will help you ID the bird you are seeing.

Photo ID: Enables you to download a picture from your phone to the app and it will try to ID your bird based on the image, the date and location the photo was taken.

Sound ID: Touching the microphone image starts a recording of the sounds around you. As the app records calls and songs it will start to ID the birds it is hearing. Since the app isn't perfect you should always try to see the bird to confirm identification before adding it to your eBird list. This app helps narrow the search for a potential match to a bird call you're hearing.

Explore Birds: Provides a complete listing of potential birds for your area. Be sure to click on the right-side icon at the top of the app page. This will enable you to "Refine the Bird List" to birds that should be at your location and en-

ables you to determine how you want to view this list. The list itself shows a photo of the bird and a time line for when you can expect to see each species. Clicking on a specific bird provides a series of photos of the species, ID info, a panel of songs and calls, and a North America distribution map. As a bonus, eBird now provides a link between a bird you are adding to your eBird list and the ID info about this bird in the Merlin app. This provides an opportunity to do a quick check of the ID to confirm an eBird entry.

Merlin is an app that I use every time I go birding and I highly recommend you add it to your phone if you're not already using this valuable birding tool. ♦