



# SONG SPARROW

Winter 2022 Vol. 52 No. 3  
www.napasolanoaudubon.com

## WINTER 2022 CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

- Nov. 10 Thu. NSAS Monthly Meeting & Speaker Series: Birding in Panama
- Nov. 13 Sun. Field Trip: The Bufferlands
- Nov. 19 Sat. Lagoon Valley Park
- Dec. 4 Sun. Bodega Pelagic Trip on the New Sea Angler
- Dec. 11 Sun. CBC 4 Kids: Connolly Ranch
- Dec. 18 Sat. Benicia CBC Pre-count
- Dec. 19 Mon. Benicia CBC
- Jan. 1 Sun. Angwin CBC
- Jan. 7 Sat. Field Trip: Skaggs Island
- Jan. 10 Thu. NSAS Monthly Meeting & Speaker Series: Birds of Morocco
- Jan. 28 Sat. Field Trip: Clear Lake
- Feb. TBA Field Trip: Morro Bay

**To sign up for All Weekly Walk & Field Trip Notices:** click on the "Subscribe to Email Updates" Link on our NSAS Website Homepage.

**Health & Safety:** In accordance with our National & Napa-Solano Audubon policy: All participants must sign a Release of Liability & Covid Waiver Form.

**We request that all participants are vaccinated, free from Covid symptoms, and wear a mask when carpooling or in close proximity in accordance with the Leader's/Driver's wishes.**



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



NAZCA BOOBIES

## Select Avians of the Enchanted Islands

By Pam Condos

As a birder with a strong interest in Central and South American avians, visiting the Galapagos Islands was an otherworldly trip of a lifetime. The Galapagos are a National Park and World Heritage Site, and are no ordinary islands. This is a place where you may meet a penguin and a flamingo on the same beach. This archipelago is part of Ecuador and is located 600 miles off its coast. The Galapagos is made up of 13 main islands, 6 smaller ones, and well over 100 islets and rocks scattered over approximately 26 miles of open space. Located at the confluence of three ocean currents, the Galápagos are a 'melting pot' of marine species.

Ongoing seismic and volcanic activity reflects the processes that formed the islands. Galapagos is a harsh, remote land, and the species that arrived there did not survive by diversifying, but rather by evolving specific traits to suit a certain niche in the environment. There are roughly three broad categories of habitat, each with its own distinctive species; the coastal zone, arid zone, and humid highlands.

The origin and history of the Galapagos is fascinating and complex. Charles Darwin visited in 1835, and his observation of Galápagos' species later inspired his theory of evolution. This article highlights a few of the endemic and other prevalent avian species I encountered on the islands.

The mostly dull color of many of the birds, along with extreme tameness, makes them especially attractive to visitors. Entering and hiking the outer islands is strictly monitored. Visitors to any protected areas within the Galápagos National Park (GNP) must be accompanied by a naturalist guide authorized by the GNP Directorate. This is to ensure the protection of wildlife, which shows an

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# President's Corner

By Mark Stephenson, NSAS President



Greetings All! This has been an amazing Fall Migration for birding in the Bay Area and California. Our California year lists have already zoomed past 400 species. And what is even more amazing, we have observed 32 species of warblers. Not only have we been treated to our favorite 10 Western Warblers, but this Fall we've had the chance to observe multiple Eastern Warblers including: American Redstarts, Northern Waterthrushes, Ovenbirds, Blackpolls, Chestnut-sideds,

Prairies, Palms, Tennessees, and Black and White Warblers in Sonoma & Marin, along with nice solo observations of a Northern Parula, Hooded, Black-throated Blue and Bay Breasted, Blackburnian and Magnolia, a brilliant, male Cape May, and our first California Prothonotary Warbler (S.F.). When we factor in Spring warbler treats including Virginia's, Lucys, and Mourning Warblers from Death Valley it's been an incredible year.

To top it off, we were ecstatic about the arrival of two Old World species of Phylloscopidae Warblers that typically breed in Northern Europe and Winter in Africa, that have never been seen in the U.S. outside of Alaska's Aleutian Islands, that somehow magically appeared in California this Fall for the first time ever: the Wood Warbler that turned up in Long Beach, and a day later the Willow Warbler that visited Rodeo Lagoon!

For sure, this has been a truly amazing Warbler year! We hope that many of you also have had the opportunity to get out and enjoy birding in the Bay Area and beyond. ♦



Cape May Warbler

# Feral Cats Impact on Birds

By Mark Stephenson

We all know that domestic cats make wonderful pets. However, when allowed to roam freely outdoors, cats can threaten birds and other wildlife and disrupt local ecosystems. Today, more than 100 million feral and outdoor cats function as an invasive species with enormous ecological impacts.

Outdoor domestic cats have now been recognized as a threat to global biodiversity. Every year in the United States, it is estimated that cats kill well over 1 billion birds. Although this number may seem unbelievable, it represents the combined impact of tens of millions of outdoor cats. When these behaviors continue outdoors, the results are deadly for birds and other wildlife. Cat caused injuries are one of the most common causes for birds being brought into our Napa Wildlife Rescue Center. Imagine how many are killed and eaten without anyone's knowledge! Unfortunately, even the mere presence of cats outdoors is enough to cause significant impacts to birds. Because cats are recognizable predators, their presence near nesting birds has been shown to reduce the health of chicks and to a decrease in successful nesting. Cats have contributed to the extinction of 63 species of birds, mammals, and reptiles in the wild and continue to adversely impact a wide variety of other species, including those with declining numbers.

On behalf of Napa-Solano Audubon, we implore all cat owners to keep their cats inside to avoid unnecessary bird kills, or provide a fenced-in area, like a

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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.**



*Meet new friends while making a difference.*



## Become a Member!

Click the **JOIN** button on our website.

Only \$25/single or \$35/family annually

# Calendar of Events



## PROGRAMS

**Note:** Our Monthly Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month beginning at 7:00 p.m. This year we're having hybrid meetings both in-person & via Zoom. Locations and Zoom links are sent out via our email update eBlasts. (Click on "Subscribe to Email Updates" on our website).

### BIRDING IN PANAMA

Thursday, Nov. 10, 2022, 7:00 p.m.  
Speaker: Luis Paz

### BIRDS OF MOROCCO

Thursday, Jan. 10, 2023, 7:00 p.m.  
Speaker: John Sterling

## FIELD TRIPS

**Field Trips are open to NSAS Chapter Members only.** There will normally be a cap of 12-15 participants and **participation is on a first to sign up, first-served basis.** So be on the lookout for Monthly Trip Notices and be the first to sign-up!

### ELK GROVE'S BUFFERLANDS

Sun., Nov. 13, 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Leader: Chris Conard, Natural Resource Specialist at Bufferlands

The 2500-acre Bufferlands, surrounding the Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant, provide an open space buffer between the treatment plant and the community. This tour provides an opportunity to visit sites with limited public access and see the fruits of local conservation and restoration efforts. Large-scale habitat restoration has been underway since 1992. We'll visit restored and remnant habitats, including tule and cattail marsh, managed seasonal wetlands, riparian forest, and grasslands to find a high diversity of species. The wastewater ponds can harbor a good diversity of shorebirds. This tour provides an excellent chance to look for rails, raptors, winter songbirds, shorebirds, and waterfowl. We will visit several sites, with short to moderate walks at each.

**Bring:** "binocs, spotting scope, lunch, water *Directions will be sent to participants after signing up.*

### BODEGA PELAGIC TRIP

Sun., Dec. 4, 7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Leader: Lucas & Mark Stephenson

Rick Powers, Captain of the New Sea Angler out of Bodega Bay has reserved December 4th for a late Fall Pelagic trip. The planned route is to head Northwest to Bodega Canyon (Sonoma Co.) and sail down along the Cordell Banks (Marin Co.) before returning to port. Many groups used to take trips at this time of year, but weather often forced them to cancel. In recent years, December has seen some mild weather making the prospect of this trip a possibility. The numbers of sea birds will be fewer in the late Fall, as large numbers of early migrating sea birds have passed through our area. However there are many less common species that may be seen making the prospect of this trip exciting! Possible sightings may include: Flesh-footed, Manx, and Short-tailed Shearwaters along with strangling Sooty, Buller's and Pink-footed Shearwaters; all Jaegers and South Polar Skuas; Rhino Auklets and Parakeet Auklets; Marbled & Ancient Murrelets along with Long-billed Murrelets; Tufted and Horned Puffins; Black-footed and Laysan Albatrosses along with Short-tailed Albatrosses, and even perhaps a Mottled Petrel. We also expect to see many sea mammals including Gray, Blue, Fin, Orcas and Humpback Whales, Risso's & White-sided Dolphins, Harbor & Dall's Porpoise, and other sea mammals that will make the trip memorable.

### BENICIA CBC PRE-COUNT

Sun., Dec. 18, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Leader: Robin Leong  
Location: Wardlaw Dog Park, 1805 Ascot Parkway, Vallejo

Robin will lead participants on a tour of some of the most exciting locations for the Benicia CBC, to track down some of the uncommon species highlights that teams will look for during the CBC which takes place the following day. One location will be a walk down Blue Rock Springs Creek. Sunday is during the count week, so rarities spotted on this field trip can be listed as part of the official CBC Count.

### CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT / CBC 4 KIDS / CONNOLLY RANCH

Sun., Dec. 11, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Coordinator: Tammy Saunders

### ANGWIN CBC

Sun., Jan. 1, 2023, 8:00 a.m.  
Coordinator: Murray Berner

### SKAGGS ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Sat., Jan. 7, 2023, 9:00 a.m.  
Leader: Murray Berner

Join Murray Berner for a guided tour of Skaggs Island – part of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge, in an area normally closed to the public. Skaggs Island, a former Naval Communication Station, is located North of Hwy 37 and South of Napa- Sonoma's Ramal Road between Novato and Vallejo. The 4,400-acre island supports deer, birds of prey, coyote, egrets, herons, and other wildlife that use the various grasslands, shrub stands, ephemeral pools, old drainage channels, and nonnative eucalyptus trees as habitat. We will focus on the many raptors that winter on Skaggs Island. Possible sightings may include: white-tailed kites, Northern harriers, rough-legged hawks, merlins, American kestrels, golden eagles, peregrine falcons, ferruginous hawks, and several species of owls.

### CLEAR LAKE

Sat., Jan. 28, 2023, 8:00 a.m.  
Leader & info: TBA

### MORRO BAY

Date, Leader & info: TBA

## WEEKLY WALKS

Weekly Walks are open to everyone. Andrew Ford is the Leader/Organizer for all Weekly Walks. **He will send out an email invite via an eBlast each week with locations and details.** When Andrew is unavailable for work out of town, a NSAS Board Member will be there to lead.

### LAGOON VALLEY PARK

Sat., Nov. 19, 8:00 a.m.  
Leader: Andrew Ford

# Select Avians of the Enchanted Islands con't.

(Continued from page 1)

uncanny lack of fear of humans. The Galapagos Islands are home to some of the highest levels of endemism anywhere on the planet. Of the 56 native bird species of Galapagos, 45 are endemic and 11 are indigenous. In addition to the native birds, there are 29 migrant species (migratory and native) and 64 species that have been observed a few times. Galapagos birds can be separated into land birds, sea birds, and shore birds.

**The Galapagos Hawk** (*Buteo galapagoensis*) is one endemic land predator of the islands. These hawks feed mainly on insects such as locusts and giant centipedes, as well as small lava lizards, snakes, and rodents. It is not uncommon for hawks to take young marine and land iguanas. My avian guide shared that the hawks are thought to be extinct on up to five islands and interestingly, there are no hawks on one island because it is too young to produce land reptiles and lizards that the hawks like to feed on. ***Its conservation status is listed as Vulnerable.***

The endemic group of 13 species known as **Darwin's finches** (with a 14th species found in the Cocos Islands some 650 km to the north), as a whole, are among the most abundant land birds. Each species has a distinctive beak size and shape, and their feeding behavior is specialized to their specific niche. Some eat seeds, others eat insects, some remove ticks from tortoises and land iguanas, some eat leaves or flowers, and several finch species use twigs or cactus spines to extract insect larvae from holes in dead tree branches.

**The four Mockingbirds** (*Mimus parvulus*), constitute the second largest group of endemic land species. The species are distinguished in bill size and shape, body size and color, and their songs are species specific. Though omnivorous, they tend to be more predatory than their mainland

relatives. They will eat young finches, lava lizards, insects, centipedes, carrion, and seabird eggs, among other things. They often form cooperative breeding groups consisting of a breeding pair plus their offspring from previous broods. ***This is a species of Least Concern.***

**There are six endemic species among the sea birds:** the **Galapagos Penguin, Flightless Cormorant, Waved Albatross, Galapagos Petrel, Lava Gull and Swallow-tailed Gull** (mostly endemic). Galapagos Penguins (*Spheniscus mendiculus*), one of the smaller penguins of the world, are the only penguins that live at or just above the equator. A drop in sea temperature below 75 degrees stimulates the onset of breeding. If conditions are favorable, they may have up to three clutches a year. Long-term monitoring has shown that this species undergoes severe fluctuations, primarily related to El Niño events and their effects on the availability of fish. ***Galapagos Penguins are currently considered Endangered.***

**The Waved Albatross** (*Phoebastria irrorata*), is the largest bird in the Galapagos with a wingspan of up to two and a half meters (8 1/4 feet). They get their name from the wave like pattern on the adults' wings. ***This species is classified as Critically Endangered*** because it has an extremely small breeding range, is essentially confined to one island, and evidence suggests that it has experienced a substantial recent population decline related primarily to fisheries, especially long-lining.

**The Swallow-tailed Gull** (*Creagrus furcatus*) is unique within the gulls for feeding exclusively at night.

Its night-adapted eyes allow it to feed miles from shore on fish and squid it captures from the surface of the ocean. Virtually endemic to the Galapagos, this species breeds mainly on the islands and on one island off Colombia. In contrast to almost all

other gulls which will return to their natal colony to breed, at the onset of their first breeding cycle Swallow-tailed Gulls will find a new breeding colony. ***It is a species of Least Concern at this time.***

The largest of the three species of Galapagos boobies is the **Nazca Booby** (*Sula granti*). It was previously thought to be a subspecies of the Masked Booby, but is now considered to be a separate species. Nazca Boobies catch fish by plunge-diving into the waters from heights of up to 30 meters. These shore birds usually forage in the coastal waters surrounding the Islands. They consume small fish such as sardines, but also eat flying fish, squid and anchovies during periods of El Niño, when sardines are less abundant in the marine environment. ***Its conservation status is Least Concern.***

Although evolution has prepared the Galapagos Islands' creatures for a simpler and more innocent world, there has been a massive increase in human population and interference in the last several decades. There is still much work to be done to ensure their destiny as a place where humanity learns to live gently in stewardship with nature in these enchanted islands. Visit [www.Galapagos.org](http://www.Galapagos.org)

**You can read the complete article on our NSAS website, in the Birding Notes Archive. ♦**



## Holiday Gift Ideas!

Our stunning landmark atlas, ***Breeding Birds of Solano County***, and Hermann Heinzel's field guide, ***Birds of Napa County*** are offered for purchase on our website.

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

[www.napasolanoaudubon.com](http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com)

# Seven Simple Actions to Help Birds

Condensed from Cornell's Laboratory of Ornithology article:

<https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/seven-simple-actions-to-help-birds/>

- 1. Make Windows Safer, Day and Night.** Install screens or film on your windows to break up reflections and reduce the light at night. More than a Billion birds die every year from window strikes during the day from seeing their reflections and at night from being attracted to lights.
- 2. Keep Cats Indoors.** Keep your cats inside or in a safe cat fenced yard or patio. Work with your city and county to reduce feral cat populations. It is estimated that outdoor and feral cats kill 2-3 billion birds every year.
- 3. Reduce the Size of Your Lawn and Transform Your Yard by Planting Natives.** Replacing lawns with native plants provides shelter, food and nesting sites for birds in our yards. We've developed and lost over 10 million acres of natural habitat in the last 2 decades. Lawns in the U.S. alone cover over 40 million acres.
- 4. Avoid Pesticides & Herbicides.** Support organic food and farming to reduce the use of these toxins and do not use them in your yard or home. More than a billion pounds of pesticides and even more herbicides are applied in the U.S. every year — these are toxic to birds and people!
- 5. Drink Coffee that is Good for Birds.** Drink bird friendly coffee from environmentally sustainable farms! More than 27 million acres of land in the tropics are planted with coffee. Three quarters of these are grown on deforested land. But coffee can also be grown in the shadows of the rainforest on environmentally sustainable farms.
- 6. Protect our Planet from Plastic.** Avoid using all single-use plastics by using reusable utensils, containers, wraps and shopping bags. An estimated 4.9 Billion Metric Tons of plastic are placed in landfills and our oceans every year. Most plastic takes more than 400 years to decompose polluting our land and waters.
- 7. Watch Birds & Share What you See!** Report bird sightings using eBird's database, participate in Project Feeder Watch, Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird and Shorebird Surveys. Your contributions provide valuable information to monitor bird populations and feedback on how birds are doing. *The passenger pigeon became extinct and people didn't even realize how quickly it was vanishing until it was too late!* Monitoring bird populations is essential to protect them. We need hundreds of thousands of people to report what they observe in their backyards, neighborhoods and undeveloped wild lands.

*Visit Cornell's Laboratory of Ornithology website for a more detailed version of this article. ♦*

## Feral Cats Impact on Birds cont.

*(Continued from page 2)*

patio, that separates them from birds and other wildlife. It will keep your cat safe from predators, too! Alternatively, outdoor cats could wear a brightly colored bell collar to warn birds of their presence. ***This article has been shortened due to space constraints. To read the entire article visit the Birding Notes Archives of our NSAS website. ♦***



*Wearing a BirdsbeSafe cat collar.*



## Christmas Bird Count

**Our two NSAS sponsored Annual Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's) are just around the corner! Please help us out as we need as many volunteers as possible!**



**The 75th Benicia CBC  
Monday, December 19th, 2022.**

*The Benicia Count was founded by Benician Emerson Stoner in 1930 — 92 years ago!* But counts weren't done during WWII, the Korean War, and in 2020 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.

**Our compilation dinner will be held at:**  
the Florence Douglas Senior Citizen Center  
333 Amador St., Vallejo, CA 94590

**For details & how to participate:** contact  
Robin Leong: [robin\\_leong@sonic.net](mailto:robin_leong@sonic.net)  
or 707-643-1287.



**The 50th Angwin CBC  
Saturday, January 1, 2023.**

**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.

**Our compilation dinner will be held at:**  
The Carnegie Building

1360 Oak Ave. St. Helena, CA 94574  
at the corner of Oak Ave & Adams St.

**For details & how to participate:** contact  
Murray Berner at [vireocity@hotmail.com](mailto:vireocity@hotmail.com)

Napa-Solano Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 10006  
Napa, CA 94581  
napasolanoaudubon.com



## NSAS Humboldt Field Trip 10-15-22

by Bruce Thomsen

Twelve members of Napa Solano Audubon Society gathered in Arcata on October 15 to meet our guide for the day, Ken Burton. Our first stop was Big Lagoon where we got off to a good start with a small raft of marbled murrelets, surf and white-winged scoters, western grebes, red-throated loons and numerous shorebirds. Next, we headed back to Arcata Wetlands (a must stop for great birding) where we found our first of many Aleutian cackling geese and too many waterfowl to count. Highlights included an Eurasian Wigeon, American avocets, dunlin, marbled godwits, western sandpipers, and an interesting hybrid western gull X glaucous-winged gull.

On our way to Samoa we drove along the Arcata Bottoms Loop. Highlights included American kestrels, northern harriers and white-tailed kites.

There were numerous overwintering

sparrows and pipits in the blackberry tangles and fields. Towards the end of Samoa spit we found both black-capped & chestnut-backed chickadees and a surprise Tropical Kingbird fly-catching on a power line. At the Elk River Wildlife Sanctuary we were treated to a red-shouldered hawk and great looks at a peregrine falcon. A flock of black-bellied plovers and a Wilson's snipe were other highlights.

Sunday morning, we began the long journey home with a stop first at the North Jetty on the tip of Samoa, with high fog, but no wind! Andrew Ford became our leader for the day, as he is familiar with the area having attended Humboldt University. Common and red-throated loons, red-necked grebes, common murres were in the channel between the two jetty's. At the tip of the jetty we found black turnstones, more marbled murrelets, surf-



MARBLED MURRELETS / MARK STEPHENSON

birds and a wandering tattler! We were able to observe both the surfbird and tattler next to one another for a great comparison. At a stop at the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge on the south end of the bay we were treated to a Virginia Rail, yellow-rumped warblers, wrentits and bushtits.

Overall, we had a wonderful trip with 109 ½ species found (½ for the glaucous-winged hybrid).

*For a complete report visit our website!* ♦