



# SONG SPARROW

Spring 2025 · Digital · Vol. 55D · No. 1  
napasolanobirds.org

## SPRING 2025 CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

- Mar. 13 Thu. Speaker Series:  
Charlie Toledo
- Mar. 24 Mon. 2-Day Monthly Field Trip:  
Pinacles National Park  
Mar 24 & 25 / Mon-Tue
- Apr. 05 Sat. Monthly Field Trip:  
Lake Berryessa's East Side
- Apr. 10 Thu. Speaker Series:  
Exploring Florida Birds
- Apr. 12 Sat. Earth Day:  
Napa Creek Cleanup &  
Napa Earth Day
- May 08 Thu. Speaker Series:  
Land Trust of Napa  
County
- May 08 Thu. NSAS Annual Election:
- May 10 Sat. eBird Global Big Day
- Jun. 04 Thu. 4-Day Monthly Field Trip:  
Yuba Pass & Sierra Valley  
Jun 4-8 / Thu-Sun
- Ongoing Weekly Bird Walks
- Ongoing Beginner Bird Walks



## Spring Bird Walks & Activities

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

napasolanobirds.org

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

SEE YOU ON THE TRAILS!



PURPLE GALLINULE / MARK STEPHENSON

## Birding Southern Florida

By Mark Stephenson

I haven't been birding in Florida since I was a teenager back in the '60s with my brother Tom, wading through swamps in search of Limpkins, Flamingos, and Wood Storks while visiting our grandparents in Brooksville.

We used to drive down from Ithaca, NY in our Rambler station wagon to visit them every couple of years on a family Christmas or Spring vacation. On occasion we got the chance to visit the Everglades, Pine Island or the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge out on Sanibel Island. Those were the good old days with plenty of Spoonbills and Limpkins to go around. I returned for a visit to Florida for 2 weeks in early April 2024 with my wife and son Lucas on the Atlantic side in the vicinity of Fort Lauderdale, and again over New Years 2025 with our family for my brother Tom's 75th birthday celebration on the Gulf side in the vicinity of Fort Myers. We were impressed by the new birding locations and the abundance of birds on both trips.

**Great Birding Locations!** I'm always in a quandary when I write about birding in a new state whether to focus on the locations or the special birds that reside there, so I will try to walk the fine line between the two in this article. In my recent visits, *I was inspired by the birding sanctuaries that Florida has established since my younger years.* In the Fort Lauderdale area, we visited: Green Cay Wetlands, Peaceful Waters Sanctuary, Wakodahatchee Wetlands, Loxahatchee NWR, and many exceptional locations on Key Biscayne, particularly with repeated vis-

*Continued on Page 6*

# President's Corner

By Mark Stephenson, NSAS President



This May, I will be approaching the end of my 5th year as your President and have enjoyed every minute of it; making new friends, going on field trips, engaging in Citizen Science Projects, teaching birding classes to youth in our schools, presenting programs to our membership, designing & keeping up our website!

However, I've recently become a proud grandparent of our new granddaughter, Reese, born to my daughter Claire and her husband Michael, in January. In addition, we are anticipating a new grandson in May, who will be born to my son Graham and his wife Dani. All of a sudden, my older children have decided to become parents and I want to spend as much time with them all as possible! **So, I'd like to either relinquish my title as President as soon as a replacement will step forward, or reduce my responsibilities by sharing them with a partner.** We probed around last year which I thought was going to be my last, but didn't find any takers. Now I am more serious and would love for one of our Members to come forward and help out with Presidential duties for next year, or even take over the helm this August. **You wouldn't be alone!** I will be available to help and support my replacement or partner and continue on the Board. So, please consider joining our wonderful Board and taking more responsibility in our Napa-Solano Audubon organization by stepping forward before May's elections.

In other News, Napa Solano Audubon has a terrific team of wonderful volunteers! We have had a successful year teaching in Napa & Solano Classrooms, providing field trips in our counties and around the state, having many inspirational speakers at our monthly meetings, and tabling at a number of community events. Tom Slyker who has contributed countless hours for our many Citizen Science activities with Bluebird Boxes, Bird Seasons, and our Benicia CBC. As Tom pointed out, Robin Leong has Coordinated the Benicia CBC for nearly 40 years, and Murray Berner is not far behind having Coordinated the Angwin CBC for nearly 20! Kudos to Tammy Saunders our Education Coordinator for all of her work in our schools and to Andrew Ford and Karina Garcia, as well as several of our Board members for leading our Weekly and Beginner's Field Trips.

Many thanks also to the volunteers who worked at our table for Mare Island's Winged Migration Festival. Despite heavy downpours, there were throngs of participants and motivational presentations and it was a very successful festival! We just returned from a great time on the Sacramento Wildlife Refuges Field trip, are looking forward to our March Field Trip returning to Pinnacles NP, our April Trip to Lake Berryessa, and our early June trip to the Sierra Valley. I greatly appreciate Wendy Cole, Bruce Thomsen and Carol Boykin's support in coordinating all of these wonderful trips! ▲

## NSAS Spring 2025 College Scholarship Awards Program

This Spring, NSAS will continue providing a one year, \$2,000 Scholarship for two High School Seniors from Napa & Solano Counties who will be enrolled in the Fall of 2025 at a Community or 4-year College pursuing a course of study in ornithology, wildlife, conservation, environmental studies or related fields. If you know of any seniors living in either Napa or Solano counties who are continuing their education in one of these fields of study please let them know they can apply for one of our scholarships. To be considered, **applications must be submitted by April 30, 2024.** Eligibility requirements and more information on how to apply and are posted on our homepage, that can be found at [napasolanobirds.org](http://napasolanobirds.org)

## Board of Directors

<b>President</b> Mark Stephenson (707) 246-2795	<b>Membership</b> Judy Kahle (707) 372-6490
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<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.**



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# 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.

### CHARLIE TOLEDO: OUR NATIVE AMERICAN'S REVERENT RELATIONSHIP WITH BIRDS

**When:** Thurs., Mar. 13; 7:00 p.m.

**Speaker:** Charlie Toledo

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



Birds played a significant role in Native American Cultures. Birds were used by every Native American tribe for food, medicine, art and

ceremony. Ms. Charlie Toledo will share her knowledge of birds and the role they played in CA Native American cultures. She will explore the reverent relationship that CA Native American tribes had with these incredible feathered friends.

**About the Speaker:** Charlie Toledo is of Towa descent, native to New Mexico. She is the Executive Director of the Suscol Intertribal Council, a community-based organization, since 1992 located in Napa, California. She has extensive experience as public speaker, presenter, and community organizer in regional, statewide, national and international forums. Since 1982 she has worked in alternative healthcare fields, as well as background in mediation for individuals, families, and organizations. She has been an organic gardener since 1978. She has lifelong commitment to social justice and international work on human rights & environmental social justice issues.

### Bluebird Nest Boxes!

If you'd like a reason to get some exercise & help with the recovery of our declining bird populations, we'd love to have you join us for this year's nest box monitoring efforts. To learn more, please contact Tom Slyker: [solanobirder@gmail.com](mailto:solanobirder@gmail.com) or 707-771-1918.

## EXPLORING FLORIDA BIRDS

**When:** Thurs., Apr. 10; 7:00 p.m.

**Speaker:** Mark Stephenson

**Location:** Benicia Public Library & Zoom

In April 2024, Mark returned to bird the Atlantic side of Florida from Orlando to the tip of the Keys. In 2025, over New Years, he traveled to the Gulf side in the vicinity of Fort Myers and visited a number of new and exciting birding locations, photographing some of Florida's most amazing birds! His presentation will take a look at some of the best birding locations that Florida has to offer as well as close-up looks at their many Herons, Shorebirds, Raptors, Woodpeckers, Warblers and other impressive Passerines.

**About the Speaker:** Mark has been the President of Napa-Solano Audubon for the past 5 years. He began birding in the 4th grade and his birding knowledge expanded dramatically as he birded regularly with Dr. Arthur Allen, founder of Cornell's Laboratory of Ornithology. After a career of more than 30 years in public education in Benicia and Napa Schools, he is enjoying retirement and Northern California birding.

## LAND TRUST OF NAPA COUNTY

**When:** Thurs., May 08; 7:00 p.m.

**Speaker:** Mike Palladini

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



In addition to an overview of the Land Trust and our preserve system, Mike will present on a broad cross section of LTNC land stewardship projects and activities relating to habitat restoration, wildfire and climate resilience, rare, threatened, and endangered species conservation, and recovery, watershed restoration, biological resources assessment and monitoring, along with the Land Trust's field trips, public access, education and outreach programs.

**About the Speaker:** Mike Palladini is the Stewardship Director at the Napa Land Trust, where he oversees the stewardship of over 20,000 acres across 23 protected natural areas. His responsibilities include managing habitat and watershed restoration, conducting biological resource assessments and monitoring, advancing conservation science research, and enhancing wildfire and climate change resilience. Mike also plays a key role in ensuring public access to the Land Trust's preserves. His extensive experience and commitment to environmental stewardship are vital to the Land Trust's mission of preserving Napa's natural landscapes.

## 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.

## PINNACLES NATIONAL PARK

### 2-Day Overnight Trip

**When:** Mon-Tue; March 24 & 25

**Leader:** Rusty Scalf & Bruce Thomsen

**Home to our California Condor, this 2-day field trip to the Pinnacles will be sure to delight.** We'll be in search for California Condors and spring migrants, and visit several areas in the park looking for oak woodland species: Red-shouldered, Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Oak Titmouse, California Quail, Acorn Woodpeckers, and Northern Flickers. In the canyon areas we might see California Thrasher, Canyon Wren, Greater Roadrunner, Lark, Sage and Rufous-crowned Sparrows, Spotted Towhee and a variety of early migrants. We can observe California Condors flying high along with Golden Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, and possibly, several falcons.

# Calendar of Events cont.

## LAKE BERRYESSA'S EAST SIDE

**When:** Sat., Apr. 5; 8:30 a.m. – 3:30pm

**Leader:** Larry Kent & Robin Leong

This is your chance to bird the east side of Lake Berryessa with the experts at a beautiful time of year. Highlights may include Lewis Woodpecker, Ospreys and Bald Eagles on their nests, White tailed Kite, and Yellow-billed Magpie. **We will meet at Eticuera Creek Day Use Area, at 8:30 am.**

**Carpool from Napa:** meet at the River Park Shopping Center at 7:15 a.m.

**Driving directions from the River Park shopping center:** take HWY 121 to HWY 128, turn left to Berryessa Knox-ville Road and continue to Eticuera Creek Day use Area at north end of the lake.

**What to bring:** Binoculars, spotting scope, water, lunch, sturdy shoes, layered clothing. Registration forms will be emailed Saturday March 8, 9:00 am. Be sure to sign up early to save a spot. This trip will be limited to 15 NSAS members. If any questions or you need to cancel, contact Wendy Cole at [cwendycole@gmail.com](mailto:cwendycole@gmail.com) or (707)363-3170.

## YUBA PASS & SIERRA VALLEY 4-Day Overnight Trip

**When:** Thu. – Sun., June 4–8

**Leader:** Mark Stephenson & Bruce Thomsen

**Limited to 15 NSAS members! Reserve your space before they are filled.**



OSPREY NEST / MARK STEPHENSON

We will take 4 days to explore this bountiful region visiting some of the best locations it has to offer. The Yuba Pass encompasses High Sierra habitats including boggy meadows, willow and alder thickets, aspens groves and coniferous forests. Within the mountain ecosystem we hope to observe Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin, Pine and Evening

Grosbeaks, Clark's Nutcracker, Sooty Grouse, Mountain Quail, Red-breasted and Williamson's Sapsuckers, Black-backed Woodpeckers, Townsend's Solitaire and Hermit Thrushes, Hammond's and Dusky Flycatchers, Mountain Chickadee, Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches, Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets, as well as a variety of warblers and sparrows. Over the summit, the Sierra Valley consists of vast areas of sagebrush and grassland along with extensive wet meadows and marshland with the heart of the valley being fed by perennial springs and tributaries of the Feather River. This rich ecosystem is home to Sage Thrasher, Horned Lark, Savannah and Vesper Sparrows, along with Swainson's and Red-tailed Hawks, Peregrine and Prairie Falcons, Golden and Bald Eagles that frequently soar overhead. The marshlands are home to a number of waterfowl, Sandhill Cranes, Black-crowned Night-Heron, American Bittern, Sora and Virginia Rails, American Avocet, Willet, Wilson's Snipe, Marsh Wren, Yellow-headed Blackbirds as well as Cliff and Barn Swallows. Stay tuned for our Field Trip eBlasts for registration information and trip details.

## WEEKLY BIRD WALKS

**Open to everyone!** Andrew Ford is the Leader/Organizer for all Weekly Walks. **He will send out an email invite via an eBlast each week with locations and details so be sure to sign up for the eBlasts.**

## BEGINNER BIRD WALKS

**Open to everyone.** These NSAS sponsored walks are usually held at the American Canyon Wetlands or Benicia Community Parks twice a month from June through September. 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 for Beginner Bird Walks,** just show up and enjoy being outdoors for a little while. We plan on holding Beginner's Bird Walks throughout the Winter and Spring. *Open to birders of all levels and ages.* **Free, fun, and loaner binoculars are on hand if you need them.**

## EVENTS

### EARTH DAY ACTIVITIES

**Saturday:** April 12

**Napa Creek Clean-up:** 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Here is a wonderful opportunity to make our world cleaner for birds and ourselves. Betty Labastida chairs this event through Napa RCD (Napa Resource Conservation District). She will greet you with buckets, gloves and pickup devices although if you have your own, please bring them. Wear your grubby clothes because depending on your physical ability you can walk down to clean up the edges of the creek. Or, just normal dress and walk the sidewalks. When you bring the garbage back to Betty, she will sort out all the recyclables!

**Napa Earth Day:** 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Come by the Oxbow Commons Park behind the Oxbow Market and visit the tabling activities and vendors contributing to Earth Day. Stop by the Napa Solano Audubon's table and learn all about our many programs. Food and activities for all ages.

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

**Saturday:** May, 10

Be part of birding's biggest team during this annual celebration of birds near you.

Sign-up for an eBird account, download the free app, or enter sightings later on your home computer, and go out birding to see how many birds you can find. Join us virtually to celebrate this Big Day of Global Migration, and share the birds you find with eBird. No need to be a bird expert or go out all day, even 10 minutes of birding from home counts. Global Big Day runs from midnight to midnight in your local time zone, all over the world.



# Conservation Advocacy

By Yvonne Baginski

As Napa County struggles with the realities of having no conservation plan, south County developers continue making progress promising new warehouses and business parks alongside Hwy 29 (203 acres) in American Canyon, another wine production facility (20 acres) along the wildlife corridor of Sheehy Creek and more hopes of future rezoning of agricultural land with 187 acres currently under the agricultural designation as Green Island Vineyards. Soon there will be a groundbreaking for the 2.3 million square foot winery warehouse project in the City of American Canyon, alongside Devlin Rd. Named the Giovannoni Project, this will be the county's largest warehouse. It will remove another 200 acres of wildlife land, smothering it with cement.

Solano County, too, has land issues, as the long-in-the-making Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), is languishing in the final approval offices of the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife Services. This plan, still not approved after 25 years of effort, promises funding for possible acquisition, conservation and restoration. The plan is voluntary for developers and only triggered when a development threatens a targeted species. Currently, that includes about 35 species, including birds, animals and native plants.

Today's news from Solano includes the reality of 160 acres of prime raptor foraging and wildlife habitat in the hills off Hwy 37 and Highway I-80 in Vallejo losing out to a gaming casino. Also, Suisun City is looking to expand and annex what is now zoned agricultural land (and owned by California Forever investors) to "increase the city's populations and strategically expand its boundaries." The pro-development Vacaville City Council also continues to approve many residential and industrial buildings. New commercial development signs on the I-80 corridor through Dixon promise even more warehouses and business parks.

When the development march goes on, Habitat shrinks! The birds, animals and native plants get squeezed out. Where are the calls for a balance? Can we have both? Can we make compromises between development and conservation?

**Conservation vs. economic development is a local, and very political, issue. NSAS Conservation Committee meets every month at the Cordelia Public Library to take action to preserve wildlife and raise awareness of local policymakers** on the importance of conservation balance on remaining land. **Please come join us.** This is a cause where you could have a great impact! Please contact me if you are able to contribute! [Yvonnebaginski@gmail.com](mailto:Yvonnebaginski@gmail.com) ▲

## You Can Help Save Birds & their Habitats.

Join us at the Cordelia Public Library each month. Contact us for details: [Yvonnebaginski@gmail.com](mailto:Yvonnebaginski@gmail.com)



# Sacramento Wildlife Refuges Field Trip Report

by Wendy Cole

The weekend of February 22 and 23 found Napa Solano Audubon members touring the Sacramento Wildlife Refuges, which are bountiful wintering grounds for ducks, geese, Tundra Swans and Sandhill Cranes.

We started at Colusa NWR at the viewing platform and had wonderful views of Greater White-fronted, Ross's and Snow Geese, Cinnamon, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shovelers, American and Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Pintails and Shovelers, Canvasbacks, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead and Ruddy Ducks. We also had fine views of two precocious Virginia Rails, Lincoln, Savannah and Song Sparrows along with the abundant Marsh Wrens. Next, we hiked along the Pond Trail where we saw a Yellow-billed Magpie flyover, and a number of land birds including Oak Titmouse, Black Phoebe, Downy, Nuttall's and Flicker Woodpeckers, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered hawks, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Lesser Goldfinch, Cal Towhees and Western Meadowlarks and numerous chipping Audubon's Warblers and Common Yellowthroats. Our only Bald Eagle of the trip was spotted perched high in a tree above the ponds from the trail!

The driving tour gave additional views of the waterfowl and time to observe Ring-necked Ducks, White-faced Ibis, Long-billed Curlew, Black-necked Stilts and Gr. Yellowlegs, Herring Gulls, Common Gallinules, Pied-billed and Eared Grebes, plus hundreds of Black-crowned Night Herons.

Next, we headed up to Sacramento NWR and continued to have magnificent views of ducks, geese, and two colorful "hunters"—a passing Merlin and a perched Loggerhead Shrike. The viewing platform gave us wonderful views of Wilson's Snipe, Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Ducks, White-faced Ibis, Belted Kingfishers and Tree Swallows.

On Sunday we headed to the Gray Lodge Preserve encountering extensive flooding along River Road. We passed a flooded section of woodlands filled with Scaup and Ring-necked Ducks and flooded fields with Long-billed Dowitchers and a distant Dunlin flock. Gray Lodge's wonderful trail hike led us along the ponds to duck blinds for close views of waterfowl. Along the way we were treated to a pair of Phainopepla in a mistletoe-filled Oak and three Orange-crowned Warblers flitting through the blackberries.

The trail offered nice views of a small group of waders, Long-billed Dowitchers and Avocets, which were accompanied by a single Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, and a small gathering of Sandhill Cranes. A Cooper's Hawk flew in and perched in a nearby tree and a Spotted Towhee was calling near our picnic tables. We continued our trip down Penington Road and circled the Buttes looking for Swans. No luck this year, but we added Horned Larks, a Say's Phoebe, and a White-tailed Kite, bringing our trip total to 101 species. *The Sacramento National Wildlife Refuges are truly an amazing place to bird in the winter!* ▲

# Birding Southern Florida

*Continued from Page 1*

its to Bill Baggs's and Oleta River State Parks, and Crandon Park's Botanical Gardens. We also ventured quite a ways further North to Merritt Island NWR and Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area, in the vicinity of Orlando, in search of rarities as well as further inland to Nubbin Slough and the Lakeside Ranch Storm Treatment Area on the shores of Lake Okeechobee. On a couple of occasions we ventured into the Everglades National Park on the Sawgrass Trail and nearby areas. Lucas and I also traveled South into the Keys from Fort Zachary at the tip of Key West, stopping at many of the Keys as we headed North including Big Pine, Summerland, Key Largo and Curry Hammond State Park. Our big miss was not having reservations to get out to the Dry Tortugas which we would highly recommend! On the Gulf Side we visited Six Mile Cypress Slough, Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, and the Corkscrew Watersheds and Bird Rookeries, as the Ding Darling Refuge was recovering from being ravaged by recent hurricanes. We would have had the opportunity to observe many more shorebirds if we had ventured out to the coast on Sanibel Island located in the gulf. There were more than enough sanctuaries, parks and hotspots to take up several weeks of great birding.

**If you are looking for waterbirds,** Florida is hard to beat. From the perennial Great and Snowy Egrets, to Great Blue and Green Herons, to the South Eastern specialties including Limpkins, Wood Storks, Spoonbills, White and Glossy Ibis, Sandhill Cranes, Tricolored and Little Blue Herons, both BC and YC Night-Herons, coastal Reddish Egrets, as well as countless Anhingas. Green Cay and Peaceful Waters had numerous herons and waterfowl, and Wakodahatchee Wetlands had the best Wood Stork Colony anywhere. The boardwalks take you within a few feet of their nests! Even Flamingos, which are extremely rare, with only a few native, endemic birds that aren't escapees from theme parks, have begun breeding in a couple of special locations. We found 4 feeding at Merritt Island NWR's Haulover Canal. In a harbor of a nearby Marina, we had the pleasure of observing a

family of Manatees bobbing up to the surface for air, chomping on mouthfuls of aquatic plants and seagrass. Another small flock of wild Flamingos can be found in the Everglades along the Snake Bite Trail. The shores of Lake Okeechobee are wonderful for observing herons including Glossy Ibis, Roseate Spoonbills, Great Blue, Green, Little Blue and Tricolored Herons, as well as Great, Snowy and Cattle Egrets. Walking around several of the treatment ponds we heard numerous Limpkins and both Least and American Bitterns, as well as Swamp Sparrows calling throughout our morning walk. These wetlands were also full of Common & Purple Gallinules, Gray-headed Swampheens (a subspecies of Purple Swampheens), and ducks including Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, Shovelers, Wood and Mottled Ducks, as well as a variety of shorebirds including Least Sandpipers, Black-necked Stilts, Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs. We located a continuing Neotropic Cormorant at Crandon Park's Botanical Gardens along with numerous DC Cormorants. Both Audubon's Corkscrew Sanctuary and Six-mile Cypress Slough had plentiful supplies of herons and egrets as well.

**And then there are the seabirds:** the beaches along the East Coast in the vicinity of Boca Raton, Fort Lauderdale and Miami have several Gull and Tern Species that Californians would be happy to observe. Overwintering Bonaparte's, Ring-billed, Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, are around into April and join the numerous Laughing Gulls which are year-round residents. They were easily observed on the East Coast's Boca Raton and Fort Lauderdale beaches and are just as common on the Gulf side. Royal and Sandwich Terns, which are especially common on the Gulf Side, and Caspian Terns that breed along both coasts, from Central Florida northward, are also year-round residents. They are joined by Least Terns that we observed regularly in Key West in early April for breeding season. Forster's were abundant during the winter months. Both species of Pelicans are quite common. We found Black Skimmers at

PHOTOS BY MARK STEPHENSON



WOOD STORK



ROSEATE SPOONBILL AND SNOWY EGRET



LIMPKIN



Lake Okeechobee's Water Treatment Ponds and they breed along both coasts. Sanibel Island is known for it's shorebirds including Snowy, Black-bellied, Semipalmated, Wilson's and Piping Plovers. They are a real treat along with a host of sandpipers, notably Solitary, Sanderling, Red Knot, Ruddy Turnstones, Lesser & Greater Yellowlegs, and both dowitchers at Sanibel Island's Ding Darling Refuge! Magnificent Frigate Birds breed in southern Florida and were regularly seen along both coasts and especially in the keys.

**Raptors are frequently found in many locations,** including Turkey and Black Vultures, Harriers, Red-tailed, Red Shouldered, Cooper's, and Sharp-shinned, Hawks along with Osprey and Bald Eagles. We discovered that Red-shouldered Hawks have strikingly lighter plumage in the East.

Visiting Storm Treatment areas on the Northeastern shores of Lake Okeechobee you can observe the endangered Snail Kites throughout the year. In April, walking around Lakeside Treatment ponds lined with cattails, I observed multiple Snail Kites diving into the marsh in search of food, as well as a number of Swallow-tailed Kites. We had numerous closer views, including observing them diving into Palm Tree nests at Nubbin Slough, just North of the Lakeside Treatment Area.

Another Florida resident raptor is the Crested Caracara. These seemed to pop up randomly, here and there, near marshy and grassland areas of the state. During migration and the breeding season you can also find Broad-winged Hawks moving through and breeding Short-tailed Hawks. We had great views of Short-tailed Hawks at the Oleta River SP, near Lake Okeechobee, and at Key West's Botanical Gardens.

As soon as I picked up Lucas at the Airport on March 30th, we rushed to the Oleta River State Park across the canal from Florida State University where a first US record of a Yellow-headed Caracara had been recently observed. (There is also an historic record in Humboldt's Ferndale bottoms in 2007 thought to be an escapee.) Sure enough, near dusk the Caracara flew into the park to scavenge food left behind by careless picnickers. It even "crashed" a wedding ceremony where we were able to take great photos of this magnificent bird behind the wedding party. (I think the guests in

the back row thought we were taking photos of the bride!) Sure enough, since then, another Yellow-headed Caracara popped up in the Houston Area on Galveston Island, TX, and in June another flew into the L.A. Area. This is so crazy, since this species is not known to migrate and resides typically in Central and South America and has been seen only once in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic! Of course, Lucas had me drive down to L.A. to see this bird as well! This lucky find is one reason to keep a watchful eye on eBirds hotspots and Rare Bird Alerts, especially when visiting a new location.

**Woodpeckers are common throughout the state,** including Hairy, Downy, Pileated, and Red-bellied. Searching along forest edges and in long leaf pine savannas and open woodlands, you can also find Red-headed and more rarely, the endangered Red Cockaded Woodpeckers. They can be found at Picayune Strand State Forest on the Gulf Side or the St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park or the J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area on the Atlantic side North of Palm Beach.

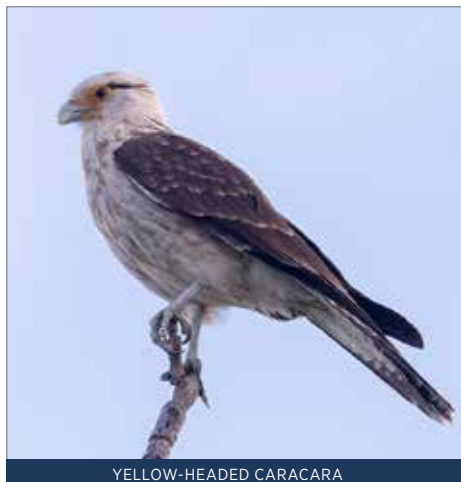
**Warblers:** A number of Warblers overwinter and are commonly found in many of Florida's parks which are sprinkled within riparian and open forest habitat bordering their wetlands. Overwintering Palm, Black & White, Prairie, Northern Parula, Pine, Myrtle, Redstart, Black-throated Green, Yellow-throated, Orange-crowned and Yellowthroat were all quite common. We found all of these species during both visits in many locations. If you visit Florida during migration almost any Eastern species is a possibility! We would nominate Key West's Botanical Gardens, Key Biscayne's Bill Baggs State Parks and Audubon's Corkscrew Sanctuary as well as Sanibel Island once it's had the chance to recover from this year's storms as some of the better locations for finding migrating warblers. Some of the species we observed in early April were: Northern & Louisiana Waterthrush, Ovenbird, Hooded, Cape May, Black-throated Green and Blue, Magnolia, Blue-winged, and even Prothonotary, Worm-eating and Swainson's. We even found 2 amazing early migrants in early January at Audubon's Corkscrew Sanctuary, a singing Kentucky Warbler and an early Louisiana Waterthrush.

*Continued on Page 8*

PHOTOS BY MARK STEPHENSON



SHORT-TAILED HAWK



YELLOW-HEADED CARACARA



NORTHERN PARULA

# Birding Southern Florida

Continued from Page 7

Probably the rarest Warbler I found was a Black-throated Gray Warbler feeding in the Oaks above my hotel's swimming pool in Fort Lauderdale. Many Florida birders were interested in seeing this rarity which is seldom found in the East and only appeared one day for me

**Other Passerines that are rarities out west include** White-winged and Common Ground Doves, as well as the rarer White-crowned Pigeon which we found at Bill Bagg's SP and were common in the Keys. There were a host of Vireos including year-round White-eyed, overwintering Blue-headed, and breeding Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos. Black-whiskered Vireos have a very limited range in the Southeast and can be observed in a number of locations from the beginning of breeding season throughout the summer months. We were lucky to find a couple at Bill Bagg's SP on Key Biscayne in early April.

**Another Florida specialty is the Gray Kingbird.** We had great views in the Keys especially on Summerland Key as well as at Crandon Park in Key Biscayne. We were too early for most other flycatchers, except for Eastern Phoebe that overwinter and the Great Crested Flycatcher which are year-round in Southern Florida. We also found several rare visiting Tropical Kingbirds in the vicinity of the Sem-Chi Rice Mill up North.

**Many other notable year-round species including** Ruby Throated Hummingbirds, Brown Thrashers, Cardinals, Tufted Titmice, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Carolina Wrens, Gray Catbirds, Blue Jays, Eastern Bluebirds, Eastern Towhees, as well as Hermit and Wood Thrush, can be found during winter and migration. Most swallows migrate through Florida and we were able to find Barn, Cliff, Northern Rough-winged and even Cave Swallows that nest in some locations near Lake Okeechobee. Brown-headed Nuthatches breed and live year-round in open Pine Woodlands and we spotted a pair at Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. Overwintering Painted Buntings, that can be most often found

at sanctuary feeders, as well as brushy habitats and forest edges, are also Florida specialties.

Another endemic Florida bird and "Lifer" for us were Florida Scrub Jays that we located at Merritt Island NWR. Their range is limited to a small portion of the state in dry palmetto and Oak scrub woodlands. Yellow-billed Cuckoos breed throughout Florida and we found them in several locations during April. Another Life Bird for us were Mangrove Cuckoos which we heard in 2 locations on Key Largo calling spontaneously. Although quite rare and very secretive, Mangrove Cuckoos can be found in a number of locations including Sanibel Island and the Everglades National Park. Use eBird's Explore Species feature to find recent sightings. There are also a few species of Parakeets flying about. We were able to observe, Monk, Mitred, and Nanday Parakeets.

**Sparrows:** Chipping, Lincolns', Swamp, Vesper, Field, and even Grasshopper Sparrows can be located during the winter months. When birding grasslands and coastal marshes, rarities including Henslow's, Nelson's and Seaside Sparrows can occasionally be found. The Grand Prize for us was observing the threatened Bachman's Sparrows singing on their breeding territory at Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area at the beginning of April in the grassy palmetto and open pine woodlands.

**We can't leave out Blackbirds either.** The Florida red-winged blackbird subspecies is the true Red-wing sporting the brilliant red and yellow lesser coverts. We also observed Brown-headed Cowbirds and Common and Boat-tailed Grackles regularly and were able to find both rarities of Cowbirds, the Bronzed at the Storm Treatment Area 1-E and 3 Shiny Cowbirds at the Sem-Chi Rice Mill as well.

*If you ever get a chance to visit Florida, at any time of year, we highly recommend these and many more exciting birding locations. Use eBird as a reference to locate hotspots and good birding locations wherever you might be traveling and set out for a fun experience observing and enjoying Florida Birds. ▲*

PHOTOS BY MARK STEPHENSON



YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER



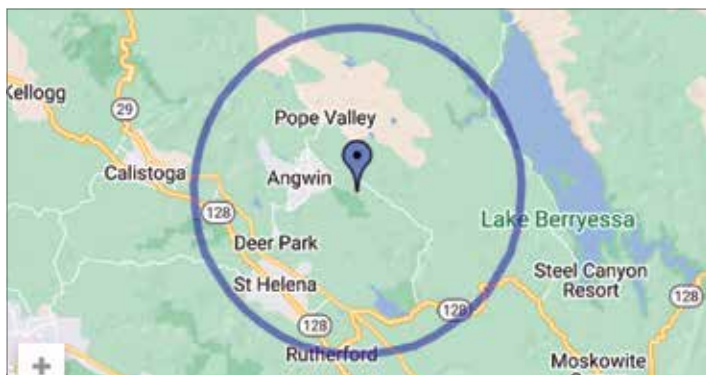
PAINTED BUNTING



BACHMAN'S SPARROW



# NSAS's Christmas Bird Counts 2024-25 Summary



## ANGWIN CBC RESULTS / JAN. 01, 2025

by Murray Berner

**The 2025 Angwin CBC took place under calm and cloudy conditions.** Some of the 36 birders experienced raindrops. I had fretted over getting enough people in the field, but it all worked out. My thanks to those of you that stepped in to help in unfamiliar areas. **We found 130 species.**

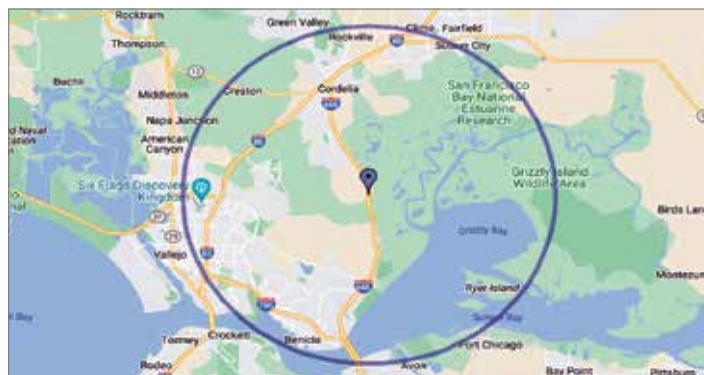
**The absence of waterfowl made news.** Only Wood Duck was found in above average numbers. Mallard was the lone puddle duck to make a strong showing. Among divers, only Bucephala (Bufflehead) came anywhere near average. Similarly, the five grebe species combined were down by 60 percent. The total of 632 California Quail has been eclipsed once before.

**Good news is that diurnal raptors were up.** Lots of people turned out on Ink Grade to look for owls and found a few. The 32 Great Horned Owls is record high, yet we found only a fraction of this common bird. Considering all the fire-killed trees in the count circle, one might expect woodpecker numbers to climb. Except for the omnipresent Acorn Woodpecker, they have not. Lewis's Woodpecker is common at Berryessa this winter but only a returning Pope Valley bird made it into the circle. **The irruptive fruit and seed eaters were hardly in evidence.** Robins appeared in low average numbers; Varied Thrush, Pine Siskins and Purple Finch continued their recent erratic ways.

As for the impacts of fire, two representative species, Wren-tit and California Thrasher, are not thriving. Wetland birds such as Rails, Marsh Wren, and Song Sparrow are stable or increasing. Minor rarities include N. Saw-whet Owl, Gnatcatcher, Yellowthroat, and Chipping Sparrow. Even the seven Mountain Bluebirds at Pope Valley are almost expected.

**The lone real rarity is the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in Pope Valley, the second count record.**

*Many Thanks to Claudia and her family for setting up the dinner. Betty made chili, and Ava did the tamales and a bunch of other stuff. Many of you brought food to share, that and your efforts in the field are much appreciated.*



## BENICIA CBC RESULTS / DEC. 16, 2024

by Tom Slyker

**We must start this account of the Benicia Christmas Bird Count (BCBC) by thanking the 74 volunteers who donated a day of their time to search for birds in our BCBC count circle.** There is not enough room here to identify all our volunteers, but a copy of the count report that has been filed with National Audubon and the list of participant volunteers can be found on our website. This year these brave volunteers faced inclement weather with rain and chilling winds for most of the day. They bounced through the waves of Suisun Bay looking for waterfowl, slogged through waterlogged marshland looking for ducks, rails, and bitterns, and climbed the slippery, muddy trails of Lynch Canyon, Newell Open Space and Hunter Hill searching for songbirds, eagles, and hawks. **In the end we were able to document 164 species** in our count circle, which is comparable to the number of species that have been observed in past years.

Finding this number of species was a significant achievement considering the weather conditions our birders faced. **What we didn't see was the quantity of birds that have been documented in past counts.** Waterfowl had pretty much abandoned the Carquinez Strait and Suisun Bay so our waterfowl counts were down. And these low counts extended to most other species except the Rock Pigeon where the 4,335 Pigeons seen was the highest count total for these birds in BCBC history. We did see birds like the **Thick-billed Kingbird** in Lynch Canyon and the **Black Oystercatcher** at the Benicia Pier that had never been previously observed during a BCBC count week. There were also several species like the Black-chinned Hummingbird, Lewis's Woodpecker, and Northern Rough-winged Swallow that have been seen on just a few of the counts conducted over the last 75 years.

I'd like to close this report with two items. *One, is to thank Robin Leong for all the work he has done to keep the BCBC going for almost 40 years that he has been involved in organizing the count.* It will be hard to fill his shoes. Second, is to ask everyone to note that our next BCBC will be held on Monday, December 15, 2025. ▲

# Bluebird Nesting Season Has Arrived!

BECKY MATSUBARA, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



If you've been walking in the local parks where our nesting boxes are installed, you have seen Western Bluebirds pairing up and exploring boxes to find the perfect location for this year's nest.

Hopefully you've been thrilled by the brilliant blue plumage of the male bluebirds as they are putting on a wonderful spring display.

The reason to mention bluebirds is that NSAS maintains and monitors ~ 150 nesting boxes in our two counties and we need help in our monitoring efforts. Monitoring is a weekly process where you get some exercise walking with friends and neighbors for about an hour along a trail or path that will take you to ~ a dozen nesting boxes. A quick stop is made at each box to see if there is a nest and if yes, document the progress being made towards fledging a

new family of birds. Monitoring is a reason to get outside on a regular basis and know that getting your exercise is also helping in the recovery of the Western Bluebird population.

If you are wondering how much of an impact monitoring these nests can have, last year birds, using the boxes we monitor, laid 991 eggs. Because some birds will nest twice in a season our results worked out to almost 7 eggs per box for the ~ 150 boxes we monitor. Of those 991 eggs, 770 babies hatched and flew from the boxes to join their parents. This result was just shy of an 80% fledge rate which made it an incredibly successful year. And to the delight of our monitoring teams, it wasn't just Bluebirds and Tree Swallows that used our nesting boxes. Last year we had a variety of birds in the boxes including a Violet-green Swallow family, House Wrens, multiple Oak Titmouse nests, a White-breasted Nuthatch couple, a Bewick's Wren couple, and multiple Ash-throated Flycatcher pairs.

If you'd like a reason to get some exercise and help with the recovery of our declining bird populations, we'd love to have you join us for this year's nest box monitoring efforts. Right now we are in the process of cleaning boxes in preparation for the new nests to be built and we will begin the monitoring process towards the end of March.

*To learn more about the program and possibly sign up to participate in this year's nesting season, please contact Tom Slyker at [solanobirder@gmail.com](mailto:solanobirder@gmail.com) or 707-771-1918. ▲*

## Finding a Bird is a Worthy Challenge

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! ▲

## NSAS Spring 2025 College Scholarship Awards Program

This Spring, NSAS will continue to provide a one year, \$2,000 scholarship to two high school seniors.

They must be from Napa or Solano Counties and will be enrolled this fall at a Community or 4-year College, pursuing a course of study in Ornithology, Wildlife, Conservation, Environmental Studies or related fields.

***To be considered, applications must be submitted by April 30, 2025.*** Eligibility requirements and more information on how to apply are posted on our homepage at [napasolanobirds.org](http://napasolanobirds.org)  
***Spread the word! ▲***

### The Birds Are Waiting for You

To JOIN a world of wonder and RENEW your love of the wild.  
Visit our website, [napasolanobirds.org](http://napasolanobirds.org) to join or renew your membership. See you on the trails!



# NSAS Field Trip to The American River Parkway, January 18th.

By Bruce Thomsen

Our trip along the American River Parkway in Sacramento began in the fog at 8:00 a.m. at the William B. Pond Recreation Area.

This area, as do most along the Parkway, encompasses oak woodland and riparian willow thickets along the American River. The American River Parkway is a Sacramento City/County Park, beginning at the Nimbus Dam and running along both banks of the American River 23 miles to its confluence with the Sacramento River.

Immediately in the park we saw Yellow-billed Magpies in the lawn picnic area where we parked. Walking to the waters edge we spotted Golden-crowned Sparrows, Oak Titmice, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet in the



oaks. A little farther upstream we observed several Purple Finches. Closer to the river as the fog lifted there were Wood Ducks, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Ring-necked Ducks and two Bald Eagles perched in the top of a tree. Further along we saw two White-tailed Kites being harassed by several American Crows. Two Phainopepla were feeding in the mistletoe in oaks and what was believed to be a Red-naped Sapsucker. Along the river we saw a Spotted Sandpiper, Belted Kingfisher, and several Common Mergansers. The most common raptor seen were 6 Red-shouldered Hawks. As we were leaving the area we spotted 8 Lark Sparrows in the parking lot.

Our next stop was Ancil Hoffman Park and the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. We found very similar species with another bald eagle flying overhead, 14 Wild Turkeys, another 8 Red-shouldered Hawks, as well as 5 White-throated Swifts, and lots of Acorn Woodpeckers.

We ended the day seeing 59 species at William B. Pond, 23 at Ancil Hoffman Park for a day's total of 63 species (5 new species were seen at Hoffman Park). ▲

# Why Tracking Bird Data is Important

by Yvonne Baginski

One way to make an impact on conservation efforts is to track data on rare bird, animal and plant species using the threatened land.

Many Audubon bird watchers are already posting on ebird.org, or iNaturalist. It is imperative to continue doing so. This citizen scientist data can be used by wildlife biologists in preparing arguments for conserving valuable habitat.

Data matters! It is essential and one of the most important elements of reporting to agencies to help preserve and set aside natural habitat that is home to many bird and animal species.

An undocumented or unverified sighting of a Burrowing Owl, a Snowy Plover or a Swainson's Hawk nest, means that the anecdotal information will be categorized as hearsay, and it isn't considered by political agencies who make decisions on whether to develop or preserve valuable habitat.

The Holy Grail for EIR's and wildlife biologists is the California Natural Diversity Database. (CNDDB). This is their reliable information source on biological sightings throughout the state.

You too, can contribute your sightings to this database. The submission method depends on the amount of data collected, and the type of project being carried out. For all data submissions, the more information that is provided to the CNDDB on population size, site conditions, threats, etc., the better the CNDDB can assign an accurate occurrence rank to the site. The occurrence rank is then taken into consideration when determining rarity status, and when prioritizing sites for conservation purposes.

The most common ways to submit data is the CNDDB online survey form. It is available at [wildlife.ca.gov/DATA/CNDDB/SubmittingData](http://wildlife.ca.gov/DATA/CNDDB/SubmittingData).

You can become a valuable Citizen Scientist by submitting your data of rare birds. First time users will need to set up an account. **Happy Birding!** ▲

Napa-Solano Audubon Society  
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## NSAS Annual Elections Are Coming Up May 8!

The four NSAS Executive Committee Board Positions which are elected or reelected annually are **President, Vice President, Secretary** and **Treasurer**. *Any member can submit their name for any of these positions.* **Mark Stephenson**, who has served as our president for the last 5 years, is looking for someone to **share or take over his duties**, as he would like to have more time to play with his grandchildren and be out in the field birding. ***Please consider joining our NSAS Board!***

The 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:** Keeps 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 directed by the Board. The Treasurer shall provide financial statement to the Board at their regular meeting or as requested.

**In addition, we would like to fill the following Board appointed positions for the coming year:**

- **Education Chair:** This position helps us to organize our School and Community Education activities.
- **Director:** Becoming a Director is a great way for you or a friend to “get your feet wet” with Board activities. Please let us know if you have the time and energy to join our Board and we will submit your name for approval. ▲

***If you are interested in nominating yourself or another member for any of these positions, please contact us by Saturday, April 26th, at: [president@NapaSolanoBirds.org](mailto:president@NapaSolanoBirds.org)***

**You can wear one of our beautiful NSAS Kestrel T-Shirts for a mere \$25.00!**

Pam Condos has done a great job designing, printing & 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!). **Order directly from our website or email Pam at: [pamelacondos58@gmail.com](mailto:pamelacondos58@gmail.com).**