



SONG SPARROW

Fall 2025 Vol. 55 No. 2
www.napasolanobirds.org

FALL 2025 CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

- Sep. 11 Thu. Speaker Series:
The Biggest Week in
American Birding
- Sep. 20 Sat. RCD's Coastal Clean-up
- Sep. 20 Sat. U.C. Master Gardeners of
Napa Valley Open House
- Sep. 21 Sun. Monthly Field Trip: Rio
Lindo Adventist Academy:
Vaux's Swift migration
- Oct. 03 Fri. 3-Day Monthly Field Trip:
Big Sur & Monterey Bay
Oct 3-5 / Fri-Sun / Limited
to 15 NSAS Members
- Oct. 09 Thu. Speaker Series: Status
& Conservation of Purple
Martins in California
- Nov. 13 Thu. Speaker Series: Birds of
Columbia
- Dec. 15 Mon. CBC Benicia
- Jan. 01 Thu. CBC Angwin (2026)
- Ongoing Weekly Bird Walks
- Ongoing Beginner Bird Walks



Fall Bird Walks & Activities

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

www.napasolanobirds.org

SEE YOU ON
 THE TRAILS!



HAWAIIAN STILT / PAM CONDOS

Ornithotherapy: Why Birding is Good For Us

Article and Photos by Pam Condos

With an aging global population, a significant increase in mental health disorders, and increased feelings of isolation and loneliness in people of all ages, there is a growing interest in finding alternatives to support healthy living.

Birdwatching, also known as birding, is enjoyed by millions worldwide. It involves observing birds in their natural habitats, identifying their species, and sometimes keeping track of their populations, behaviors and movements. While birding is often considered a leisure activity, it has also been found to have significant mental health benefits. This begs the question: Can we consider birding to be a wellness activity to support a healthy lifestyle? Hippocrates is said to have stated that "Nature itself is the best physician."

Birding is a calming and mindful activity that requires you to be present and aware of your surroundings. For many of us, turning to birds for the mood elevation they provide is innate. We are, after all, animals and a part of nature, so it makes sense our minds and bodies crave the natural world for our wellbeing. When you are walking in nature, you are engaged not only physically, but while focusing on the sights and sounds of the birds around you, your mind is less likely to dwell on your worries and concerns. This can help lower your cortisol levels, the hormone associated with stress.

In recent years, research has focused on the influence of birdsong on human mood. One of these studies (tinyurl.com/Merker-birdsong) suggests that after

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President's Corner

By Mark Stephenson, NSAS President



Hello to Reese,
Mark's first
Granddaughter
Born 01/18/25

Napa-Solano Audubon has an incredible opportunity to participate in a new 5-year, state-wide, Breeding Bird Atlas.

What is a Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA)? And why is it so important? A Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) is a large-scale, multi-year project that documents the breeding distribution and activity of bird species within a specific geographic area, such as a state or county. It provides crucial data for understanding changes in bird populations and their habitats, informing conservation and management efforts. This current State-wide project, being coordinated by the California Bird Atlas organization, with well-

known birder, Van Pierszalowski serving as the Executive Director, is especially important, as *California is one of only 6 states that has never engaged in a state-wide atlas*. In fact, only 16 of our 58 counties have ever published a BBA. We are proud of the work by our many volunteers who completed 2 of the 16 atlases in both Napa and Solano Counties.

However, it has been 32 years since NSAS completed the field work for the first Napa Breeding Bird Atlas in 1993. The information was published 10 years later in 2003. The field work for the first Solano County BBA was held from 2005-2010 more than 15 years ago and was published in 2014. Many changes have occurred in our area during the past 15-30 year span as a result of housing and urban development that are sure to have impacted birds and their habitats since our last BBAs were completed. *A new BBA would be of huge value to document the changes to birds, our landscape, and consequential conservation needs and priorities.*

The field work process involves dividing up our counties (and similarly the state) into geographic blocks and further into smaller survey grids that are usually 5 by 5 Kilometers (3 by 3 Mile grids) to ensure comprehensive coverage. The survey grids are then the centers for volunteers to visit regularly completing bird surveys during the breeding season which begins as early as December-January for early nesting species like owls and hawks and runs through August and into September for late nesting species like goldfinches.

By co-sponsoring and supporting the newly formed, California Bird Atlas organization, our Chapter is able to gain access to Cornell Universities' Breeding Bird Atlas Platform that instantly records breeding data when birders submit their surveys using eBird lists coded for breeding behaviors. Like other Breeding Bird Atlas endeavors, Cornell's Breeding Bird Atlas criteria involve observers identifying bird species and documenting observed breeding behaviors within the survey grids using a tiered system of codes to signify the certainty of breeding. These criteria and data are uploaded through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird Platform and include codes for possible, probable, and confirmed breeding. These criteria range from "possible" as in observing a bird in suitable breeding habitat during the breeding season; to "probable" as in observing a pair of birds in suitable habitat, or a bird carrying food or nesting materials; to "confirmed" such as finding a nest with eggs or young.

The goal of a BBA is to understand and update the distribution and abundance of breeding birds for conservation purposes. Our original BBAs established a baseline of the breeding species. In Napa our NSAS Volunteers documented 145 known and 11 possible breeding species, eventually confirming all 156 species.

The atlases established an important baseline dataset for future comparison studies. Since its completion, naturalists have already noted declines in certain

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<https://napasolanobirds.org/contact-us/>

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.

NSAS Kestrel T-Shirts



This beautiful T-Shirt is perfect to give as a gift or for yourself.

Only \$25.00

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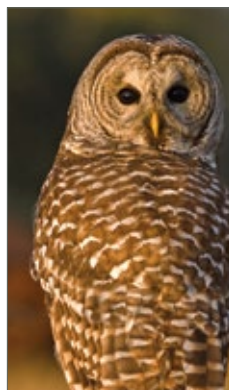
ARTWORK: PAM CONDOS



Volunteers make the load lighter and are essential to success.

Join our efforts today and help protect and preserve wildlife and their habitats.

BETTINA ARRIGONI



The Birds are Waiting for You

JOIN or RENEW

Visit our website to **JOIN** a world of wonder and **RENEW** your love of the wild.

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BECKY MATSUBARA

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.

THE BIGGEST WEEK IN AMERICAN BIRDING

When: Thurs., Sept. 11; 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Mark Stephenson

Location: Napa Valley Lutheran Church & Zoom



MARK STEPHENSON

The Biggest Week is one of the largest birding festivals in the U.S. held in early May just East of Toledo on the shores of Lake Erie. This annual festival draws upwards of 10,000 birders from around the country. Northern Ohio is considered by some to be the “warbler capital of the world” as thousands of migrating warblers land on the shores of Lake Erie to refuel, before crossing this great expanse of water and continuing on their journey North. The heart of the festival happens at Black Swamp Bird Observatory’s Magee Marsh Board Walk, a 2.5 mile path through the shoreline marsh. Magee is unique in that the high water table keeps most trees at shortened heights, providing more exceptional views of our spring migrants. This, coupled with the fact that early May is when most trees are just beginning to bud, before leaves make viewing more challenging, is why the Biggest Week is so exciting. During this year’s 9-day festival at the Boardwalk, along with a number of local area hotspots, birders observed 243 species including 36 North American Warblers.

About the Presenter: Mark has been the President of our Chapter, Napa-Solano Audubon, for the past 5 years. He began birding in the 4th grade and his birding knowledge expanded dramatically when his family moved to Ithaca, NY where he birded regularly with his

mentor, Dr. Arthur Allen, founder of Cornell’s Laboratory of Ornithology and other leading experts from the Lab. During college he worked summers at Sapsucker Wood’s and for the Massachusetts Audubon Society before heading west and directing Environmental Education Programs at Foresta Institute in Washoe Valley, Nevada. After a career of more than 30 years in public education in Benicia and Napa Valley schools, he is enjoying retirement.

THE STATUS & CONSERVATION OF PURPLE MARTINS IN CALIFORNIA

When: Thurs., Oct. 9; 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Dan Airola

Location: Benicia Public Library & Zoom



DAVID ORNELLAS

The well-documented & drastic decline in the Purple Martin nesting population in Sacramento has contributed to concerns about the species’ status throughout California. The species has been recognized as a state Species of Special

Concern for nearly 50 years.

Dan Airola is co-leading a comprehensive statewide Purple Martin status assessment 2025. Dan will discuss the unique life history of this largest North American swallow, differences between the eastern and western subspecies, current threats they face. He’ll present an overview of the status and conservation issues facing the species in California. He will also provide preliminary results of the 2025 statewide Purple Martin breeding population survey

About the Presenter: Dan Airola is a Sacramento Wildlife Biologist and Ornithologist who has worked for over 45 years in research and conservation of at-risk bird species in Northern California. Dan has conducted research and a conservation program for the Sacramento Purple Martin population for over 30 years. He also has conducted several status assessments of the spe-

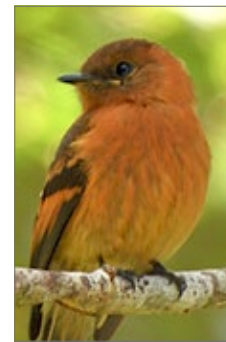
cies in California and is co-leading the 2025 statewide status. Dan also has also led studies in Northern California for the Tricolored Blackbird, Yellow-billed Magpie, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Swainson’s Hawk, Turkey Vulture, fire-adapted forest species, migrant songbirds, and diving ducks. Dan also serves the Central Valley Bird Club as a Director, Conservation Chair, and editor of the Central Valley Birds journal and is a Conservation Committee member for Sacramento Audubon.

BIRDS OF COLUMBIA

When: Thurs., Oct. 9; 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Rich Cimino

Location: Napa Valley Lutheran Church & Zoom



Colombia is a place that every bird watcher dreams about. A place every bird photographer should *not* leave off their bucket list! Renowned for its exceptional avian diversity, Colombia is home to 1,945 bird

species according to eBird, including 176 endemic species. The country encompasses 29 distinct habitat types. Mr. Cimino’s presentation will highlight several of these habitats, beginning in the metropolitan area of Cali and ascending the western Andes Mountains to the elevated Paramo region, characterized by grass and shrub environments. The second portion of the presentation will focus on Caribbean bird species, starting in the humid rain forests near Santa Marta on the northern slopes of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

About the Presenter: Rich has 58 years of birding experience in Northern California and is the owner and guide for *Yellowbilledtours.com*. He has led annual field trips to destinations from Alaska to Colombia, throughout the Western Hemisphere for 25 years. Based in Marin County, Rich is active on Marin Audubon conservation committee, leads six Christmas Bird Counts, and is an approved field trip leader for California State Parks. He also teaches Beginning

Calendar of Events cont.

Birding at Las Positas Community College and founded the Eastern Alameda County Christmas Bird Count, now in its twelfth year.

MONTHLY FIELD TRIPS

Extended Monthly Field Trips are open first to NSAS Chapter Members. There is often a limit of 12-15 participants and is on a first sign-up, first-served basis. Be on the lookout for Monthly Trip notices, sign-up procedures & 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.

RIO LINDO ADVENTIST ACADEMY: VAUX'S SWIFT MIGRATION VIEWING

When: Sun.; Sept. 26; 6:15PM

Leader: Mark Stephenson/Wendy Cole

Open to everyone! We will stay from 6:15 until Dusk when we anticipate the Swifts will form a massive vortex and descend into the school's chimney. Vaux's Swifts have been roosting in Rio Lindo Adventist Academy's chimney since 1989, the first year the school's boiler wasn't producing steam



VAUX'S SWIFT / STEVE KOLBE

year-round. The chimney is still used in the winter when the boiler generates heat for the school campus, but that's after the fall swift migration has finished. The first small groups of migrating birds usually appear in mid-August. Vaux's Swifts

use the chimney on the campus as a roosting site on their stop-over, during fall migration. Numbers vary daily into the thousands, but begin to peak around September 20. In an average year, the count peaks between 5,000 and 10,000 birds for a few evenings. The highest numbers that have been observed were in 2015 when a couple of evenings the estimate was between 35,000 and 40,000 swifts. The Swifts enter the chimney at

dusk in a whirlwind-like vortex. *It has been described as one of the "7 Wonders of the Birding World!"* For more information visit: **Vaux's Swift Migration – Rio Lindo Adventist Academy:** <https://www.riolindo.org/about-rio/swifts/> An eBlast message with additional information has already been sent out for interested participants to register.

BIG SUR & MONTEREY BAY 3-day Overnight Trip

When: Fri. – Sun., Oct. 3–5

Leader: Mark Stephenson/Bruce Thomsen

This Field Trip is limited to 15 NSAS Members, so sign up early.



WHIMBREL / MARK STEPHENSON

Tentative Trip Itinerary

Friday's Schedule: we will venture to Big Sur's Andrew Molera State Park. Andrew Molera is a haven for migratory birds along the Big Sur River and shorebirds along the beach.

Saturday's Schedule: we will visit several areas around the Monterey Peninsula: Jacks Peak Park (woodland), Frog Pond (wetlands), Garland Ranch (riparian along the Carmel River), Carmel River Beach (riparian along the Carmel River, sandy beach), Asilomar (sandy beach, sand dunes), Pt. Pinos (rocky shoreline, oceanic), Laguna Grande Regional Park.

Sunday's Schedule: As we work our way towards home, we will stop at Salinas River National Wildlife Refuge, Moon-glow Dairy, Moss Landing and North Jetty Rd.

Registration information and more details will be sent out in a Field Trip eBlast in the near future, as the trip approaches.

WEEKLY BIRD WALKS

Open to everyone, membership not required. 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.** When Andrew is unavailable, a NSAS Board Member will often step in to lead the walk. Don't forget to sign up for all Field Trip eBlasts by clicking on the Activity Sign-up Button on our new website! Be on the lookout for Andrew's eBlast with the details of his next walk.

BEGINNER BIRD WALKS

Open to everyone, all levels, all ages. Membership not required, no reservations needed. These NSAS sponsored walks are usually held at the American Canyon Wetlands or Benicia Community Park **twice a month, September – June.** Carol Boykin 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. **Free, fun, and loaner binoculars are on hand if you need them.**

EVENTS/ACTIVITIES

RCD'S COASTAL CLEAN-UP DAY

Saturday: Sept. 20; 9:00AM - Noon

Join Betty Labastida and help our NSAS Team Clean-up a portion of Napa Creek at the Corner of Main and Pearl Streets in downtown Napa. Watch your inbox for an eBlast with more details soon!

MASTER GARDENERS OF NAPA VALLEY OPEN HOUSE

Saturday: Sept. 20; 1:00PM - 4:00PM

Oxbow Commons: 1710 Soscol Ave, Napa
NSAS will be hosting a table at this wonderful event. Stop by and learn more about our native plants.

Conservation Advocacy

By Yvonne Baginski

Our Conservation Committee members have been actively involved in the following efforts:

Solano County: California Forever is a Silicon Valley-backed project planning a new city and manufacturing center in Solano County. NSAS is primarily concerned about threats to bird habitats, especially migratory flyways. Investors are considering annexing land from Rio Vista and Suisun City to circumvent a county-wide vote. Discussions continue, with NSAS members Jane Hicks and Janelle Hall actively participating in opposition efforts and gathering habitat data.

Lagoon Valley Development, Vacaville. Roberto Valdez is keeping an eye on the “new” wetland preserves and protected riparian areas.

Scotts Valley Casino, Vallejo: This 160-acre site, located at the intersection of Highway 80 and Highway 37, is currently involved in complex legal proceedings with multiple tribes and the federal government. The Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians has proposed constructing a 400,000-square-foot casino complex. NSAS is monitoring the situation as this site is hillside habitat known for overwintering Burrowing Owls.

Napa County: Green Island Vineyard, American Canyon: Investors have proposed the development of 157 acres of agricultural land adjacent to the San Pablo estuary, including an industrial park, residential units, and a sports complex. This site is contiguous with areas where prior development has led to the replacement of wetlands and avian habitats, resulting in significant biodiversity reduction. Mark Stephenson, President of NSAS, presented a conservation appeal before the City Council on September 2 to express how important this habitat with its Forest, Grassland, Marsh and Bay Ecosystems is for the more than 100 species of wetlands birds that are residents and migrants to this critical area of the Bay.

Sheehy Creek is a one-mile wildlife corridor with notable challenges. In April, 44 bird species were recorded in two hours during a Bioblitz. Three wineries are proposed nearby, and NSAS is pursuing ongoing protections. Among other species, Swainson's Hawks nest and forage in this riparian and grassland habitat.

Baseline Data Report: Napa County is collecting information on sensitive habitats, special status species, and key natural areas in preparation for the General Plan Update. *If you have relevant data for Napa County, please contact: bdr@countyofnapa.org. If you'd like to attend or become a member of the Conservation Committee, please join us on Thursday, Sept. 18, 6-8 p.m. at the Cordelia Public Library. Or contact Yvonne Baginski: <https://napasolanobirds.org/contact-us/> ▲*

Do you know?

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. Source: <https://www.nrdc.org/>



EASTERN BLUEBIRDS AT NEST BOX / MARK STEPHENSON

Bluebird Box Monitoring

by Carol Boykin

Bluebird box monitoring is incredibly gratifying and it is a joy to be part of our NSAS Bluebird team.

Our “work” is a weekly walk through paths in the countryside from spring to midsummer when nesting season ends. The nesting box is on a pole around 5 feet high. A screw attached to the side board with a hinge allows for easy access and viewing of the nest. At the first of the year we check to make sure the box is free of wasp and spider nests. At the end of March we begin our weekly walks to look inside and record what is seen. There are twelve boxes on our route. Each box has some activity such as a few pieces of straw or later a full nest. We have small mirrors on extending handles to look carefully inside. I got mine at a car parts store. We then determine the species of the bird, which is usually a Bluebird or Tree Swallow. On occasion we get a Bewick's Wren or an Ash-throated Flycatcher.

Nests are usually easy to identify: Swallows use feathers in building and lining their nest that cover their white eggs. Bluebirds have pretty blue eggs. Sometimes the parents are waiting nearby, or in the case of swallows, they may pretend to dive-bomb our volunteers. We always leave as soon as possible to avoid disturbing the “home owners”. Then, in a few weeks... babies! Little mouths wide open for food. Parents perched by with a juicy bug or moth for lunch. Each week they are bigger with fuzz transforming into feathers. Then suddenly, all are gone. They have flown away to start their independent lives! We clean out the box and often find a brand new nest the following week. ▲

Ornithotherapy: Why Birding is Good For Us

Continued from Page 1

listening to birdsong for six minutes, anxiety and irrational thinking subsides for up to eight hours. This makes sense when you look at what is happening in a bird's environment as it is singing. When birds sing, they have a sense of security in their surroundings. For example, a House Wren is not going to sing his heart out with a Cooper's Hawk nearby.

Birdwatching also encourages cognitive stimulation. Identifying different species, recalling bird calls or songs, and understanding bird behavior, stimulates the brain, which



SAFFRON FINCH



JAPANESE WHITE-EYE

can help in maintaining cognitive function and potentially delaying the onset of dementia-related conditions. Learning about and identifying different bird species can provide a sense of accomplishment and purpose.

For example, there are online programs such as eBird, which is a real-time, online checklist program for bird observations, managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It allows birders to record their sightings and contribute to a vast database of bird distribution and abundance information.

Participation in eBird can not only enhance our understanding of conservation science, but the act of contributing to the "greater good" can help us to feel we have the power to make a difference. This can boost self-esteem and provide a feeling of fulfillment and joy.

Birding can be a social activity as well that can help combat feelings of isolation and loneliness. As community builders, birds offer us social connections: bonding through shared experiences. We connect to each other while connecting to birds. Joining a local birding club or attending birding events or bird walks can provide opportunities to meet new people who share your interests. Social support and interactions have been found to positively impact mental health, and birding can be a fun and engaging way to connect with others. Alternatively, while birding we are often surrounded by birds or birdsong, which offers companionship and lets us know we are not alone. Birdwatching is a delightful and beneficial activity for people of all ages. It offers a unique blend of physical exercise, mental stimulation, environmental engagement and social interaction. Birding can enhance overall well-being and awareness of the beauty and wonder of the natural world. Birds can share their story with us if we are open to understanding the power they hold for our wellbeing: mind, body, and spirit! ▲

Napa-Solano Audubon's Banner June Sierra Field Trip

Article & Photos by Mark Stephenson



HAMMOND'S FLYCATCHER

On June 5, 2025, 14 NSAS Members met at the trailhead for Madora Lake near Graeagle, CA to begin our June Field Trip to the Northern Sierra. On a typical excursion to the Sierras in June, one might expect to observe 80-90 resident species. But luck was with our group and we had wonderful views of 114 species, a nice accomplishment for our team. Madora Lake Trail begins at approximately 5,000 feet elevation and entails a moderate 1.5 mile loop that descends through the Eastern slopes' yellow pine and white fir forest ecosystems circumnavigating Madora Lake and returning up slope to the parking lot. The lake might now be considered a pond as it is slowly filling in with Sierra granitic sediments, and becoming more of a marsh than a lake!



GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET



MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER

As usual, this short loop did not disappoint! Our group had wonderful views of Pileated and White-headed Woodpeckers and plenty of Mountain Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Hammond's Flycatchers. We were excited to learn that many of us could still hear the high-pitched Golden-crowned Kinglets! We had exceptional views of Cassin's and Warbling Vireos, Western Tanagers and a nice showing of Sierra Warblers including Yellow, Nashville, MacGilli-

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Pinnacles National Park

NSAS March 2025 Field Trip

Written by Phil Burton | Photos by Mark Stephenson

It was a clear, cool morning at 8:00 AM when we met our guide, Rusty Scalf, in the parking lot of the campground store in Pinnacles National Park. We then moved to the beginning of the Condor Gulch Trail parking lot to begin our day.

As we headed up the trail, we stopped along the way to look and listen, finding Rufous-crowned, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows, House Finch, several Orange-crowned Warblers, Bewick's Wrens, Oak Titmouse, and several others. We moved up the trail, for our first look at California Condors soaring farther up in the canyon.

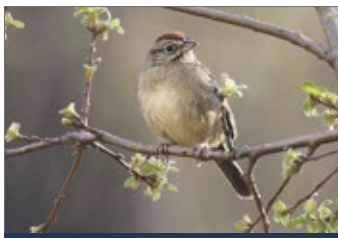
As the day progressed so did the temperature. Farther up the trail we spotted Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, White-throated

first bridge. It was warm and not much was seen except under the shade of a beautiful oak tree. We ended the day having dinner at Cosmos Bar and Grill in Hollister.

All totaled for the day, we saw 8 California Condors and were able to identify tag numbers on 4 of them with an overall species total of 43 species.

Two interesting spots in the area along Highway 25 from Hollister to Pinnacles to look for birds are: San Benito County Historical Park and Paicines Reservoir. Highlights from the Historic Park were close encounters with a Phainopepla and a Lawrence's Goldfinch. Paicines Reservoir, where we spotted Bald Eagles and a number of ducks and shorebirds, can be viewed only from a pull-off from the highway, and due to the distance, a spotting scope is recommended.

On Tuesday, we traveled to Salinas River National Wildlife Refuge, where we saw a number of shorebirds, including Snowy Plovers (7), Cinnamon Teal and several species of



RUFIOUS-CROWNED SPARROW



CINNAMON TEAL



LAWRENCE'S GOLDFINCH



OSPREY

Swifts and Violet-green Swallows flying overhead. Sitting on a rock were two Condors with a juvenile alone on another, at the top of the canyon.

The trail turned from moderate to strenuous after about a mile with little shade as the heat was building, to eventually reach 95°. We stopped for lunch just below the junction with the High Peaks Trail and had several Condors fly directly overhead, and two very close.

Once down from the Condor Gulch Trail we drove to the beginning of the Old Pinnacles Trail and walked out to the

waterfowl and other water birds including an Eared Grebe and a Red-throated Loon. We saw a total of 44 species.

Our final stop was at Moss Landing's Jetty Road. The tide was out so there were many shorebirds including: Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Whimbrel, Willet, Black-bellied Plovers, Dunlin, and Least Sandpipers. In all, we had nice views, of 27 species in a little over an hour!

With some birding along the way to Pinnacles and stops at San Benito County Historical Park and Paicines Reservoir our group observed 115 species; a nice total for our 3-day trip. ▲

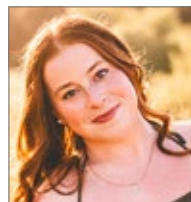
2025 Scholarship Winners



ALEXIS CASTRUITA

Alexis is our 2025 scholarship recipient for Solano County. Alexis attended Buckingham Collegiate Charter School in Vacaville. She was instrumental in transforming an underused, overgrown, outdoor space at her school with native plants, dwarf fruit trees and painted murals, making it an inviting, safe area for students. Alexis also worked as an intern for the US Youth Conservation Corp at Point Reyes National Seashore.

Her work there as a Trail Crew member inspired her to pursue a degree in Forestry Management at Oregon State University this fall. She hopes this leads to a career protecting wildlife habitats and the environment.



LAUREN GERENSER

Lauren is the Napa County recipient of our 2025 scholarship. She attended Vintage High School where she was involved in many volunteer activities focused on environmental conservation, including tree planting events, community cleanups, and habitat restoration projects. As a member of the Napa Schools for Conservation, she helped draft a Climate Restoration Resolution to address rising carbon dioxide levels.

As a club officer for the Thirst Project at her school, she raised awareness and funds to fight the global water crisis. Lauren will pursue a degree in Environmental Sciences at UC Berkeley this fall. ▲

NSAS's Banner June Sierra Field Trip

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DUSKY FLYCATCHER

vray's, Hermit, Wilson's and Yellow-rumps. The point blank views of a MacGillivray's Warbler, made this trek well worth the time. Following lunch we continued up to Plumas-Eureka State Park for fantastic views of Willow Flycatchers and Western Wood-Pewees. The afternoon was capped off with an American Dipper feeding under the campground bridge, playing in the surging rapids, and surfacing on rocks just below our feet. Its beak filled with Mayflies. On the way to dinner in Sierraville everyone spotted Black-billed Magpies perched on ranch posts and fence lines.

Friday began at Yuba Pass with Band-tailed Pigeons and White-throated Swifts flying overhead. The massive-billed, Evening Grosbeaks, along with Cassin's Finch and Pine Siskins fed along the roadside right next to the parking lot. It was a perfect outing to compare the shorter primary extension of Dusky Flycatchers with the many Hammond's we had observed the previous day. Red-breasted Sapsuckers fed on

lodgepole pines, Juncos and Chipping Sparrows sang from meadow edges, and Thick-billed Fox Sparrows perched in small saplings for magnificent views. Further along the trail, deeper in the woods, we were serenaded by several Hermit Thrushes. When we ventured into the Yuba Pass campground that has been closed due to decaying and falling trees, a small flock of juvenile Red-Crossbills landed on a lodgepole pine where everyone had fantastic views of their unique bills. We even had the opportunity to see them prying tiny seeds from the lodgepole pinecones high overhead. Brown Creepers, Cassin's Finch, Western Tanagers, Nashville, Hermit and Yellow-rumped Warblers perched above our heads providing magnificent views. A trek across the empty campground's alpine meadow brought out an inquisitive and colorful Wilson's Warbler within a few feet from our group.

We stopped at the SF State's Sierra Nevada Field Station hoping to see a Black-backed woodpecker but were denied



WHITE-HEADED WOODPECKER

this time around, so we headed onto Bassett's Lodge and Sardine Lakes. Many watched in awe as a White-headed Woodpecker emerged from its nest in a telephone pole at Bassett's Lodge. Unfortunately, the Hummingbird feeders were empty and we missed the Calliope that usually come in to feed next to the porch.

Sardine Lakes Resort provided 3 pleasant surprises along the trail from Lower to Upper Sardine Lake: Nashville Warblers, Thick-billed Fox Sparrows and Green-tailed Towhees perched in the tips of young ponderosa pines, serenading us with their songs. A quick late afternoon stop at the mosquito-infested Church Meadows did not produce either the Pine Grosbeak or resident Calliope Hummer we had hoped for. Our last stop was at the Elwell Lodge Campground, where some of our group were staying. The Lake provided distant views of a Common Merganser, Spotted Sandpiper and loudly

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AMERICAN DIPPER

NSAS's Banner June Sierra Field Trip

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WILSON'S WARBLER



BARN SWALLOW

calling Sora Rails. It also gave us the opportunity to study a compliant Olive-sided Flycatcher with its iconic dark vest! It sang for several minutes before sharp eyes located it buried in the needles of a red fir.

On Saturday, Day 3, we decided to change up our itinerary and head to the expansive alpine meadows of Carmen Valley. I had only been there once before, but fortunately, Pam Condos had discovered on eBird that a Calliope Hummingbird had been posing for photos in an historic "Bread Oven" near the meadow the day before. Apparently Calliopes have been feeding on insects under the cover of the oven's tin roof for more than 25 years! We approached the oven carefully so as not to scare our hoped for hummer. Sure enough, Pam spotted one in the shadows of the oven, landing on the ground and feeding on insects. This lush meadow didn't disappoint in many other ways! A pair of Mountain Bluebirds were perched on the corral's fence-line taking turns flying into the meadow to snatch up unsuspecting insects. Chipping Sparrows were singing in the shadow of the forest pines and eating seeds along the trail. Wilson's Snipes were winnowing high overhead spinning back to earth hidden in the

wet meadow grasses. All of a sudden, we heard the unique 2-phrase, scratchy call of a Gray Flycatcher! We had hoped to find this species that prefers the drier slopes of sparsely growing ponderosa and lodgepole pines found on the hillside above the meadow. My only regret was that we didn't stay longer to explore the entire area! Next Trip! We headed to Loyalton's Rotary Park for a chance to view a few birds that live in its riparian willow thickets and other species that are found on the drier sagebrush hillsides. The park did not disappoint! As we passed through Loyalton, a Swainson's Hawk flew over the road. The Park's willows hosted Black Phoebe, Wood-Pewees, Cassin's & Warbling Vireos, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Purple Finch, Western Kingbirds and Bullock's Orioles. From across the road we heard the 2 note couplets of a Lazuli Bunting singing on the slopes of the dry hillside who complied with our wishes by flying in for magnificent views!

For our Final Day, we headed out into the Sierra Valley to observe the many unique species that call this habitat their home. The valley floor is an ancient lake created by

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EVENING GROSBEEK



OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER



LAZULI BUNTING

NSAS's Banner June Sierra Field Trip

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slip faults that used to be deeper than Lake Tahoe, but has slowly filled in with more than 2000 feet of alluvial silt over a period of tens of thousands of years.

The Feather River and its tributaries as well as underground springs keep much of the center portion of the valley wet for the entire year and filled with tules and cattails. Rails, Egrets, Herons, Ibis, Cranes and a number of ducks breed in this prolific habitat. We began the day near dawn rendezvousing at the Graeagle Mill Pond and were treated to Pygmy Nuthatches chattering from the pines. Arriving at the East Entrance to the Sierra Valley Preserve we immediately were serenaded by Vesper and Brewer's Sparrows who breed in this Sagebrush habitat. The Preserve Foundation has built an impressive blind in the middle of the marsh to view waterbirds. As we continued down the trail, a Sage Thrasher perched on a post and began serenading us for tremendous views. Upon reaching the blind we all had quick views of shy Sora and Virginia Rails that scurried through the reeds. Marsh Wrens and Yellow-headed Blackbirds were chattering and squawking from every patch of cattails.

The Sierra Valley was not disappointing! Marvelous views of baby Coots being fed by their parents, and young Pied-billed Grebes were a few of the highlights. Flocks of White-faced Ibis and White Pelicans flew overhead regularly, and pairs of sandhill cranes were spotted in the grassy fields, often accompanied by 1 or 2 young chicks. One of the Valley's highlights was watching hundreds of Barn and Cliff Swallows perch on fence lines and diving under the bridge to their nests.

When we finished driving along Marble Hot Springs Road, we continued to Harriet Lane. Besides Wilson's Snipes that



WESTERN MEADOWLARK

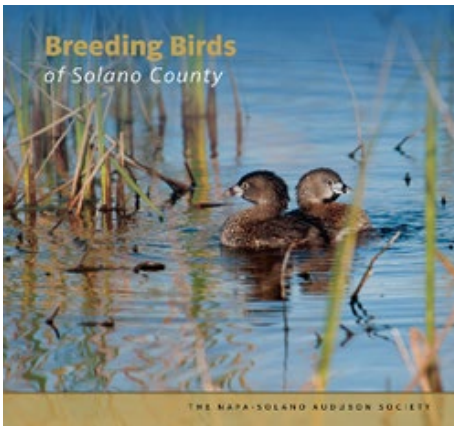
winnowed high in the sky, we were treated to another shorebird in breeding-plumage that resides in the valley; the precocious, speckled, Willet! During breeding season, these shorebirds love to perch on posts and call out with their loud whistle to all who will listen.

Our NSAS June Field Trip to the Northern Sierras was an enjoyable experience for all! We had the privilege of enjoying each other's company and observing 114 species. Exploring the high Sierra's Fir and Pine forests, raging streams as well as the dry sagebrush hillsides and lush wetland ecosystems of the valley floor made our trip memorable. As we departed for home after this banner 4 day trip, we were treated to Western Meadowlarks' melodious whistles encouraging us to return again real soon. ▲



NSAS MEMBERS ON THE SIERRA FIELD TRIP. LEFT TO RIGHT: Judy Kahle, Cora Loveland, Mic Loveland, Rahul Sridhar, Malathay Sethuraman, Mike Hall, Pam Condos, Bruce Thomsen, Phil Burton, Mark Stephenson

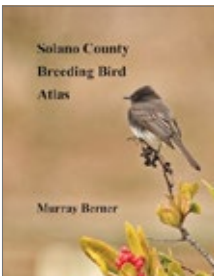
CURRENT BREEDING BIRD ATLASES FOR SALE ON OUR WEBSITE.



Breeding Birds of Solano County SECOND EDITION

Also available as an ebook.

After more than six years of preparation and extensive field work, this book is the culmination of our Solano Breeding Bird Atlas project and the definitive resource on the nesting birds of Solano County. [CLICK HERE](#) for more info and purchase.



Solano County Breeding Bird Atlas

Presented as traditional paper bound, softcover. Unlike the large format, hardcover, coffee-table book, this version of

the atlas has limited photos. **Note:** This is NOT a guide for bird identification. Rather, it describes current and 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. Available on [Blurb Books](#) for purchase.

Napa County Breeding Bird Atlas

NSAS conducted a breeding bird atlas project during the late 1980's and the 1990's. The field work was completed in 1993. *This is the most fact-based and comprehensive volume on the breeding birds of Napa County.* [CLICK HERE](#) and scroll down for more info and purchase..

Birds of Napa County

From grebes, herons, loons, and ducks to creepers, owls, flycatchers, and sparrows, there is a liveliness to renowned illustrator Hermann Heinzel's Napa. [CLICK HERE](#) and scroll down for more info and purchase.

Importance of Breeding Bird Atlases

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species, such as the Loggerhead Shrike and Burrowing Owl, emphasizing the value of this early data. They also documented the presence of several endangered species including: Ridgway's Rail (formerly Clapper Rail), Black Rail, Snowy Plover, Least Tern, and Swainson's Hawk.

Species of Concern included Grasshopper Sparrow, and both Burrowing Owl and Tricolored Blackbirds which are now considered endangered.

The Atlases led to or informed conservation efforts to protect certain species by identifying conservation concerns and highlighting the importance of certain habitats. The data from these original atlas provides an essential baseline for conservationists, policymakers, and agencies like the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to make informed decisions about protecting vulnerable species and their habitats. They have also led to areas which are rich in bird diversity that are currently protected including the Suisun Marsh, Montezuma Wetlands, Grizzly Island Wildlife Area, and the hill environments near Vacaville and Benicia. Restoration efforts which have taken place along some streams, like Putah Creek, were informed, in part, by the atlas's findings that these waterways were in poor condition for supporting breeding bird populations.

The Solano County Water Agency has also worked to protect and manage habitat for endangered species like the Burrowing Owl. This work also led to more attention for Rangeland conservation. Regional Audubon initiatives, such as the Conservation Ranching program, work with ranchers to implement bird-friendly practices including planting native grasses and stopping the use of pesticides, which have had a profound impact on grassland species, including a number highlighted in the atlas.

We hope to launch into our surveys during the next five years. This project will require many, if not hundreds of volunteer birders to complete the observations and data submissions. Analysis will take up to an additional five years, but we are excited by the potential conservation actions that may take place as a result of determining how bird species are faring and which areas of our counties are critical for their survival.

In order to support this endeavor, we are attempting to raise \$10,000 to contribute to the success of this project. We are hoping that our members will value this project as much as our Board of Directors and support us during the coming months both as volunteer birders, and in or efforts to raise these funds.

We would like to thank our members in advance for their incredible support over the years. We are hopeful this BBA Project will continue our important work of supporting birds and protecting critical habitats throughout our region and across our state. ▲

A Big Thank You to Our Members

Your support, generosity of your time, and infectious enthusiasm, contributes enormously to the success and growth of our Chapter. *You are awesome!*



Napa-Solano Audubon Society
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Napa-Solano Audubon along with other Napa County environmental groups have formed a Wildlife Habitat Conservation Coalition as an ad hoc group to advocate for Napa County officials to create a local conservation plan for the county.

The Coalition, now celebrating its first anniversary, includes volunteer activists, non-profits, government agencies, and others asking for a dedicated plan *banning certain development in critical habitat areas, protecting wildlife corridors and saving land for conservation*. **The Coalition meets monthly at the Gasser Foundation, 433 Soscol Ave. Napa, CA.**

Website: <https://napaconservation.org> For more info, contact Yvonne: <https://napasolanobirds.org/contact-us/>

You CAN Help Save Wildlife & Their Habitats. Join our efforts today.
napasolanobirds.org

Protect Our Salvador Creek Salmons

Vintage High School Seniors, Claire Mulligan and Arya Adhye, members of the school Conservation Club, pose with signs recently posted on the campus bridges over Salvador Creek to educate and protect migrating salmon in the coming winter months. This project was a joint effort of NSAS, The Sierra Club, Vintage High School, ICARE, and the Golden State Salmon Association.



Fundraising efforts are now continuing to place two larger signs on public access Garfield Park bridge in the hopes that this will curtail the harassment of the spawning salmon that has been occurring in the creek that runs past Vintage High and Garfield Little League Park. ▲

Habitat restoration begins with us.

