



# SONG SPARROW

Fall 2022 Vol. 52 No. 2  
www.napasolanoaudubon.com

## FALL 2022 CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

- Sep. 03 Sat. Birdwalk to American to Canyon Wetlands
- Sep. 08 Sat. NSAS Monthly Meeting & Speaker Series: Birding Ecuador
- Sep. 11 Sun. Field Trip to Sonoma Coast
- Oct. 13 Thu. NSAS Monthly Meeting & Speaker Series: Beauty and the Beast / California Wildflowers and Climate Change
- Oct. 15 Sat. Humboldt Bay Field Trip

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

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



### Fall Walks & Activities

Watch your email inbox and our website for more walks and activities.  
[napasolanoaudubon.com](https://napasolanoaudubon.com)



BALTIMORE ORIOLE / JAMES KINDERMAN

## Why Do We Bird?

By Mark Stephenson

This is a question that I have asked myself numerous times since I began birding in the 4th grade. Now that I have an avid teenage birder in the house, I continue to ponder this question more than ever. I can still remember the thrill of locating and observing a new bird when I first began birding in 1961. We didn't have color field guides or app recordings, so when we heard a new bird singing, we had to search until we found it and carefully observe the structure, plumage, and behavior in order to identify it.

From the vibrant orange and black Baltimore Orioles that sang outside our window while perched near their hanging mossy nests, to the rich blue and burnt orange hues of Eastern Bluebirds that swept over our grassy fields in search of insects, we marveled at each new bird we discovered. Our class kept a list of new species seen by our students and I began keeping my own personal list. By Spring, the class list reached over 100 species and following summer vacation I had observed over 150 in my first year of birding. By then, I had convinced my older brother Tom to go birding with me, and our father to drive us on journeys in search of new birds for our list. My teacher, Mrs. Thompson and her friends, knowing how much we were hooked on birding, also drove Tom and I on excursions looking for local rarities such as Morning, Cerulean, Blue-winged and Golden-winged warblers and to places like Montezuma Marsh to observe the throngs of migrating shorebirds.

I vividly remember the first time we spotted an Upland Sandpiper perched high on a telephone pole singing away with its incredible rising and descending song. (Be sure to listen to this bird's amazing song in one of your bird apps such

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# President's Corner

By Mark Stephenson, NSAS President



This is the beginning of my 3rd year serving as your president! I am humbled by the great work that our organization accomplished last year despite the impact of the continuing pandemic.

First, we continued our Monthly Speaker Series over Zoom with record attendance from near and far. This year we will do our best to conduct hybrid meetings at locations allowing local members who wish to attend in person and hosting joint zoom sessions to allow those not able to attend to join in!

Second, **Andrew Ford** and our Field Trip Team of **Carol Boykin, Bruce Thomsen & Wendy Cole** continued our weekly birding walks and our Monthly Field Trips. They ventured to local birding hotspots across Napa & Solano county and far afield to visiting such incredible sanctuaries as Milliken Reservoir, Shollenberger Park, Yolo Bypass, Sacramento, Colusa and Merced National Wildlife Refuges, Monterey, and Yosemite, Mono Lake, and the Eastern Sierra. We're looking forward to our local and extended field trips which will begin again in September. Be on the lookout for our regular eBlasts announcing these activities.

Thanks to the energies of **Tammy Saunders** our new Education Coordinator, and **Louisa Liu**, our College Intern, we restarted our school education programs in January working in 27 Napa and Solano County classrooms serving more than 575 students with 4 or more hour-long sessions, involving award winning presentations, hands-on activities and classroom field trips. We also teamed with **Napa Wildlife Rescue** to bring Maddie the Red-tailed Hawk and Olive the Opossum into the classrooms for first hand experiences with rehabilitating birds and mammals. We will start up this program with a bang in the Fall and hope to reach twice as many students in the coming year.

Thanks to our Vice President, **Tom Slyker** and many volunteers, we continued our many citizen science activities: from recording checklists using Cornell's eBird database; to weekly Bird Seasons Point Counts in American Canyon Wetlands and Benicia Community Park; to monitoring Bluebird Nesting Boxes; to surveying target species in Audubon's Climate Research in 20 locations; to monitoring nesting in endangered Tricolored Blackbird, Snowy Plover and Least Tern colonies. With the continued leadership of **Robin Leong** and **Murray Berner**, we kept our Christmas Bird Counts going strong with over 200 volunteers continuing our Benicia and Angwin CBC counts. Tammy Saunders also coordinated a wonderful Christmas Bird Count for Kids at Connolly Ranch!

Cudos to **Nancy Piotrowski & Robin Leong** who led the way along with the team from Bay Area Audubon Councils and Audubon California in a number of critical activities advocating for bird and habitat protection throughout our Bay Area counties and state.

Finally a huge shout out to **our wonderful Board Members** and their continued efforts at helping to run our local chapter! We invite all members and friends to participate in any and all of these wonderful activities in the coming year. Come join us for all of the fun! ♦

## Board of Directors

### President

Mark Stephenson  
(707) 246-2795

### Vice President

Tom Slyker  
(707) 771-1918

### Secretary

Helena Kassel  
(707) 812-4463

### Treasurer

David Kassel  
(707) 812-4464

### Conservation

Nancy Piotrowski  
(415) 386-4923

### Field Trips

Carol Boykin  
(707) 252-6194

### Membership

Judy Kahle  
(707) 372-6490

### Programs

Barbara Navolanic  
(707) 745-8454

### Director at Large

Robin Leong  
(707) 643-1287

### Director at Large

Pam Condos  
(707) 738-2488

### 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!

**Napa-Solano Audubon Annual Membership:** only \$25 for individuals and \$35 for families.

Click on the "Join Button" on our NSAS website homepage.

# 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.

### BIRDING IN ECUADOR

Thursday, Sept. 8, 2022, 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Denise & David Hamilton

In June of 2019, David & Denise visited Ecuador for the San Jorge Eco-Lodges and Botanical Preserves' "Seniors" Birding Tour. This meant birding before breakfast, and then more birding between breakfast and lunch, with a return to the lodge for an afternoon rest or birding on your own. This was a tour meant for up to 8 people, but when they arrived, they discovered they were the only 2 on the tour and, in fact, were the only ones staying at all 3 lodges! They ended up with their own personal bird guide, and often with a very late lunch! The tour took them from 1,650 feet in the lowland subtropical forest, to 12,120 feet in the Paramo/high barren plains.

On the 16-day tour, they observed a total of 291 species, including 37 species of hummingbirds, 44 species of tanagers, the Andean Condor, and more! At September's meeting, they will share their photos and stories from this amazing experience!



**SIGN UP FOR ALL WEEKLY WALK & FIELD TRIP NOTICES ON OUR NSAS WEBSITE HOMEPAGE!**

Just click on the link:  
**"Subscribe to Email Updates"**  
<http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/Main/RequestForm>

### BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: California Wildflowers and Climate Change

Thursday, Oct. 13, at 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Nita Winter & Rob Badger



STEVE DANIELS

Nita Winter & Rob Badger are authors of this 12-time, award winning, photographic essay book co-published by the California Native Plant Society. Their book celebrates California Native Wildflowers for what they are; works of art! It will encourage love for wildflowers, the diverse living species that have an interconnected relationship with them, and a desire to fight to protect our earth from devastating Climate Change. Rob and Nita are excited to take you behind the scenes on their 27-year journey photographing wildflowers throughout California and the West and the making of this stunning book. "Beauty and the Beast" is an educational traveling exhibit and a companion award winning coffee table book. They introduce you to how they use their art and the voices of a diverse group of scientists, environmental leaders, and nature writers to inspire hope and action regarding climate change, land conservation and species extinction.

### HEALTH & SAFETY

When joining our walks or field trips, we are asking all who are eligible, **be vaccinated & sign a release of liability and Covid Waiver Form.** Please also **bring a mask to wear** when you are in close proximity to others or when carpooling.

## 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!

### SONOMA COAST

Sun., Sept. 11, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Leader: Mark & Lucas Stephenson

We will visit a number of birding locations along the Sonoma Coast from the Russian Gulch, Jenner Headlands, and Willow Creek Road in the North to Salmon Creek Beach, Bodega Head, and Doran Beach in the South. It should be a special time for shorebirds and vagrants with Fall Migration heating up. **Meet at:** "The Tides" in Bodega Bay, 8:00 AM. **Carpool:** Sweeney's Sports at 7:00 a.m. *Stay tuned for the eBlast Signups Notice.*

### HUMBOLDT BAY

Sat., Oct. 15, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Leader: Leader Ken Burton

Ken Burton, well known birding expert from Humboldt County, and author of "A Birding Guide to Humboldt County," will take us to some of his favorite spots based on the current status of this Fall's migration. We will likely go to such Birding Hotspots as: Blue Lake's Mad River, Arcata Marsh and Bottoms, The Elk River Mouth and King Salmon Spit. *Stay tuned for more information via our Field Trip eBlasts.*

## 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 & details.** When Andrew is unavailable for work out of town, a NSAS Board Member will be there to lead. is not required.

### AMERICAN CANYON WETLANDS

Sat., Sept. 3, 8:00 a.m.

Leader: Andrew Ford

# A Very Successful Bluebird Nesting Box Season!

by Tom Slyker

Did you know that early American farmers built and hung nesting boxes around their farms to encourage the presence of Bluebirds? These birds were a “natural pesticide” keeping down insect populations that were harmful to crops. In the 1800’s Bluebirds were as common as Robins across the American landscape. Unfortunately, from 1920 to 1970 there was a dramatic decline in Bluebird populations to the point where extinction was considered inevitable. There were many reasons for the decline, however the major cause was the introduction to North America of the House Sparrow and the European Starling.

Bluebirds are “secondary” cavity nesters. They require a cavity in which to create their nests, but they are not strong enough to peck out the holes they live in. So, they are dependent on woodpeckers and other natural cavity creators to generate their nesting locations. Both House Sparrows and Starlings are also cavity nesters, and both are extremely competitive and aggressive species that will attack Bluebirds in their nests and dislodge them

from their homes. With the rapid increases in Sparrow and Starling populations the Bluebirds looked to be doomed. Then in 1978 the North American Bluebird Society was formed by citizen scientists with the goal of optimizing nesting boxes ideal for Bluebirds to use, and setting up boxes on monitored trails. The results have been a dramatic rebound of the Bluebird population and an escape from certain extinction.

To the best of my knowledge, NSAS joined the nesting box project ~10 years ago and this year we’ve had a very SUCCESSFUL season. We have teams of 2 – 5 people monitoring 108 nesting boxes at 10 different locations in Napa County. In Solano County we have teams of NSAS volunteers who monitor over 40 boxes at Lynch Canyon. This year, from these boxes we fledged just over 500 baby birds. 330 were baby Bluebirds. Another 200 were baby Tree Swallows which are also a “secondary” cavity nesting species. In addition to these two major groups, we also

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## Meet Our Two Scholarship Winners



Mazlyn (Mazzy) Jones graduated from St. Helena High School and is on her way to UC Santa Cruz this fall to work on an Environmental Studies degree specializing in

Agroecology. Mazzy lives in Angwin and described her childhood as being “born and raised surrounded by trees. As a kid, the forests around my house were my playground.”

In high school she applied for admittance to a restricted special early morning “Zero Period” class and was accepted as one of a small group of students in an Applied Sciences course. For the last 3 years she and her classmates have conducted ongoing environmental projects including surveying salmon in the creeks feeding into the Napa River, making biodiesel fuel, composting, and beekeeping. For the last two years she has been president of her school’s Environmental Club where she led the members in Napa River clean-up excursions, organized paper-making sessions where ~30

club members converted old homework pages into recycled paper, and lobbied the SHHS board to switch to solar energy.

One of her references described Mazzy as “focused, considerate, and innovative, consistently employing an optimistic attitude and growth mindset. This is evident through her extensive dedication to environmental activism.” We choose Mazzy for this scholarship because we are confident she will become a lifelong advocate for improving our environment for all.



Braden Begbie graduated from Benicia High School. After two years earning an Associate’s Degree in Natural Science from Diablo Valley College he is headed to UC

Santa Cruz to earn a B.S. degree in Environmental Science. Braden is a doer. He is committed to people and the environment as demonstrated by his volunteer activities in serving as member of the Board of Directors for

the Benicia Tree Foundation, working with Sustainable Solano, and assisting in food packaging efforts for the Solano County Food Bank. Braden is also an excellent communicator and public speaker.

He studied speech and debate in high school and then became a collegiate speech and debate competitor where he advocated for unique solutions to conserve the environment. His speech detailing the Rights of Nature movement was such a success that he was invited to travel to St. Louis to deliver his speech in front of a national audience.

Steve Goetz of Benicia Tree Foundation said of him, “Braden exemplifies the kind of leadership emerging from our younger generation that is dedicated to protecting our natural resources. We need more young adults like Braden.” We are confident that Braden will use his schooling as a stepping stone to become a successful protector of our natural resources. ♦

# Conservation Advocacy

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

Hello Bird Heroes in Napa Solano Audubon Society! A big thanks to all who helped by advocating to our elected state representatives during the first week of August 2022. We had zoom meetings to speak on behalf of birds and their environments to advance four bills: SB977, AB30, AB2382, and AB2278. As a result of our efforts, we are sharing some bittersweet news. First, the conservation ranching bill, SB977, was held in the Assembly Appropriations committee and will not move forward this year. The bill had a lot of support, but not enough to move forward. As a result, Audubon California is looking for other options to address conservation ranching in 2023.

On the plus side, the other three bills passed through the Senate and are on their way to the Governor's desk. AB 30 makes policy for the State of California that every resident has safe and affordable access to nature and to outdoor opportunities. AB 2382 requires the State of California to ensure that lighting fixtures on state buildings are designed to reduce unnecessary light pollution. While we certainly would like this for all buildings, this is an incremental step in that direction.

Finally, AB 2278 requires the California Natural Resources Agency to provide an annual report to the state Legislature on progress to meeting the 30x30 goals. You can read more about these by looking under the "advocacy link" on the Audubon California webpage.

*If you have questions or would like to get involved, please email me: [napiotrowski at yahoo dot com](mailto:napiotrowski@yahoo.com).* ♦

# BlueBird Nesting con't.

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had 7 Bewick's Wrens and 12 Ash-throated Flycatcher nestlings fledge from our boxes this year.

We would like to thank Jeff Bonneville, Carol Boykin, Evan Bremer, Wendy Cole, Janelle Hall, Maggie Hall, Patti and Bill Heidl, Pat Hildreth, Jeanne Hillyard, Helena and David Kassel, Betty LaBastida, Marcy Lavender, Adrien Molieri, Mo (Betty) Mosher, Wally Neville, Liz Nicolaou, Lou Penning, Kelly Pepper, Jessica Poehleman, Mickey Riva, and others who helped these teams as they monitored their nest box trails.

**If you would like to spend some time next spring being outside with friends monitoring nesting boxes we could use your help as we will have an opportunity to install more boxes next year and will need monitors for those new locations.**

*If you have any interest in this citizen science project or would like to learn more about the nest box program contact Tom Slyker: [solanobirder@gmail.com](mailto:solanobirder@gmail.com)* ♦

# Why Do We Bird con't.

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MAGNOLIA WARBLER / MARK STEPHENSON

as Merlin or Sibleys.) Each bird was a new discovery, and it was so exciting to observe their amazing plumage and behaviors.

One Spring day, I hiked down to a small creek near our house and sat alongside the stream mesmerized by the flowing water. A colorful Magnolia Warbler suddenly appeared in the willow right next to me. The breeding plumage male with its flashing white wing-bars, bright yellow breast and vividly contrasting thick black necklace and streaks cascading down its breast, searched for insects as if I were not even present. It flitted even closer and I could have reached out and touched it. Suddenly I was overcome with its gentle presence, a kinship I had never experienced this strongly before. It was as if our spirits had become intertwined and I had known this bird forever.

As the year's passed by, I realized how much I had learned about each bird's habitat, and the importance of the relationship they have in our ecosystems. Now, as the young birders that my son Lucas joins for birding adventures tick off new species, records of 250 or more birds in each county, and track down rarities for our State and Nation, I return to my experience with the Magnolia Warbler. My biggest fear is that naming and listing birds takes away the wonder of closely observing a bird and their habitat, and the special experience that I had as a youth that continues as I observe birds today. *I encourage all birders to go beyond the naming and listing and take the time to observe what a bird is doing, how it is behaving and interacting with its environment.* Certainly, it's always fun to find new species, but look deeper, search until you locate a nest, sit quietly and watch a parent as it brings food into its young to nourish their growing bodies. Listen to their songs, call notes and interactions.

If you take the time to feel the spirit of each bird, I assure you that you will be hooked on birding forever and you will become a passionate steward for birds and the environment! ♦

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## Mono Lake Field Trip

by Carol Boykin

Mono Lake, nestled in the Sierra Nevada Mountains at above 6000 feet, is stunningly beautiful and gritty at the same time.

We were met by our knowledgeable guide who drove a very large new van. She knew all the obscure places to find birds, and almost as important, bathrooms!

At Lee Vining Creek we saw a Green-tailed Towhee, White-headed Woodpecker, Black-headed Grosbeak and a Mountain Bluebird.

Onward to Mono Mills where she used her sharp young ears to find a Sage Thrasher!

At one stop an American Dipper entertained us along the banks of a flowing river.



Eastern Sierra Overlook

CAROL BOYKIN

At Lundy Canyon, after much tromping around in the woods, we spotted a Northern Pygmy Owl and close up views of a MacGillivray's Warbler.

The frosting on the cake was a Great Horned Owl spotted napping in a tufa tower along the shores of Mono Lake.

A wonderful time was had by all. ♦