



# SONG SPARROW

Spring 2023 Vol. 53 No. 1  
[www.napasolanoaudubon.com](http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com)

## SPRING 2023 CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

- Mar. 09 Thu. Speaker Series: ID'ing Tricky Female Ducks
- Mar. 12 Sun. Beg. Bird Walks: American Canyon Wetlands
- Mar. 26 Sun. Beg. Bird Walks: American Canyon Wetlands
- Apr. 13 Thu. Speaker Series: TBA
- Apr. 15 Sat. Connolly Ranch, Earth Night Festival
- Apr. 21 Fri. Milliken Reservoir
- Apr. 23 Sun. NSAS Earth Day Cleanup
- Apr. 23 Sun. NSAS Booth at the Oxbow Commons
- Apr. 29 Sat. NSAS Big Day Team Birding Event
- May 06 Sat. Putah Creek
- May 11 Thu. Speaker Series: Spring Birding in Texas
- May 13 Sat. Global Big Day Cornell Lab of Ornithology & eBird
- Jun. 03 Sat. Point Reyes Nat. Seashore

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.

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



GREAT HORNED OWL CASTING OUT A PELLET / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

## The Ins And Outs Of Owl Digestion

By Pam Condos

Many owls roost in trees, often venturing out at night to hunt. An owl that has been roosting, commonly leaves physical clues as to its whereabouts. These clues come in the form of furry, oval objects on the ground below its perch known as owl pellets.

Scientists can acquire important information about an owl's behavior and the complex nature of the food chain by analyzing owl pellets. Pellets tell us what an owl eats, seasonal variation in eating habits, where it is likely to roost, what small mammals live nearby, and over time, even the relative proportions of those animals. Owls use their powerful talons to catch and kill their prey, then often swallow the prey whole. If the prey is too large to eat whole, the owl will tear it into pieces. Either way, their digestive system then has to deal with bones, fur, and feathers. Not only do owl pellets contain the bones of their prey, they are also ecosystems unto themselves, containing fungi, beetles, moth larvae and caterpillar droppings.

Owls differ from other species of birds in that they do not have a crop (the baglike organ used to store food after it has been swallowed and digested later). However, like all birds, owls have a two-part stomach. The proventriculus, the region of a bird's stomach between the crop and the gizzard, secretes digestive enzymes that break down the food. The food then passes into the ventriculus (often called the 'gizzard'), where muscular contractions help soften and mix the food with the digestive enzymes. The enzymes in the ventriculus are unable

*Continued on page 7*

# President's Corner

By Mark Stephenson, NSAS President



**Greetings all, Spring is just around the corner!**

And I can't wait to go out in search of the many birds that return and migrate through the Bay Area! Both Point Reyes and Bodega Bay are two of our favorite birding hotspots, but both Napa & Solano Counties offer many exciting locations as well! American Canyon Wetlands, Green Island, Huichica Creek, & Hudeman Wetlands are great for migrating shorebirds and waterfowl. Skyline Park, Lake Hennessey, Mt. St. Helena, Angwin's Los Posadas State Park, Ink Grade Rd, Aetna Springs Rd and Lake Berryessa are several other wonderful birding locations. Solano County is equally impressive during migration from the Cullinan Ranch Wetlands, to Benicia State Recreation Area for migrating waterfowl, to Lake Herman, Rockville Hills, Gate's & Mix Canyons that lead to the top of Blue Ridge, Lake Solano Park, & Putah Creek for wonderful passerine birding spots. We are blessed to have our Field Trip teams offering so many birding excursions from Weekly Walks to Monthly Trips. We encourage everyone to get out and enjoy the Spring birding!

On Saturday, April 29th NSAS will once again host a Birding Big Day. This is an opportunity to go out and see what birds you can find on your own or on a team in Napa & Solano Counties! Don't miss out on this Fun Day of Birding!

*I can't end without thanking our many wonderful volunteers for all of their support this year. Our programs would not exist without all of their efforts:* First, many thanks to all of our Board Members for coordinating so many activities! I especially want to thank **Tammy Saunders**, our *Education Coordinator*, for visiting so many schools and exciting so many students with the joys of birding and conservation! A huge thank you to **Andrew Ford** for leading our *Weekly Bird Walks* and for **Wendy Cole, Bruce Thomsen, & Carol Boykin** for coordinating our *Monthly Field Trips*. **Tom Slyker** has done a yeoman's job organizing our *Citizen Science* activities from *Weekly Bird Seasons Point Counts*, to *Bluebird Box monitoring*, and assisting with our *Climate Research teams* that survey birds in Napa & Solano Counties twice a year! Special thanks to **Murray Berner** and **Robin Leong** for coordinating this year's *Christmas Bird Counts*! Special thanks to **Judy Kahle** for taking over as our *Membership Chair*, and to **Barbara Navolanic** for her incredible job organizing our *Monthly Speaker Programs* that have been so educational this year!

We would like to encourage everyone to come join us for any of our activities, so don't miss out and come and participate in any way that works for you! ♦

## NSAS Spring 2023 Scholarship Awards Program

Each year NSAS provides 2 scholarships of \$2,000 each to help fund the education of college bound students who will be pursuing a course of studies that will enable them to focus on conservation, protection of the environment, sustainable farming, ornithology, or another related field focused on the protection of our lands and environment for future generations.

If you know of any students living in either Napa or Solano counties who are continuing their education in one of these areas please let them know they can apply for one of these scholarships. To be considered, applications must be submitted by April 30.

*Information about the scholarships & how to apply is posted on our website:*  
[http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/nsas/docs/NSAS\\_2023\\_Scholarship\\_Announcement.pdf](http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/nsas/docs/NSAS_2023_Scholarship_Announcement.pdf)

2 | NAPA-SOLANO AUDUBON SOCIETY

## 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

Robin Leong  
(707) 643-1287

### 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) 246-2795.

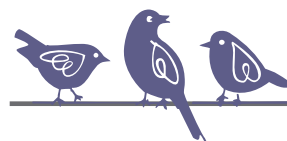
### DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

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.*



## Calling all Bird Heros

Join our efforts and make an impact today!

Contact Robin Leong:  
[Robin\\_Leong@sonic.net](mailto:Robin_Leong@sonic.net)



# Calendar of Events

## PROGRAMS

**Note:** Programs are held on the second Thursday of the month in location and via Zoom. We encourage everyone to attend. You will be sent the meeting details in our regular eBlasts.

### SPRING BIRDING IN TEXAS

Thursday, May 11, 2022, 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Mark & Lucas Stephenson

Location: Hybrid / Napa Valley  
Luthern Church & Zoom



PHOTO CREDITS THIS PAGE: MARK STEPHENSON

Last year, Lucas and I took on the challenge of birding in Southern Texas. We traveled to incredible birding meccas from the Southeast Coast along the Louisiana border, to Corpus Christi on the Gulf Coast, to the Southern Rio Grande, and inland as far North as San Antonio in search of exciting birds that we had never seen before and fun migrants passing through the amazing Texas landscape. We will take you on our journey and share some of the best birding locations, the 285 species, and nearly 50 life birds that we observed in late April on our 10 day trip.

## FIELD TRIPS

### MILLIKEN RESERVOIR

Fri., Apr. 21, 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Leader: Murray Berner

Situated below Atlas Peak, Milliken Reservoir is a remote source of Napa city water. We will take a circuitous route to reach the lake, passing through blue oak woodland, the old Camp Milliken, a Douglas fir forest, and skirt the canyon below the dam. The gravel road loop from Atlas Peak Rd to the lake and back is about 2.2 miles with a few modest grades.

### PUTAH CREEK

Sat., May 6, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Leader: Manfred Kusch



Sign up early for this fun NSAS Field Trip! The Putah Creek Preserve follows the flow of Putah Creek as it meanders its way from Pedrick Rd., where it straddles the border of Solano and Yolo Counties, to areas just south of the UC Davis campus. **We will wind up the day in Manfred's Hummingbird Garden.** Birds likely to be seen along this riparian habitat are Wood Duck, Green Heron, Belted Kingfisher, Swainson's Hawk, Bullock's Oriole, Black-Headed Grosbeak, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Western Tanager, and a plethora of other passerines. On a good day during Spring migration we might see Yellow, Orange-Crowned, Black-Throated Gray Warbler, Wilson's and MacGillivray's Warblers. On occasion Yellow-Breasted Chat, Painted Bunting, Nashville and Black-and-White Warblers may also be observed.

### POINT REYES OUTER POINT

Sat., June 3, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Leader: Mark Stephenson



Point Reyes is one of the best stop-overs on the West Coast in the Spring & Fall for migrating passerines. Come join us to explore some of Pt. Reyes' best locations on the Outer Point. We will visit the Lighthouse Point, Chimney Rock/Fish Docks, RCA, as well as possible inland locations based on time and the most recent bird sightings.

## BEGINNER BIRD WALKS

Are you dipping a toe into birding, or dusting off a pair of binoculars for the first time in a while? If you want company as you learn about birding, we'd be delighted to have you join us for our Beginners' Bird Walks. **We are scheduling two of these walks each month from now through June and are currently holding these walks on Sundays at the Wetlands Edge Park in American Canyon.** Be on the lookout for our email blasts in March. For more information contact Tom Slyker: [SolanoBirder@gmail.com](mailto:SolanoBirder@gmail.com)

### AMERICAN CANYON WETLANDS

Sun., March 12, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Sun., March 26, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

## EVENTS

### CONNOLLY RANCH: EARTH NIGHT FESTIVAL

Sat., April 15, 5:00 p.m - 8:30 p.m.

Connolly Ranch Education Center will host its 10th annual Earth Night Festival; a celebration of arts, music, movement, and nature. Spend time with the animals, enjoy nature-based activities, good food and drink & dance under the stars.

### EARTH DAY NAPA VALLEY

NSAS Clean-up Activity along the Napa River & NSAS Booth at the Oxbow Commons

Sun., April 23, 11:00 a.m - 4:00 p.m.

Betty Labastida will be coordinating a NSAS Napa River Clean-up Project in conjunction with Napa RCD. *If you'd like to lend a hand and help improve the environment on our designated stretch of the Napa River, stay tuned for more information on our website and in future eBlasts.*

**NSAS will be sponsoring a booth at the Earth Day celebration in downtown Napa at the Oxbow Commons.**

This is an event to connect people with local organizations who provide earth-friendly, creative pathways towards a sustainable future. There will be ~ 100 exhibitors at this year's event which will be open from 11 am to 4 pm. We hope to see you there!

## Calendar of Events *continued*

### NSAS'S BIG DAY OF BIRDING IN NAPA & SOLANO COUNTIES Sat., April 29

Last year we reinstituted our Napa-Solano Audubon's Big Day of Birding and had a blast! A team of Young Birders broke the previous record observing 170 species. The number one goal is to have our birding members and friends go out on this Saturday and have FUN birding as an individual, small group, or team. You may bird in Napa County or Solano County or both! We anticipate setting up a competition between the 2 counties as well as acknowledging the team that observes the most species seen in Napa and Solano counties and in both!

***If you'd like to join the fun, please register by sending an email to: NapaBirder@gmail.com***

If you are looking for a team to join, we will do our best to connect you with other birders. We will also place a form on our website closer to the date to expedite this process. Let's celebrate with a Fun Day of Birding!

Many chapters use the Big Day as a fundraising adventure. We encourage all teams to raise funds during this event by getting friends to sponsor you. They can donate a flat fee such as \$25, \$50 or \$100, or any amount, for the number of species that your team finds, for example \$1.00 per bird. *(Don't forget to remind them if your team locates 100 species they will owe \$100.)*

As a challenge to our members and friends we will break down their gifts by designating a specific giving category amount just as many other Audubon Chapters do!

**Golden Eagle Donation:** \$5,000+

**Bald Eagle Donation:** \$1,000+

**Goshawk Donation:** \$500+

**Broad-winged Hawk:** \$250+

**Rough-legged Hawk Donation:** \$100+

**Red-tailed Hawk Donation:** \$50+

**American Kestrel Donation:** \$25+

Come join in on all the fun and bird with us on Saturday, April 29th!

***We will hold a Celebration Zoom Meeting on Saturday, April 29th at 7:00 pm. for all participants.***

### CORNELL'S LABORATORY OF ORNITHOLOGY & eBIRD'S GLOBAL BIG DAY

Sat., May 13

Be a part of birding's biggest team! Global Big Day is an annual celebration of the birds around you. No matter where you are, join us virtually and help celebrate World Migratory Bird Day, and share the birds you find.

#### **How to participate:**

1. Get an eBird account.
2. Watch birds on 13 May.
3. Enter what you see and hear in eBird.
4. Watch the sightings roll in: During the day, follow along with sightings from more than 200 countries in real time on our Global Big Day page.

### WEEKLY WALKS

**Please note:** *we no longer list Weekly Walks here, as Andrew chooses locations based on the latest bird sightings. He will send out an email invite via each week with locations and details.*



### Become a Member!

**Napa-Solano Audubon  
Annual Membership:**

only \$25 for individuals  
and \$35 for families.

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

## A Walk to Hudeman Slough

by Carol Boykin

If you're looking for a lovely walk in the Carneros region of wine country, with ponds, a grassland vista, and wetlands in Southwest Napa, we have a favorite place to visit! It's what we call Hudeman Slough *(don't google it or you will end up in the wrong place)*.

Hudeman Slough is located near the Napa-Sonoma County line. It's a good winter birding spot, as you will find ducks like Northern Shoveler, Ruddy, Gadwall, American Wigeon, and Cinnamon & Green-winged Teal, along with a variety of hawks, like Red-tailed, Northern Harriers, American Kestrels and on a good day a Prairie Falcon or Merlin.

Look for birds you would expect to see in this grassy, wetlands habitat like Loggerhead Shrike, Lincoln and Savannah Sparrows, Western Meadowlarks, Great and Snowy Egrets and with luck a White-faced Ibis.

A week or so ago a flock of as many as 120 Bonaparte's Gulls cruised over one of the ponds along with over-wintering Tree Swallows.

**To get to Hudeman:** Take Hwy 12 to Duhig Road. Turn left and head south. When Duhig Road makes a sharp right-hand turn, it changes its name to Ramal Road. Continue past Skaggs Island Road and look for a small dirt parking lot on the left approximately a mile further down the road, next to what we call a pole barn. We always take the trail (gravel) east a tad and then to the right (south). Follow it around the first reservoir/pond. Keep going over the small bridge. We usually head North and back up to the second pond. On the walk back look for Wilson's Snipes. Also, if you look carefully in the Eucalyptus trees you will often find roosting Great Horned Owls. ♦



# Conservation Advocacy: Join the International Dark Skies Movement

By Mark Stephenson

Have you ever flown into a large metropolitan area at night and seen the glow of the urban lights illuminate the evening sky for miles and miles? Or seen a satellite nighttime view of the earth from space with the enormous glow over our cities? Or have you ever gone backpacking in the high Sierra and seen the amazing display of the milky way without the interference of city lights? Imagine what passerine birds see when migrating at night, and how different their view is from the views of their ancestors that migrated before our electric lights of the 20th and 21st centuries. In fact, the illumination of our metropolitan area night skies leads millions of birds to their death every year. ***In North America, 70% of bird species migrate and, of those, 80% migrate at night, using the night sky to help them navigate.***

Birds like many other animals are disoriented by light and when the lights are shining from a tall skyscraper or even a suburban home, birds often fly into the structure and perish. During the day, birds rely on the resources available in the natural habitat to rest and refuel before taking off again the next night. Some migrating birds are casualties of nighttime collisions with windows and walls, but others can circle in confusion until dawn, and when they land, potentially without access to critical resources, are subject to other urban threats. ***That's why there is an international movement in the works to dim our lights, particularly during migration time.*** U.S. cities including New York, Chicago, Boulder and Cupertino to name a few are embracing the Dark Skies movement.

***What we all can do to reduce bird migration casualties:***

- 1. Install time and motion sensors on your outdoor lights.** The best way to reduce light pollution is to turn lights off completely when not needed.
- 2. Shield Outdoor Lights.** Safety lights do not need to illuminate objects high in the sky. Install shields that block the skyward escaping light. Shielding also allows light bulbs that consume less power to provide the same amount of light when it is targeted in the direction needed.
- 3. Use dimmable light bulbs with dimmable switches** to control the light intensity they emit. Close your curtains to keep light escaping from your home to the outside.
- 4. Choose light bulbs with warmer colors** which are more suited to circadian rhythms and avoid bright white and blue daylight tones<sup>1</sup>.



Florida and the Southeast Coast from Space at Night

Excess light cast into the sky is now seen as a form of pollution with real impacts on the environment. We have flooded the night with light and it's accelerating. In the last 25 years, light pollution is estimated to have grown globally, by around 100 percent. All that light, much of it aiming up into the sky, is taking its toll on nature, especially the birds.

Birds are adapted for flying at night in darkness, not in light, and their vision at night actually depends on darkness in order to sense the magnetic fields of the earth. When it's too light, they become disoriented. As a result, many birds end up in places where they face the dangers of an urban environment.

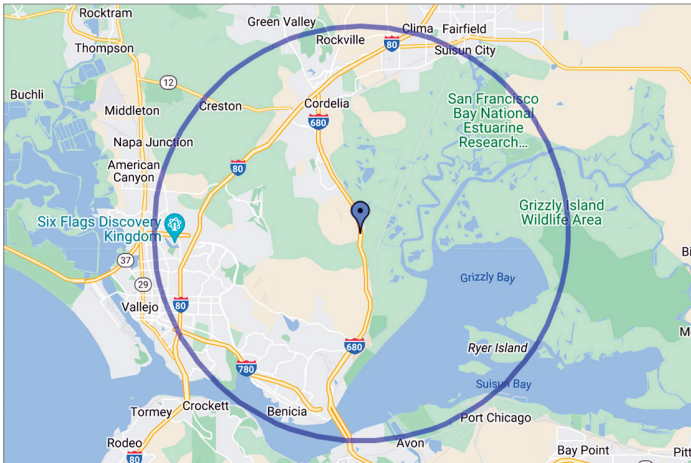
The Bay Area is right in the middle of the Pacific Flyway, the main migratory route for millions of birds moving South in the Fall and North in the Spring. But a satellite map displaying luminance shows the entire Bay Area is ringed with a solid glow of artificial light. All those birds are coming through our area and they can't avoid the light. They can't go around it.

It's a problem scientists have only recognized in the last few years, prompting South Bay Assemblyman Alex Lee (D-Milpitas) to introduce AB 2382. The bill, simply put, requires that all State buildings have a light shield, so basically, a physical shield, or are motion-activated so they're not constantly on. This will not only reduce our energy consumption but reduce light pollution as well. It's a small change, but has immense impact on the natural and built environment, too. Home owners can also do their part! Help save birds by modifying your outdoor lighting and strengthen our efforts to return the night sky to a more natural state!<sup>2</sup> ♦

References:

1. From National Audubon's International Dark-Sky Association webpage and from LA Times article by Sumeet Kulkarin 9-20-22
2. From Curbed article by Megan Barber 3-30-17

# Napa Solano Audubon's Christmas Bird Counts 2022-23



## THE 74TH BENICIA CBC / DEC. 19, 2022

by Robin Leong

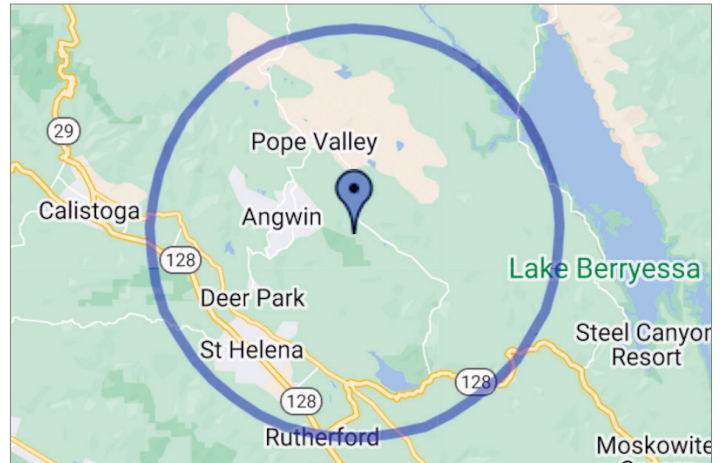
First, thank you so much to all participants for helping out in the 2022 Benicia CBC, especially counting in that bloody, cold weather. I would especially like to thank the leaders of the 14 territories that make-up the standardized 15 mile diameter CBC circle. Audubon maintains a national ranking of CBCs by species seen. In 2021 we had 164 species, that ranked us 37th out of over 2,621 counts done in North America. This year, for the first time in many years, we didn't lead the nation in a high count for any species, however, we totaled 163 species.

**Some notable birds include:** Snow & Cackling Geese, 370 Tundra Swans, Eurasian Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal, Barrow's Goldeneye, Wood & Long-tailed Ducks, American Bittern, Black Rail, Burrowing Owl, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Orange-crowned & Townsend's Warblers, Great-tailed Grackle, but only 4 Tricolored Blackbirds.

Usually the BCBC has between 90,000 to 120,000 birds, but late in the day, two of our counters watched a murmuration of Eurasian Starlings estimated to be 150,000. As far as interesting species found, a Swamp Sparrow was spotted (last seen in 2011), and a Sandhill Crane was heard (last heard in 2015, but prior to this in 1982).

Other interesting observations: Lewis' Woodpeckers have been seen in large numbers this year, and the BCBC found two. This compiler guesses that this is a result of a big fire in the area two years ago, giving this species a chance to forage. This was also a good year for Hermit Thrushes (80). Our BCBC proved this by having the highest count ever of the 75 counts done on the BCBC.

Notable misses were Willet, Bonaparte's Gull (but seen on count week), White-throated Swift (perhaps due to dense fog and limited visibility), and Varied Thrush (9 out of 10) which have been seen in the past 10 counts, but not this year.



## ANGWIN CBC / JAN. 01, 2023

by Murray Berner

Our count total this year was 126 species. Definitely on low side of the recent averages which have been in the mid-130s. The area's resident and wintering birds continue to recover from the 2020 fires that burned 40 percent of the count circle. This may or may not explain the continued absence of Golden Eagle, and first-ever miss of Rock Pigeon and Western Screech-Owl. Bald Eagles, Buteos and Kestrels were found in average numbers; other diurnal raptors were scarce. Ducks and geese were down a little, while grebes were present near the average. Gulls have been decreasing for several years, while regionally, there are lots of gulls.

Lake Hennessey once hosted hundreds of roosting Short-billed (Mew) Gulls. This no longer occurs. Lake Berryessa continues to concentrate Common Merganser. Here are a few of the significant finds on the 2023 count: Snow Goose and Prairie Falcon in Pope Valley, an oddly placed Common Loon at Bell Canyon Reservoir, 2 Green Herons at the Glass Mt WTP, a Northern Saw-whet Owl in Pope Valley, 8 Rock Wrens on the lakeshore at Putah Creek, 15 Mountain Bluebirds in Pope Valley, and 2 Chipping Sparrows near St Helena. The overall total of 13 White-throated Sparrows broke the previous 2020 record of 11. A Swamp Sparrow found at the mouth of Sage Creek was the first since 2013. We also had two count-week species: a Burrowing Owl at Pope Valley, and a Townsend's Solitaire at PUC.

***Finally, many thanks to all that participated with special thanks to Helen, Ava and Betty for putting together the dinner.*** Helen is "retiring" and Claudia Zinn will take on the task next year. ♦

If you would like to see the past history of the Benicia or Angwin CBCs you can go to National's CBC page: <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>



# The Ins And Outs Of Owl Digestion

(Continued from page 1)

to break down indigestible waste materials such as fur, feathers, and bones. These are compacted into an oval mass; a nice tidy package covered in fur called a pellet. Any remaining waste is ejected through the vent (often called 'white-wash') with liquid waste from the urinary system. Next, the pellet moves back up through the esophagus and out the mouth, (often called 'casting the pellet').

You can sometimes tell when an owl is getting ready to cast a pellet as the owl's facial disc changes shape and may look slightly strained. Its mouth opens wide and out drops the pellet!

Pellet size is roughly the size of the owl's stomach, so smaller owls have



Owl pellet up close.

smaller pellets. Pellet size can also determine how much and when an owl ate. Pellets from smaller owls may contain only partial or one prey animal, however larger pellets can contain up to 7 prey items in one pellet. Pellets typically form several hours after an owl has fed. Multiple prey consumed in

a short time period are typically processed into a single composite pellet. If the owl eats again, the digestive process starts over until all food is digested. Once an owl's stomach is full, they must cast a pellet before eating more.

As mentioned, analyzing owl pellets may provide valuable scientific information regarding owl behavior and the food chain. Pellets can be easily accessed, they don't degrade quickly, and they're a way to study owls that is noninvasive to their normal living habits. This ease of interpretation also makes them an ideal introduction to science for young students. ♦

## NSAS Takes Birding into the Classroom

by Tammy Saunders, NSAS Education Coordinator

As Education Coordinator, I'm delighted to bring you up to date on the current educational programs we've been running in 4th and 5th grade classrooms throughout Napa and Solano counties. Through these programs, students are able to learn about the importance of avian diversity, adaptations, feathers and flight, migration, bird song, nesting, and how humans impact birds' environments. Our college intern, Grace Gabel and myself have visited many schools including Mary Farmer and Robert Semple in Benicia, Willow, McPherson, Donaldson Way, Browns Valley and Alta Heights Elementary Schools in Napa returning to every classroom for 4-5 lessons. We use PowerPoint presentations to introduce our concepts followed with related hands-on interactive activities. A popular activity is the tried and true "Bird Beak Buffet" as a part of our lesson on adaptations. In this activity students get to try out different bird "beaks" using household tools that represent a variety of bird beaks to learn how birds survive in their habitat. This helps students to gain a hands-on understanding of how



Building a bird nest at McPherson

resource partitioning works and why habitat needs have shaped these adaptations to allow birds to live together in a variety of niches within every ecosystem. I also created a few activities of my own, such as songbird ID. During the lesson, I give an audio-visual presentation on birds and their vocalizations. Students learn why birds sing and their amazing repertoire of call notes that help them to communicate with each other.

To help the students learn and engage, they are divided into small groups and given a set of cards with pictures of birds they have just seen and heard. When I play a bird call each

group must discuss and decide which bird it is. When time is up, each team must hold up a card that they think is the correct bird. They get so excited, trying to figure it out, while having lots of fun. It's amazing to see their enthusiasm!

On our last visit to each class we take students on a bird walk in their school yard or a local park with binoculars supplied by a *Gasser Foundation* Grant. Students have spotted Western Bluebirds, Black Phoebe, Red-tailed Hawks, Turkey Vultures, California Scrub Jays, White-crowned Sparrows, and Yellow-rump Warblers, to name a few of their favorites.

The binoculars help them to have spectacular, close-up views and build enthusiasm for birding! We often include an assembly with a Red-tailed Hawk brought by Napa Wildlife Rescue to provide students a first-hand experience with a bird of prey. Through these activities and many others, the students gain a better understanding of birds and their habitats, as well as develop an appreciation for the importance of preserving them. ♦

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



## NSAS Spring Elections are just around the corner!

The annual election of officers is coming up in May.

The four positions that need to be elected/re-elected are **President, Vice President, Secretary** and **Treasurer**. Following is a brief summary of the duties of each as stated in our By-Laws:

- **President:** President of NSAS, Chairman of the Board, and an ex-officio member of all committees,
- **Vice President:** Assist the President in the performance of duties, and in the absence of the President, the Vice President shall preside at any meetings,
- **Secretary:** Keep a record of all proceedings of the Board and of NSAS, and shall conduct such correspondence of NSAS as the President or Board may direct,
- **Treasurer:** Shall have custody of all of NSAS's funds and shall disburse these funds as may be ordered by the Board. The Treasurer shall provide financial statement to the Board at their regular meeting or as requested.

**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:**

- **Conservation Advocacy:** This position stays in touch with local conservation issues and reports to our membership on positive action we can take to support habitat preservation.
- **Education Chair:** This position helps us to organize our Education activities in the Schools and Community.
- **Communications Chair:** This position entails writing short articles for our Newsletter and promoting our activities to local news organizations.
- **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.

Any NSAS member interested in running for one of these positions should **contact Carol Boykin by April 15th:**  
carol.boykin@att.net

***Don't be shy, take the plunge! ♦***