



# SONG SPARROW

Winter 2024 Vol. 54 No. 3  
www.napasolanobirds.org

## WINTER 2024 CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

- Nov. 14 Thu. Speaker Series:  
Raptor Advantage
- Nov. 16 Sat. Monthly Field Trip 2-Day:  
Klamath Falls Basin
- Jan. 9 Thu. Speaker Series:  
Caring for Injured Birds  
and Wildlife
- Dec. 13 Sat. Benicia CBC Pre-Count
- Jan. 18 Sat. Monthly Field Trip:  
TBD
- Feb. 01 Sat. Winged Migration Expo
- Feb. 02 Sun. Winged Migration Expo
- Ongoing Weekly Bird Walks
- Ongoing Beginner Bird Walks



PROTHONOTARY WARBLER / MARK STEPHENSON

## Fall Migration Highlights

By Mark Stephenson

This year, coastal passerine migration in the North Bay has been unusually sparse with fewer numbers of migrants stopping over along our coast's normal hotspots, particularly in Sonoma and Marin.

This may be a product of strong and persistent Northwest winds that have continued for most of the months of September and October encouraging migrants to keep on flying South. However, one of the recent coastal highlights included a Chestnut-sided Warbler that Lucas helped me find at Bodega Bay's Hole-in-the-Head.

I returned the favor by helping him observe this Prothonotary Warbler found originally in the willows along the Bodega Bay Rail Ponds by Rob and Anne O'Donnell on October 2nd and then re-found in the Bodega Dunes Campground the following day. It was present for more than a week in the campground.

Most inland locations have had typical numbers of Western Passerine Migrants and even a few unusual vagrants as well. The days I visited Putah Creek, Lake Solano, Napa River Ecological Preserve and other fun hotspots there were numerous Yellow Warblers as well as numbers of Townsend's, Black-throated Gray, and with even a few Nashville Warblers mixed in. Blue Grosbeaks, Lazuli and Indigo Buntings as well as an American Redstart and Ovenbird have also been spotted at various locations along Putah Creek. By late September, the Yellow-rumps began to arrive in large numbers, and with their constant activity flying from branch-to-branch, making it more difficult to pick out other species.

*Continued on Page 6*



## Winter Bird Walks & Activities

Choose  
"Activity Signups"  
on our new website  
for bird walks  
and activities.

[napasolanobirds.org](http://napasolanobirds.org)

<https://tinyurl.com/nsas-activities>

SEE YOU ON THE TRAILS!

# President's Corner

By Mark Stephenson, NSAS President



## Greetings NSAS Members, Family & Friends,

while walking on one of our recent birding excursions along the shores of Abbott's Lagoon, listening to the waves wash up along the miles of uninterrupted white, sandy beach, and watching harbor seals poke their heads above the foam, I was struck by the amazing peace it brings to our spirits to be outside immersed in nature. In our busy lives, we often lose touch with our natural environment, and tragically, many young folks seldom venture outside of their homes, held captive by television and alluring video games. *My wish is for everyone to be blessed by time spent outside enjoying the sun, wind, and pounding surf, our prairies, chaparral, forests, and wildlife that is our fragile planet's gift to all of us.*

At Point Reyes this weekend we had a wonderful view of a migrating Burrowing Owl flying across the hillside and hiding in a badger burrow. For a related positive environmental update; the California Fish & Wildlife has voted to protect the western Burrowing Owl and has established a committee to declare them as either a Threatened or Endangered species. This decision will go a long way in helping to protect these incredible owls and their habitat!

Shortly after you receive this newsletter, we will have our annual fundraising appeal! If you are able to contribute, this year's appeal is our only request for you to donate to support our many chapter activities. Your donations help to fund our education in the schools programs, our monthly speaker series, and our expert ornithologists who lead us throughout the year on our birds walks and field trips. They also help maintain our data collection for our Citizen Science Program and building and replenishing our nesting boxes for Western Bluebirds and American Kestrels. We are predominantly a volunteer organization and your gifts help us to accomplish our many worthwhile projects. Please consider a gift of any amount this year to help us fund our program activities.

**Our holiday Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's) are just around the corner!** Napa Solano Audubon sponsors both the Benicia (Monday, December 16th) and Angwin (Wednesday, January 1st) Bird Counts. We encourage all birders regardless of their expertise to join a team. There are many experienced leaders and this is always a fun event. Participants will get to join a team for an enriching day of birding, and if you choose, join a celebratory compilation dinner at the end of the day and hear about other teams' experiences and learn the locations they visited and what species they observed. *For more CBC details, please see the Christmas Bird Count sidebar on Page 4, and our website.* ▲

## ANNUAL FUNDRAISING APPEAL

Our major fundraiser of the year, is intended to support our School Education Programs, Monthly Speakers, Field Trips, Christmas Bird Counts, and other annual expenses. Our Fall Fundraising Appeal Letter is already in the mail, so please be on the lookout for it!

- Non-members will receive annual membership for gifts of \$25+
- Donations of \$200 will receive a copy of Hermann Heinzel's book "Birds of Napa County".
- Donations of \$300 will receive one of our new Kestrel T-Shirts;
- Donations of \$500 will receive a hard copy of our "Breeding Birds of Solano County".

We appreciate any amount you can give. Thank you for your support!

## Board of Directors

<b>President</b> Mark Stephenson (707) 246-2795	<b>Membership</b> Judy Kahle (707) 372-6490
<b>Vice President</b> Phil Burton (707) 953-9516	<b>Communications</b> Regina Brinker (925) 628-9121
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<b>Conservation</b> Robin Leong (707) 643-1287	<b>Solano Conservation</b> Roberto Valdez (707) 328-2724
<b>Field Trips</b> Carol Boykin (707) 252-6194	<b>Director at Large</b> Pam Condos (707) 738-2488
<b>Education Coord.</b> Tammy Sanders (419) 410-6283	

### Board Meetings are open to all members

If you wish to attend, please call:  
(707) 246-2795.

### DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

Since NSAS consists of many volunteers and a few part-time staff who are working in the field, 100% of your donation goes to support our mission.

**All donations are tax-deductible.**



ANDREW TURNER

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[napasolanobirds.org](http://napasolanobirds.org)



# Calendar of Events



## SPEAKER 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.

### RAPTOR ADVANTAGE WITH DR. CRAIG FARQUHAR

**When:** Thurs., Nov. 14; 7:00 p.m.

**Speaker:** Dr. Craig Farquhar

**Location:** Napa Valley Lutheran Church & Hybrid Zoom



Learn about 'the raptor advantage' with this brief overview of what a 'raptor' really is; focusing on the main anatomical and physiological adaptations that are featured in these birds. These crucial adaptations are products

of millions of years of evolution honing virtually every body part to a lifestyle that depends on being able to capture prey that would rather not be devoured

**About the Speaker:** Dr. C. Craig Farquhar is conservation biologist, raptor ecologist, and illustrator, formerly with the Austin Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, currently teaching Raptor Ecology and Ecology of Rarity at Texas State University, San Marcos, TX. He received a PhD in Raptor Ecology and Wildlife Biology at Texas A&M University, and a Frank M. Chapman post-doctoral fellowship in the Department of Ornithology at the American Museum of Natural History, New York.

## CALL FOR CBC VOLUNTEERS

The NSAS Annual Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's) are just around the corner. We sponsor two CBCs, and always have a great time counting birds during the day, and celebrating with lots of camaraderie at our delicious compilation dinners that follow!

Please come join us this year. We can't do it without you!

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

**Angwin CBC:** Contact Murray Berner  
[vireocity@hotmail.com](mailto:vireocity@hotmail.com)

### CARING FOR INJURED BIRDS AND WILDLIFE: Badger Run Wildlife Rehab Center's Mission

**When:** Thurs., Jan. 09; 7:00 p.m.

**Speaker:** Liz Burton

**Location:** Napa Valley Lutheran Church & Hybrid Zoom



Liz will be talking about how she got started in Wildlife Rehabilitation, her original vision for Badger Run, what happened along the way and where they are now. She will also give "case studies" of some of their Educational Ambassadors from injured bird intake to today. She will be happy to answer any questions about Wildlife Rehab or Exotic Rescue during her presentation.

**About the Speaker:** Liz is Badger Run's founder. She has been devoted to wildlife rehabilitation for over 30 years. Liz holds a B.S. degree in Animal Ecology, Behavior and Evolution. She is also active in exotic pet rescue and educating exotic owners in the proper care of their animals.

**SIGN UP FOR WEEKLY WALKS & FIELD TRIP NOTICES ON OUR NSAS WEBSITE.**

[napasolanobirds.org](http://napasolanobirds.org)

**SEE YOU ON THE TRAILS!**

## MONTHLY FIELD TRIPS

Field Trips are open first to NSAS Chapter Members. There is often a limit of 12-15 participants and is on a first to sign-up, first-served basis. **Be on the lookout for Monthly Trip notices, sign-up procedures, and be the first to register!** If space is available it will open to non-members shortly before the trip heads out. We encourage membership so you won't miss out on these exciting Field Trips.

### KLAMATH BASIN

#### 2-Day Overnight Trip

**When:** Sat-Sun; November 16 & 17

**Leader:** Kevin Spencer

**Only a few spaces left! Please register on our website's homepage.** The Klamath Basin is located along the California/Oregon border. Both the Upper and Lower Klamath Wildlife Areas along with Tule Lake are stopovers for migrating waterfowl and numerous passerines. Most species of ducks, geese, swans along with raptors including resident Bald Eagles and Prairie Falcons are regularly seen in this area. The region also includes riparian habitat that hosts migrating thrush, flycatcher, bunting, & warbler species. The walk begins at Nibley's Cafe, 2424 Washburn Way, Klamath Falls, OR. We will spend 2 days exploring this region with local bird guide, Kevin Spencer.

### ANNUAL BENICIA CBC PRE-COUNT

**When:** Sat., Dec. 13; 8:30 a.m. – Noon

**Leader:** Tom Slyker & Robin Leong

For those of you who enjoy birding areas close to home, or who plan on participating in this year's Benicia Christmas Bird Count and would like to get a head start, this trip is for you! Robin and Tom will take you to a number of the Benicia CBC's local hotspots to look for exciting birds that have arrived in time for this year's CBC that will be held the following Monday, Dec. 16th. *The trip is tentatively planned to begin at Waterfront Park on Whitesides Dr., Larry Glen Cove.*

### JANUARY FIELD TRIP

**Location TBD**

**When:** Sat., Jan. 18; 8:00 a.m.

**Leader:** Larry Kent



## WINGED MIGRATION EXPO (formerly SF Bay Flyway Festival)

**When:** Sat.-Sun., February 1 & 2

Stay tuned for many events, including birding field trips, speakers, vendors, food and drink that will be scheduled in this year's Winged Migration Expo. We anticipate leading a number of birding field trips around the Bay Area on this weekend. More information will be posted on their website:

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

## WEEKLY BIRD WALKS

**Open to everyone.** NSAS sponsors weekly birding walks led by ornithologist Andrew Ford. Andrew is a wealth of information regarding birds, plants, and just about anything else you might happen to come across on these walks.

- Walks are usually from 8am – Noon, in Napa and Solano Counties local birding hotspots.
- Sign up for our Field Trip's eBlast by clicking on the green button entitled "Activity Sign Up" located at the top of our new site: [napasolanobirds.org](http://napasolanobirds.org)
- He will send out the weekly destination for each Bird Walk to those who are signed up.

## BEGINNER BIRD WALKS

**Open to everyone.** These NSAS sponsored walks are usually held at the American Canyon Wetlands or Benicia Community Parks. Carol Boykin, Karina Garcia and Tom Slyker are experienced birders and leaders who will guide you along the way.

If you are dipping a toe into birding, or dusting off a pair of binoculars for the first time in a while, and you want some company as you learn about birding, we'd be delighted to have you join us for our Beginner's Bird Walks.

**No reservations needed,** just show up and enjoy being outdoors for a little while. We plan on holding Beginner's Bird Walks throughout the Winter and Spring. These walks are open to birders of all levels and ages. **Free, fun, and loaner binoculars are on hand if you need them.**

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[vireocity@hotmail.com](mailto:vireocity@hotmail.com)

## NSAS Kestrel T-Shirts make timeless gifts



**Beautiful and colorful, the new NSAS Kestrel T-Shirt is perfect to give as a gift or for yourself.**

**Only \$25.00**

Pam Condos has done a great job designing, printing, and distributing these 1st class t-shirts! We have all men's and women's sizes in stock. (We're hoping not to "lose our shirts" on these amazing, quality t-shirts!).

**You can order them directly from our website or email Pam: [pamelacondos58@gmail.com](mailto:pamelacondos58@gmail.com).**



## Christmas Bird Count



**The 77th Benicia CBC  
Monday, December 16th, 2024.**

The Benicia Count was founded by Benician Emerson Stoner in 1930; 94 years ago! This year, Robin Leong will be assisting Tom Slyker in organizing this fun event. The Benicia CBC circle includes the communities of Benicia, East Vallejo, Cordelia, West Suisun City, as well as parts of Grizzly Island. *If all goes well, we'll send a boat out into the Benicia Straits! We have many teams, with experienced leaders and various levels of hiking & walking difficulty, so let Robin & Tom know type of surface & level might be best for you and we will match you up with a count team suited to you.*

**Our compilation dinner:** TBA

Florence Douglas Senior Citizen Center;  
333 Amador St. Vallejo, CA 94590

**Contact:** Tom Slyker: [solanobirder@gmail.com](mailto:solanobirder@gmail.com) or 707-771-1918; Robin Leong: 970-234-5727 or [Robin\\_Leong@sonic.net](mailto:Robin_Leong@sonic.net)



**The 52nd Angwin CBC  
Wednesday, January 1, 2024**

**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 & distribution of birds in the wildfire burn zone that impacted about forty percent of the count circle in 2020.

**Our compilation dinner:**

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:  
[vireocity@hotmail.com](mailto:vireocity@hotmail.com)



# Conservation Advocacy

## A Call to Action — How To Help Conserve Land for Wildlife

By Yvonne Baginski

Every day it seems, bulldozers are ripping out vegetation, grading soil, discing fields, cutting down trees and preparing land for cement blankets, smothering out the possibility of any future wildlife.

Thousands of acres have already disappeared, and hundreds of acres are in line as developers continue to propel progress to ensure that virtually every square inch of private land in south Napa County, and the City of American Canyon is built out with warehouses, business parks or residential subdivisions.

**Wildlife do not have a voice in these decisions!** Most of the Environmental Impact Reports, known as EIR's, required by law for this new construction, contain wildlife biologists reports stating that most of the development will have "no significant impact" on wildlife, or, if there is any impact, the developer elects to mitigate the situation, by purchasing land elsewhere! The local wildlife will no longer have habitat to live in our area. **As the land disappears, so do the plants, the invertebrates, the insects and the birds.** Often, there is no room for these species to relocate, as adjoining properties are also in line for future development. It seems that no one oversees the combined impact of all projects to measure the cumulative effect of the developments on the loss of habitat and species.

While the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) staff write letters in support of conservation, and ask for specific mitigation measures to be enforced, these letters are often barely considered in the larger scheme of things. CDFW understands the toll the developments have made on the biological resources, but don't always have the staff and resources to count the loss or collect baseline data on pre or post development. Without a doubt, there's already been a significant loss of habitat in our county. Wildlife is being pushed out, or extricated, because there's nowhere left to go.

**But there are things we can change!** As a member of NSAS, you have access to hundreds of like-minded people who can work together to organize information, collect data, verify sightings and show up at Planning Commission and City Council meetings to testify on the behalf of the birds and wildlife that have no voice. Twice a month, these meetings

*Continued on Page 8*

# Rodeo Lagoon

## Field Trip Report 09.16.24

By Mark Stephenson

Nearly 20 intrepid NSAS birders visited Rodeo Lagoon with William Legge as our guide, on a foggy September day.

We crossed the foot bridge that leads to the beach and immediately began observing wonderful birds.

Black Phoebes and Western Bluebirds sat on the railings of the bridge. American Goldfinch ate seeds from the numerous Poison Hemlock branches. Red-necked Phalaropes spun in circles feeding along the shores of the Lagoon and a rare pair of Common Terns were spotted flying in the distance. Surf Scoters, you guessed it, played in the pounding surf.

Further out to sea, William helped us spot Parasitic Jaegers chasing Elegant Terns hoping they would cough up their food for an easy meal. A few came close enough for nice spotting scope views. We hiked along the edge of the pond catching glimpses of the pair of Common Terns diving and feeding for small fish in the shallow waters. On occasion they came close enough for nice photos. The group learned to ID them by their small size, tiny bills, and by their dark carpal bars on the leading edge of their wings. Before long, they were joined by a frenzied flock of feeding Brown Pelicans.

William has birded the lagoon virtually every week for two decades and took us to little known locations in search of birds. A willow patch behind storage buildings revealed a pair of Western Kingbirds perched on a telephone wire, accompanied by, the surprise of the day, an Eastern Kingbird! They performed admirably for our group chasing each other and diving for insects in mid-air.

We visited the *Headlands Center for the Arts* for coffee served with cookies, then continued on working our way around the lagoon. Many fall migrants and overwintering residents were spotted including House Wrens, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Hutton's Vireo, but the only warbler by this point, was a resident Common Yellowthroat. As president, I announced we could not leave until we spotted at least one migrating warbler, and sure enough out popped several Yellow Warblers and a Townsend's Warbler flew over our group and landed in a nearby willow.

All in all we experienced a wonderful day as the sun came out to warm us all. Our group observed 68 species at the Lagoon. A small group continued on after lunch and drove up to Hawk Hill, and after a short climb viewed migrating Vaux's Swifts and several accipiters that joined a number of Red-tailed Hawks. ▲

**We Need You!  
Help Save Birds  
& their Habitats.**



Native species in California have declined by 20%, and over 600 species are at risk of extinction. California has lost more than 1 million acres of natural area in the last 20 years, 90% of our coastal & inland wetlands, 99% of our riparian areas, and most of our native grasslands.\*

\*<https://www.nrdc.org/>

# Fall Migration Highlights

*Continued from Page 1*

This Fall, San Francisco has been the fortunate recipient of many rare migrants that have rested in Golden Gate and several other parks that dot the City after successfully flying across the S.F. Bay's open waters. They have had a number of Redstarts, Chestnut-sided, Blackburnian, and even Bay Breasted and Black-throated Blue Warblers. On July 29th, Pine Lake hosted a Mexican, Slate-throated Redstart found by Dominik Mosur that remained for more than a month in willow patches near the lake. Although these warblers have been seen on a few occasions in Arizona and New Mexico, this was California's first state record!

A Grace's Warbler is still lingering at Fort Miley along the edge of the Lincoln Park Golf Course near 40th Ave & Clement. We've only had about a dozen Northern California records of this Mexican species that has been moving North and now breed regularly in Utah, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado. My first view of this bird in California was a male that spent the summer singing persistently, trying to locate a female, near Mono Lake in 2018.

Marin and Sonoma including Point Reyes have been unusually quiet, with a smattering on American Redstarts, Chestnut-sided, a couple of Blackburnian and Blackpoll Warblers. One of the highlights was a rare eastern, Alder Flycatcher spotted for just a few hours on September 10th by 3 exceptional, young birders: Logan Kahle, Ethan Monk and Dessi Seiburth. Three days later on September 13th, I joined Eli Gross and Jim White and found a Least Flycatcher at Fish Docks. Least Flycatchers are Eastern migrants that will usually turn up annually somewhere in the Bay Area, but are still not a common bird. All Empid flycatchers are challenging to ID unless you can hear them giving their diagnostic call notes. Least Flycatchers can be identified with care by their nearly perfect, thin, white eye-ring, dark contrasting wing-bars, white-edged wing coverts, small bi-colored bill, and relatively short primary projection. Hammond's Flycatchers, that look very similar, have a much longer primary projection. To clinch this ID, our bird was calling with it's distinguish-

ing, sharp and persistent "whit" call note. It even obliged us by providing a couple of che-BEK territorial songs.

In late September a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was found near a farm reservoir in Petaluma along South Ely Road. This bird accommodated many folks by staying for almost 2 weeks offering many birders wonderful views. This is the 2nd record in the last 2 years as another 1st year bird visited Bodega Head last year. However, this bird, commonly found in Texas and Oklahoma is extremely rare in the Bay Area. Most of the other Bay Area records were 20 or more years ago.

One should not miss out on climbing up to Hawk Hill, high above the Golden Gate Bridge to view our Fall's Hawk Migration. Not only are there spectacular views of San Francisco and the Bay, but many species of hawks begin streaming over on there migration South as early as August. Red-tails, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, and Harriers predominate with peak migration somewhere near the middle of September. Our NSAS field trip to Rodeo Lagoon stopped by for a few minutes and we were able to spot a few accipiters, but later in the month I revisited for wonderful views of a small kettle of adult and juvenile Broad-winged Hawks, the smallest Buteo and truly one of our Fall Migration highlights! Unlike other soaring Buteo hawks that show 5 long, protruding primaries, Broad-winged Hawks are atypical in showing only 4 of these protruding "fingers".

Shorebirds began arriving in July and have continued coming through in regular numbers. Huichica, American Canyon Wetlands, and Cullinan Ranch, located along Highway 37 between Vallejo and Skagg's Island, have had large numbers of peeps; Least and Western Sandpipers, Dunlin, as well as Marbled Godwits, American Avocets, and Semipalmated and Black-bellied Plovers.

One of the inland shorebird highlights was a Wood Sandpiper that arrived on September 9th at the Davis-Woodland Water Treatment Plant and moved to a small storage pond near Farmer's Central Road. This species is a small Tringa

*Continued on Page 8*



SLATE-THROATED REDSTART / MARK STEPHENSON



SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER / MARK STEPHENSON



LEAST FLYCATCHER / MARK STEPHENSON



# Mangini Ranch

## Field Trip Report 10.27.24

by Mark Stephenson



On Sunday, October 27th our Monthly Field Trip visited Mangini Ranch, a small 210 acre open space preserve on the slopes of Mount Diablo, led by Mt. Diablo Bird Alliance President, Jerry Britten.

The preserve is only open for education groups so we had this area all to ourselves. An open grassland dotted with Interior Live, Valley and Blue Oaks, this was indeed a picturesque trip. It was nice to have Jake Ruygt, one of our members who is a rare plant specialist, as part of our group. Jake pointed out all of the unique trees, shrubs and wildflowers along the way, and Jerry helped us to locate many species of the resident and over-wintering birds.

The trail was a gentle climb winding its way through the grassy slopes. American Kestrels were perching high in the trees acting as sentinels, keeping watch over the fields for small rodents or even large insects like grasshoppers and beetles. Black Phoebes were calling near any wet seeps and Say's Phoebe's and Western Bluebirds joined them from the grasslands chasing dragonflies and other insects.

We walked up along the edge of a small ravine, covered in denser stands of Oaks and shrubs, created by water erosion during the rainy season, and at this time of year, with just a few trickles of water remaining idly at the bottom. The Oaks were loaded with a number of woodpeckers including Acorn, Nuttall's, Hairy, and Red-shafted Flickers. They were joined by White-breasted Nuthatches, Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Hutton's Vireos calling from the canyon's denser stands of Oaks. High above us the Chaparral scrubland that dominates Mt. Diablo's upper slopes held hidden Rufous-crowned Sparrows and California Thrashers which we were unable to locate this time.

One of the highlights, was observing a Purple Finch and an unexpected small flock of five Phainopeplas perched in a dense stand of Hollyleaf Redberry shrubs, a member of the Buckthorn Family, that were loaded down with berries at this time of year. ▲

# The Importance of Eco-Friendly Gardening

## Part 2: Water-wise Gardening

By Pam Condos



In Part 1 of our series *The Importance of Eco-Friendly Gardens*, we addressed the need for replacing or reducing lawns. Part 2 highlights the importance of utilizing Water-wise Gardening. This type of gardening emphasizes using native, and low-water-use plants.

There are several important basic principles of Water-Wise gardening. First, be sure to use native and low-water-use plants. Plants naturally adapted to our climate provide great beauty and support the presence of our pollinators. Prior to planting, make sure soil is healthy and amended with organic matter such as compost. A layer of mulch over the soil around plants reduces evaporation and inhibits growth of water-stealing weeds.

Next, group plants in zones according to water needs. Native annuals and perennials will require different watering schedules than shrubs, trees, lawns, or potted plants. The use of efficient irrigation systems and scheduling times will address the different needs of each landscaping zone. Infrequent, deep watering is generally the best strategy and early morning is the best time to avoid evaporation loss.

With water conservation in mind, there is a great need for Water-Wise landscaping in Napa and Solano counties. **For more information on resources for each county use the links: For Napa:** <https://tinyurl.com/CityNapa>; **For Solano County:** <https://tinyurl.com/CtySolano/> Their site even recommends different plant species to help you conserve water.

Another site for locating drought tolerant Native Plants has been designed by the **National Wildlife Federation:** <https://tinyurl.com/3sj3f5y6> Here is a few of the drought tolerant native plants they recommend: *Liatrix spicata* (Blazing Star), *Penstemon* spp. (Beardtongue), *Coreopsis* spp. (Tickseed), *Echinacea purpurea* (Purple Coneflower), *Asclepias tuberosa* (Butterfly Weed), *Salvia* spp. (Sage), *Rudbeckia hirta* (Black-Eyed Susan), *Agastache* spp. (Hyssop), and *Lobelia cardinalis*, (Cardinal Flower). ▲

# Conservation Advocacy

Continued from Page 5

offer the opportunity for residents to approach the microphone and give comments. Although they are limited to just three-minute increments, this is an opportunity to tell our elected officials what we know, the data we have, and lobby for compromises to promote conservation!

If you're seeing endangered Swainson Hawks in South County, or know of nests, bring proof to the planning commission/city council. Right now, almost all of the EIR's claim that there are no Swainson Hawk's in the area. If that isn't true, we need to tell them. If you see other endangered/

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**“As land disappears, so do plants, invertebrates, insects and birds.”**

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threatened species in these lands cited for development; monitor, verify and bring that information to the meetings. For example, one wildlife biologist hired by the developer claimed that the “only” birds seen along Sheehy Creek in south county were scrub jays and crows. Therefore, the building of the warehouse commenced without any mitigations. However, in April, 2020, ebird.org has a verified photo of a Swainson Hawk sitting on the grass in the corner of the property at Gateway East and Technology Way. This year, our President observed 4 Swainson's Hawks flying above the

remaining fields along Sheehy Creek. This was even after the building was completed!

**If you're interested in knowing more about how you can speak up on behalf of birds and wildlife**, you can go directly onto the city or county's website and look up the status of various projects throughout Napa County. Each EIR comes with a 30-day public review period. You can send in your comments during this time, and you are also able to attend the public hearing of the Final EIR.

Right now, our radar is on the next piece of land slated for business parks/ warehouses which is the Hess-owned 280-acre parcel alongside Hwy 29 from S. Kelley Rd. to Green Island Rd. The Napa County Planning Commission recently approved the rezoning of this land from Agricultural to Industrial Use. The next step in the process is for their recommendation to go before the Napa County Board of Supervisors. This land, while still under county jurisdiction, is also on the “special study” of the City of American Canyon, who is considering annexation it in the near future.

At every step, NSAS members can write letters, send emails and step forward at the meetings to voice opinions and advocate for wildlife and conservation. NSAS has also formed a Conservation Committee which will start meeting monthly this coming December.

**To become more involved, please contact Yvonne Baginski at [yvonnebaginski@gmail.com](mailto:yvonnebaginski@gmail.com) ▲**

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## Finding a Bird is Not Easy

by Carol Boykin

Helping a friend find a bird in a tree or bush can be very challenging. Even explaining where the bird is to an experienced birder can be difficult as well. Getting a new birder to find it, well, you have to have a sense of humor. It helps when the bird moves.

Flapping wings, tail pumping, any movement at all help to locate a hidden bird. But often times birds just sit still, without twitching a muscle. One can say, see the tree with green leaves??? But there are five trees that look like that. How about the branches that curve to the left??? Once again multiple trees look like that. Look at the bare tree, ... which one?, ... close, how close?, define close! Once you have their eyes focused on a certain object, often known as the mutual starting point, it is much easier to give clear, step-by-step directions that go from there! Finally, there comes the ahh haa moment when they find the bird whether in a tree, bush or muddy reeds. In the end, helping someone find a bird, is so worth all the repetitive struggle! Now let's go out and find another!

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## The Hummingbird & the Fire

*You can find variations of this story all over the internet. It was made popular by Kenyan Wangari Maathai, winner of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize.*



BECKY MATSUBARA

One day, a terrible fire broke out in the forest. The animals watched as the forest burned, feeling overwhelmed and powerless to act.

Then, a little hummingbird flies to the nearest stream and quickly takes a few drops of water and brings it back to the fire. It repeats this, as fast as it can, over and over, while the other animals watched in disbelief, trying to discourage the little bird, saying it was too small to make a difference.

They shouted, "What do you think you're doing? You're too small and the fire is too big. There is no hope."

Yet, the hummingbird turns to them and says, "I'm doing what I can."

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This story is so pertinent when we're facing gigantic odds, and even more touching because our Allen's Hummingbird is endangered due to the climate crisis. Let's all remember the little hummingbird, and do what we can ! ▲



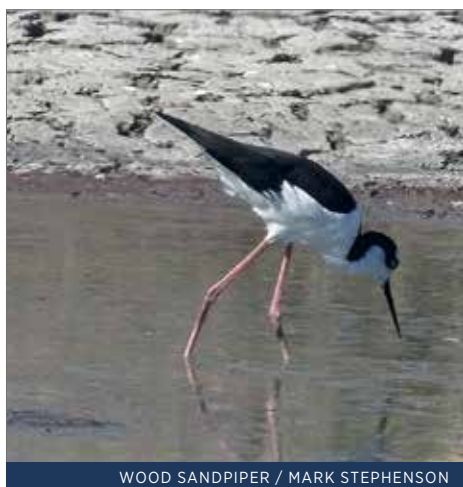
# Fall Migration Highlights

Continued from Page 6

sandpiper, closely related to Yellowlegs and Solitary Sandpipers, that breeds in Northern Europe and Asia and winters in Africa, India and S.E. Asia. It is smaller than a Lesser Yellowlegs and almost identical in size and looks to the Solitary Sandpiper, but can be distinguished by its longer dull yellow legs, a strong white supercilium, and larger and more prominent white spots that are dotted extensively on its wings and back. In flight, their prominent white rump and tail is a clinching field mark. Solitary Sandpipers are more common in the Eastern U.S. but are seen annually during migration in the Bay Area. Their back and wings are finely spotted with not nearly as prominent spots as the Wood Sandpiper, although individuals vary on the amount and size of spots found on their back and wings. Unlike the Wood Sandpiper, they have greenish-yellow legs, less streaking, a whiter throat, and in flight they have a noticeable dark rump with a thick, central dark medial line on the tail.

Plover also became nervous, scared by the larger plover, and flew south out of sight. As luck would have it, a young birder spotted a flock of 8 more Mountain Plovers the following day and many other birders were able to observe these wonderful birds! The Mountain Plovers spotted occasionally migrating along the coast are typically juveniles. A few years back Lucas and I hiked down Mendocino's 10 mile beach with Adrian Hinkle and found our first coastal Mountain Plover. We believe that adolescent plovers will often lose their way, flying further west and migrate down the coast, while most adults seem to choose the inland route. Mountain Plovers breed in the grasslands and prairies of Colorado, Wyoming and Montana. Many winter in Mexico, but we are extremely fortunate to have small flocks that winter in the Solano County grasslands southeast of Vacaville and Fairfield near Robinson and Flannery Roads.

In past years, the flock has been 100 or more birds, but



WOOD SANDPIPER / MARK STEPHENSON



MOUNTAIN PLOVER / MARK STEPHENSON



GRACE'S WARBLER / MARK STEPHENSON

On October 10th we heard that a Mountain Plover had been spotted at Abbott's Lagoon. This would be the first Marin record in more than 11 years. Lucas drove down from Humboldt and we arose the next morning at 4:30 a.m. to drive out to Abbott's. As might be expected, we were the first birders to arrive and after hiking down to the beach Lucas quickly located the Mountain Plover standing on the elevated dune between the lagoon and the beach. Before anyone else arrived, it flew South but we were able to track where it landed in a flock of Snowy Plovers. We kept our distance knowing that other birders were on their way and when we had a group of 8 others slowly made our way to the flock of roosting plovers.

Often unusually tame, the Mountain Plover gave everyone wonderful views until an agitated Black-bellied Plover flew into the flock calling loudly, raising a ruckus, as if being hunted by a Peregrine Falcon, and streaked away flying South. Unfortunately, moments later, the Mountain

in recent years their numbers appear to be dwindling to around 50 individuals. This area is the location for the proposed Mega-City development that would eradicate their wintering territory.▲



BROAD-WINGED HAWK / MARK STEPHENSON

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

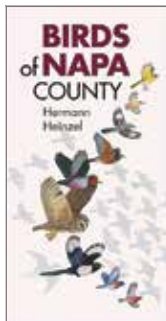


## Holiday Gift-Giving Ideas from NSAS

<https://napasolanobirds.org/forsale>

### **Birds of Napa County** Illustrated by Hermann Heinzel

A fits-in-your-back-pocket reference with over three hundred species of birds depicted realistically in their natural environment—poking at the ground or pecking at pinecones—organized by species as well as by season and region, *Birds of Napa County* has everything for the experienced or novice birder, including a locator map, a checklist, and a section on rare birds.



### **Breeding Birds of Solano County**

Co-written, and edited by noted conservationist and bird expert **Mike Rippey**; with engaging detailed species accounts authored by well known North Bay ornithologist **Murray Berner**.



This beautiful, coffee table book features full page colored photos, and the latest taxonomy and conservation status updates. **You can see sample pages of the book on our web site:**  
<https://tinyurl.com/y5swb2bh>

### **Breeding Birds of Napa County**

Factbased, comprehensive, and beautifully illustrated. A fascinating profile is written for each species, with information on breeding records, habitat needs, nesting tendencies, and future prospects. A map shows the areas where nesting birds were found.

### **Solano County Breeding Bird Atlas**

NOT a guide intended for bird identification, rather, it describes current & historical distribution, habitat, conservation and population trends and includes an introduction to the biogeography of Solano County, as well as individual maps for every breeding species.

### **NSAS Membership**

To give an experience rather than something material, purchase or renew a Napa-Solano Audubon membership. Consider a Gift Membership for a family member or friend.

### **NSAS American Kestrel T-Shirts**

Available for men & women, from Small to XL. Go to our website or contact Pam Condos to order:  
[pamelacondos58@gmail.com](mailto:pamelacondos58@gmail.com)

