



SONG SPARROW

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www.napasolanobirds.org

SPRING 2026 CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

- Mar. 12 Thu. Speaker Series: Galápagos Birds and the Study of Evolution
- Mar. 28 Sat. Field Trip: Mine's Road
- Apr. 09 Thu. Birds of the California Delta
- Apr. 18 Sat. Earth Day Festival
- Apr. 23 Thu. Field Trip: Mount Diablo's Mitchell Canyon
- Apr. 25 Sat. Napa Creek Cleanup; Earth Day
- May 14 Thu. Speaker Series: Bringing Birds to the Garden
- Jun. 04 Thu. 3-Day Field Trip: Mono Lake & Central Sierra
- Ongoing Weekly Bird Walks
- Ongoing Beginner Bird Walks



Don't Miss an Article

The PRINT version of our newsletter often has to shorten or omit articles that have been submitted, simply because we don't have room.

However, you can enjoy ALL the submissions here, in this DIGITAL version. Enjoy!

Be Notified of 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!



YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON / MARK STEPHENSON

The Yellow-crowned Night Heron is back again!

By Ron Brown

Some Bay area birders may be unaware of an unusual visitor that joins the local birds that feed and roost around the edges of Richardson Bay in Sausalito.

This is a Yellow-crowned Night Heron which breeds in the eastern US and has year round populations in the south of the US (coastal areas of Southern Florida-Alabama-Mississippi), in South Baja, Mexico and South America and some Caribbean islands. From Cornell World of Birds "A significant northward expansion of breeding range occurred between approximately 1925 and 1960, particularly between 1945 and 1955 ... Strays often appear north and west of mapped range, mainly in spring (adults) or in late summer/early fall (juveniles), and non-breeders evidently over summer widely, at least in Mexico" (Howell and Webb 1995.). It is found in areas where there are plentiful crustaceans, the main part of this bird's diet. Night Herons primarily feed at night as their name suggests but may be active during the day.

Information on this unusual visitor to Sausalito can be found from various sources. On the internet Cornell University has eBird and "World of Birds", there are also scientific and newspaper articles. **eBird Marin:** Reports of the Yellow-crowned Night Heron around Sausalito have been recorded every winter from 2019 to 2023. There is now a "stakeout Yellow-crowned Night Heron (2021-25)". There were also sightings at Inverness City Park in Oct/Nov 2005. West

Continued on Page 7

President's Corner

By Mark Stephenson, NSAS President



NSAS has a wonderful Board of Directors and a terrific cadre of volunteers that make our organization one of the best Chapters in the state! **Phil Burton**, our Vice President, has done an amazing job this year, coordinating our expert speakers for our monthly meetings. **Regina Brinker**, our Admin Assistant extraordinaire, has helped with eBlasts, the website, and broadcasting our programs and activities to the community through newspapers and other forums. Our expert birders, from **Andrew Ford** who leads our Weekly Bird Walks to local hotspots, to **Tom Slyker** and **Carol Boykin** who lead our Beginner Bird Walks at The Wetlands, to **Wendy Cole** & **Bruce Thomsen** who organize our Monthly Field Trips further afield, all do an amazing job of sharing the joy of birding with our more than 400 members.

Many additional volunteers are starting to help us with our five-year **Breeding Bird Atlas** (see article on supporting this BBA) by recording their observations in eBird to support this critical project. **Judy Kahle**, our Membership Coordinator, keeps membership lists updated and supports new and returning members to join in our many fun activities. **Helena Kassel** records our Board meeting minutes and **David Kassel**, our Treasurer is on top of our budgets and expenses.

We have a number of volunteers giving lessons in our schools including Jane Hicks, Judy Kahle, Pam Condos and yours truly. We have an army of volunteers who support our **Citizen Science Projects** including Robin Leong, Tom Slyker and Murray Berner who coordinate our Christmas Bird Counts and who recruited over 120 volunteers this winter to make these events so successful. Tom and many others lead our **Bird Season's Surveys at American Canyon Wetlands and Benicia Community Parks every week of the year!** Tom, Wendy David, Helena, Wendy, Betty Labastida, and 30 others monitor our **Bluebird boxes**. Pam, Phil, Adam Cimino, and yours truly survey our local parks for **National Audubon's Climate Research**.

This year's Winged Migration Expo was more incredible than ever with hundreds of community members enjoying the field trips, presentations and tabling at Mare Island with special kudos to **Jane Hicks**, who was our representative on the organization committee. **Betty Labastida** coordinates our Earth Day and Coastal Cleanup Napa Creek Team, and all of our Board members and others help with our educational tabling at these two wonderful community events. **Yvonne Baginski** and **Roberto Valdez** have taken on the herculean task of conservation advocacy in both Napa and Solano Counties, and lobbied hard to protect critical bird and wildlife habitat from being developed.

A huge thank you to this year's many volunteers! We would like to encourage all of our members to participate in any activity that interests them from birding, to education, to citizen science, to conservation advocacy and habitat preservation. Come join in the fun!

Well, two grandchildren are better than one, and now I have two! Lewis and Reese were born only three months apart to my oldest son and daughter. Spending time with them means that **I will have less time to devote to being your President**. I love the many activities that immerse me in our Chapter and will continue to do much of this work. However, *I would like to encourage someone else to consider being the President or Co-President of Napa-Solano Audubon for next year to give me extra time for my grandkids! Please contact Regina Brinker at birdspotter26@gmail.com if you are interested in becoming a member of our Board for 2026-27 and helping us with our Mission!* ▲

Board of Directors

President Mark Stephenson	Membership Judy Kahle
Vice President Phil Burton	Communications Regina Brinker
Secretary Helena Kassel	Programs Phil Burton
Treasurer David Kassel	Napa Conservation Yvonne Baginsky
Conservation Robin Leong	Solano Conservation Roberto Valdez
Field Trips Carol Boykin	Director at Large Pam Condos
Education Coordinator TBA	

To contact our Board Members:

<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.

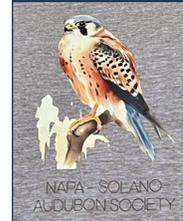
All donations are tax-deductible.



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

NSAS Kestrel T-Shirts



This beautiful T-Shirt is perfect to give as a gift or for yourself. Only \$25.00 napasolanobirds.org/for-sale/

ARTWORK: PAM CONDOS



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.

napasolanobirds.org

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.

GALÁPAGOS BIRDS AND THE STUDY OF EVOLUTION

When: Thurs., Mar. 12; 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Dr. Jaime Chaves

Location: Napa Valley Lutheran Church & Zoom



GREAT FRIGATEBIRD / DOUGLAS GIMLER

Dr. Chavez's research centers on understanding how biodiversity is generated and maintained in the Neotropics, with a particular emphasis on the connection between molecular variation and phenotypic traits. He has applied phylogenetic comparative methods, and integrated data from fieldwork and museum collections, to investigate evolutionary histories of organisms, addressing fundamental questions in biodiversity. By combining molecular genetics with field biology, his presentation will explore evolutionary processes at multiple levels: from population divergence and speciation in action, to species-level phylogeography and systematics. Dr. Chavez's projects are grounded in international, multidisciplinary collaborations that actively engage local students and communities. While he employs molecular techniques across a variety of taxa, he is especially drawn to birds for their remarkable diversity and life histories. The majority of his work focuses on species on the Galápagos Islands.

BIRDS OF THE CALIFORNIA DELTA

When: Thurs., Apr. 09; 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Aaron Haiman

Location: Benicia Public Library & Zoom



WHITE-FACED IBIS / MARK STEPHENSON

Based on his new book, "Birds of the California Delta", this talk will focus on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta as a place of connections and complexities. This is a place where rivers meet one another, where freshwater meets salt water, where fish link inland forests with the open ocean, where birds from the north come for the winter, and where birds from the south come to breed. The Delta is also a place of complexity. How water interacts with land and forms soil is a complex process. How humans use water, and land contains a nest of complex pressures. All these connections and complexities play out on a daily basis throughout the Delta.

About the Speaker: Aaron N.K. Haiman, a life-long birder, began volunteering at a young age with bird research organizations before receiving a BS in Environmental Science from UC Berkeley as well as MS degrees in Avian Science and Animal Behavior from UC Davis. Aaron guides bird walks, mentors high school students in ecology and sustainability, leads a youth bird-a-thon team, gives presentations on birds and habitat restoration, and is active on YouTube and social media under the handle "A Birding Naturalist" sharing knowledge of birds, nature, and science. He works for the State of California and lives in West Sacramento.



BRINGING BIRDS TO THE GARDEN

When: Thurs., May. 14; 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Ben Jacob-Schwartz

Location: Napa Valley Lutheran Church and Zoom



ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD | B. MATSUBARA

In this presentation, Benny Jacob-Schwartz will help you discover how California's 5,000+ native plants and 700 bird species connect and how backyard gardeners can support declining habitats. Learn practical steps to create bird-friendly native plant gardens and meet the species that visit them. You will gain the tools to transform your backyards into bird friendly habitat! It may be the solution to support our native California birds to continue to thrive despite the loss of countless acres of native habitat. Transforming our yards into bird friendly gardens can even bring some species back from serious decline and become a formula of success to save a number of endangered species! Information about local native plant and gardening resources will be shared.

Native Plant Sales

Solano County

Saturday, May 2nd from 10AM-2PM.

In-person shopping takes place at the Benicia Presbyterian Church (1400 E. Second St.). An online sale happens the week before, with a pickup option in Fairfield. The in-person sale will have chapter members present to answer questions and give recommendations to folks based on yard conditions and other preferences. Sponsored by the William L. Jepson CNPS Chapter.

Napa County

Saturday, April 11 (10am - 3pm) and Sunday, April 12 (10am - 2pm) at the Martha Walker Native Habitat Garden, Skyline Park, Napa. Sponsored by the Napa Valley CNPS chapter.

Calendar of Events cont.

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.

MINES ROAD AND DEL PUERTO CANYON

When: Sat.; Mar. 28; 8:00am - 4:00pm

Leader: Robin Leong

SPACE IS LIMITED. Register soon at:
<https://tinyurl.com/registerMinesRd>

LAWRENCE'S GOLDFINCH / M. STEPHENSON



Mine's Road stretches 35 miles from Livermore to San Jose! We will meet at the junction of Tesla and Mines Roads at 8 a.m. with a full tank of gas, money for entrance fees, lunch and plenty of liquids. **The majority of this trip is not a hiking trip, but a true road trip.** Participants should try to carpool, as there are only a few small pull outs for a long caravan. We will be using Jean Richmond's book "Birding in Northern California" as our guide. As we head down the beginning of Mines Road along arroyos at the lower elevations we hope to observe Acorn and Lewis's Woodpeckers, Phainopeplas, Yellow-billed Magpies & Lark Sparrows. At Del Valle Regional Park we will stop at the reservoir that hosts a variety ducks and waterbirds & look for Green Herons, Wood Ducks, Greater Yellowlegs, Great Horned Owls, and a variety of Warbler species. Along the road at higher elevations in the extensive chaparral zone we have a chance to see a variety of exciting birds including Lawrence's Goldfinch,

California Thrashers, Rufous-crowned and Bell's Sparrows. *There is even the possibility of sighting a Roadrunner!* At the junction of Mines & Del Puerto Canyon Road we will head East with a stop at Frank Raines County Park. There we will visit a riparian woodland that has a host of resident birds and we should also be treated to a number of early migrants as well. The trip will end at HWY 5, where we turn north and head back home which will complete our 75 mile round-trip journey. **Bring binoculars, spotting scope, LUNCH, money for entrance fees to parks, drinks, snacks.**

MOUNT DIABLO'S MITCHELL CANYON

When: Thur., Apr. 23

Leader: Mark Stephenson & Bruce Thomsen

Detailed Information and Registration sign-ups will be sent out about a month before the trip.



CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD / M. STEPHENSON

This is the perfect time of year to view Mt. Diablo's Migrants and Resident Birds. Deer Flat Creek is flowing from Spring showers and the canyon is resounding with bird song. Anna's and migrating Calliope Hummingbirds are feeding on spring flowers and males can be heard zipping down from hundreds of feet up in their display flights hoping to impress a mate. Acorn, Nuttall's & Downy Woodpeckers are actively chiseling out nests. Olive-sided, Western and Ash-throated Flycatchers are setting up territories and Hammond's are passing through on their way to the Sierra. Hutton's and Warbling Vireos will be actively starting nest building. Warblers including our resident Orange-crowned and Wilson's will be singing along riparian corridors and Yellow-rumped, Nashville,

Black-throated Gray along with an occasional Hermit will be feeding in the trees tops. In the higher chaparral we expect to find CA Thrashers, Rufous-crowned and Bell's Sparrows.

3-DAY MONO LAKE AND THE CENTRAL SIERRA

When: Thu-Sat., Jun. 4-6

Leader: Mark Stephenson & Bruce Thomsen

NOTE: Dates are tentative. Registration sign-ups will be sent out via eBlasts.



SAGE THRASHER / MARK STEPHENSON

Mono Lake and nearby reservoirs host a number of exciting bird species in early June from Gadwall, Redhead and Ruddy Ducks to Common Mergansers, Clark's and Eared Grebes, White Pelicans, Caspian Terns, Avocets, Willets, and Spotted Sandpipers. Open Sagebrush and Pine Woodlands will feature Black-billed Magpies, Lewis's Woodpeckers, Pinyon Jays and Sage Thrashers, Brewer's and Sagebrush Sparrows with even a chance for Greater Sage Grouse. Riparian Areas nearby can be a magnet for Swainson's Thrush, Warbling Vireos, Yellow Warblers, Lazuli Buntings and Bullock's Orioles. The Sierra host a completely different set of birds from Calliope Hummingbirds, Mountain Chickadees, Pygmy Nuthatches, Pine Siskin, Clark's Nutcrackers, Mountain Bluebirds, Townsend's Solitaire, Black-backed Woodpeckers, Red-breasted and Williamson's Sapsuckers to MacGillivray's, Hermit, Blackthroated Gray and Nashville Warblers to Thick-billed Fox Sparrows, Green-tailed Towhees, Cassin's Finch and Western Tanagers. This should be an fun adventure with many exciting birds to find and observe. We will be going a week before the popular Chautauqua Birding Festival.

Calendar of Events cont.

EVENTS/ACTIVITIES

EARTH DAY FESTIVAL OXBOW COMMUNITY PARK, NAPA

When: Sat., Apr. 18; 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 providing food and activities for all ages. Stop by the Napa Solano Audubon's table and learn all about our many programs.

EARTH DAY NAPA CREEK CLEAN-UP

When: Sat., Apr. 25; 9:00-12:00 p.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.

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.* ▲

American Canyon Wetlands and Measure L

The Napa Solano Audubon Society was recently awarded a grant by the City of American Canyon to help promote the American Canyon Wetlands as one of the top birding sites of Napa County. The number of species and biodiversity found at the Wetlands are unmatched in other parts of the county. Sightings have included endangered Bald Eagles, Burrowing Owls and even Black Rails. Flying overhead one can see Egrets, Shorebirds, White-tailed Kites and numerous other Birds of Prey. The Eucalyptus forest is home to several species of Bats, Great Horned Owls and Monarch Butterflies have even been sighted.

This wildlife area is nature's gift to our community. Two Sundays every month, Audubon Society volunteers organize groups for "Beginner Bird Walks." This is an easy walk, along the Bay Trail, from 9-11 a.m, and introduces participants to bird identification. Last Sunday, 18 people attended, and many were from other Bay Area Counties. Each was making a first time visit, to this distinctive ecosystem. More information on these walks can be found at our website.

An ecosystem such as this is rare nowadays and needs active conservation and protection. Directly north of the wetlands sits a 157-acre private property which is a valuable ecotone, containing irreplaceable space and habitat necessary for wildlife to thrive. This parcel is an essential buffer to the American Canyon community to protect it from sea level rise and should not be developed. Protecting this buffer, consisting of forests and marshland, is why we are so concerned about the Measure L initiative that is currently circulating in American Canyon.

Measure L is gathering signatures to develop this property. The Napa-Solano Audubon Society is asking that this property not be developed. As an alternative, we propose the City of American Canyon negotiate a conservation easement to protect the entire property in perpetuity. There are many funding sources for conservation easements and local experts are available to take this effort into an active reality.

The extensive development of American Canyon and south Napa County has already had a considerable impact on local wildlife. We've seen a considerable decline in waterbirds, songbirds and other mammals in this area. These are animals that won't be returning because there's no longer sufficient habitat left to support their survival. If this 157-acre property is developed, it will be a significant loss, not only to the ecology of the region, but future generations as well.

American Canyon is currently preparing to build an Ecology Center on the wetlands, as well. We support the creation of such a center. If building the center, and taking pride in the wetlands is of value to the community, then protecting and maintaining a stable wildlife population is essential as well.

We ask both the City of American Canyon and Napa County, that in the negotiations with the property owners of 1661 Green Island Road, that a conservation easement be considered as a top priority and the Measure L initiative be taken out of circulation.

Reprinted from The Napa Valley Register | Letter to the Editor. March 8, 2026

Conservation Advocacy

Actions to protect birds and their habitats

By Yvonne Baginski

The National Audubon Society just released a very sobering report on the 30% decline of birds, throughout the nation, since 1970. The reasons include pesticide use, habitat loss, cats and climate change. *Their report can be read here:* <https://tinyurl.com/NatAudubonBirdDecline>

A report by Cornell Labs is here:

<https://tinyurl.com/CornellBirdDecline>

The question we face: What actions can we take, individually and collectively, to protect birds and conserve habitat? *Here's a partial list:*

1. Keep cats indoors, all the time.
2. Stop poison spraying . Those sprays kill EVERY insect, and they poison soils. Plus, they cause cancers in humans.
3. Don't clear out your leaves, or dig in your soil until nightly temperatures are regularly at around 50 degrees. Leave your yard a "mess." It's better for the insects and birds.
4. Become involved in local land development issues. Those empty fields in your city are already planned for development. Find out more about what's going on.
5. Turn off all outside lights. Or, have them on motion detector timers.
6. Create bird friendly habitat with native plants, shrubs and trees. Get rid of your front lawn and replace with native plants.
7. We need more citizen-scientists. To understand how birds are faring, we need to know what people are seeing in their backyards, neighborhoods and wild place. Join a project, such as ebird.org, Project Feeder Watch, the Christmas Bird Count, the Breeding Bird Survey, or the International Shorebird Survey, to record your bird observations.

The NSAS Conservation Committee meets the 3rd Thursday of each month, 6 p.m. in the Cordelia Public Library. **Current projects include opposition to Solano County's, California Forever, which will be a disaster for local birdlife, and the American Canyon's Green Island Vineyard proposed development on the estuary.** NSAS just completed grid-mapping the entire property now owned by California Forever and have each grid area defined by critical habitat needed by special status birds. This remarkable project will give those preparing the Environmental Impact Report a clear picture of what birds are living on those lands. *Special thank you to Janelle Hall and Rusty Scalf for the enduring work to make this mapping project happen.*

If you'd like to be involved in the Conservation Committee, please contact: yvonnebaginski@gmail.com. There is much to be done. ▲

Consider Joining Solano Together and Protect Our Beautiful Region

Since time immemorial, the Patwin and Miwok people stewarded the lands of what is now known as eastern Solano County. This area is blessed with its vibrant agricultural industry, iconic grasslands, sustainable wind power, and unique delta habitats.

Montezuma Hills and surrounding areas have been home to highly productive dryland farms and rare vernal pool habitats for generations. Farmers and ranchers have adapted to worsening drought and innovated with dryland farming and regenerative agriculture practices, even in the face of growing climate hazards.

This special place is now threatened by a proposed sprawl development in the region.

We are a group of concerned residents, leaders, and organizations who came together to form Solano Together, a coalition that envisions a better future for our region that focuses development into existing cities and strengthens our agricultural industry.

Our work is driven by an alternative vision for Solano County in the face of Flannery Associates' claims about California Forever's benefits—our vision is guided by local voices and perspectives.

As a science and fact-based coalition, Solano Together will provide the public, voters, and decision-makers, with accurate information on the impacts of California Forever & unite around a shared vision for the future.

www.solanotogether.org

Yellow-crowned Night Heron

Continued from Page 1

Marin Island, 7/20/1971, and nearby Loch Lomond Marina 11/12/1972-5/17/1973.

It seems this out-of-place species of bird was first found in Marin in 1971 around West Marin Island, where Great Egrets may have been breeding. The bird I was so delighted to see in 2026 probably first arrived or was first spotted in Sausalito in 2019 and it is now its chosen overwintering site. Where could it have come from in 2019?

In February 2021 the **Marin Independent Journal** published an article titled "Sausalito gets rare visit from southern heron". **eBird San Mateo County:** Coyote Point County Park, San Mateo 7/24/2002 - 5/13/2024. Año Nuevo SP-October 2023. **eBird Monterey County:** Elkhorn Slough 11&12th of October 2025. *Yellow-crowned Night Herons are now established and breeding in Southern California since 2005.*

There is often excitement when this bird shows up in unexpected places. *May 2018, in Pennsylvania the reported: "Yellow-crowned night herons like raising a family in Harrisburg."*

Where does the bird that overwinters in Sausalito come from? Looking at Cornell's "World of Birds" range map it is possible that it comes from the breeding areas in the Eastern US or Mexico or the Non-Breeding population of Baja. The long distances birds migrate is one of the reasons birders are so fascinated by these enigmatic creatures. One way birds relocate is after the breeding season when juveniles have to find new territories or follow adults to wintering grounds. If our Sausalito bird originally came from the breeding sites in the US, it would have crossed or gone around some serious mountain ranges. If it came from Baja or the coast of Mexico, it would have left a climate and habitat similar to Marin's. It would not have been a migratory trip to a wintering ground and traveling so far from its place of birth

would seem unlikely. The e-Bird sightings in California in May and July are also puzzling.

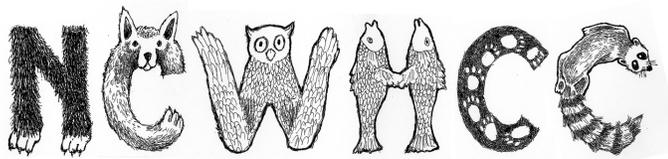
New scientific techniques using feathers and mineral content could answer the question of where our lonesome Sausalito bird came from. There have also been major advances in telemetry. The transmitters attached to the bird are now extremely small. The location signals from these tiny transmitters can now be detected by an expanded network of receivers, such as the Motus Wildlife Tracking Community. Audubon Canyon Ranch (now All Hands Ecology) in Marin is part of this community and built a receiving tower on its property by Tomales Bay. They have tagged Great Egrets and discovered some amazing travels similar to the journey our Sausalito visitor must make.

I could not find enough data or information to determine when this solitary bird arrives and leaves Sausalito. Does it return to the area it fledged to breed? A return to the breeding range in the US would seem more likely and the arrival of winter a key to its return to Sausalito.

An interesting scientific article from *Western Birds* in 2008 on the hybridization of a Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned Night Heron in the wild at Imperial Beach in San Diego county raises interesting possibilities for Sausalito's solitary bird. The San Diego Black & Yellow-crowned Night Herons shared nesting responsibilities and successfully fledged young of which only one survived to leave the nest. The scientific paper did not indicate which of this hybrid pair was male or female.

The Yellow-crowned Night Heron roosts with some local residents this year. During the day, the Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Snowy Egret and Great Blue Heron are often close together at a roosting spot by the edge of Richardson Bay.

Whenever our special Sausalito bird leaves, I hope it returns to other Yellow-crowned Night Herons and maybe I will see it again next year. ▲



NAPA COUNTY WILDLIFE HABITAT CONSERVATION COALITION

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/>



Every Birder Can Contribute to the California Breeding Bird Atlas

Collecting Data for the California Breeding Bird Atlas will be one of the most important activities we undertake in the next five years. We want to encourage every member to use the eBird app while in the field to record their birding observations.

The eBird app is simple and intuitive to use, and can be downloaded onto your phone whether its an Apple iPhone or an Android. **The app allows you to record every species and number of birds seen on your outing by using their banding codes** which are usually the first two letters of the bird’s first name and the first two letters of the birds second name.

For example: The banding code for Mourning Dove is: **MODO**, and Lesser Goldfinch is **LEGO**. Banding codes save you from having to type out the bird’s complete name, and once you get the hang of it, this technique is extremely fast!

Listing the number of birds and species observed while you are in the field keeps you from forgetting a species and helps to more accurately track the number of birds for each species that you observe. The eBird App allows you to become an active citizen scientist by recording your field observations accurately! Of course, you may also add breeding code data within the app while you’re in the field,

if you want to take the time. When you return to the comfort of your home, you can either use the app, by selecting the breeding code buttons (the complete behavior appears when you select a button). You can also use your desktop or laptop computer (some folks feel a computer screen makes it easier to add data than your phone app) to go to the California Bird Atlas Portal and enter any breeding information observed in the field.

It is extremely easy to enter this portal from a computer. Here are eleven simple steps that will lead you to entering Breeding Bird Data.

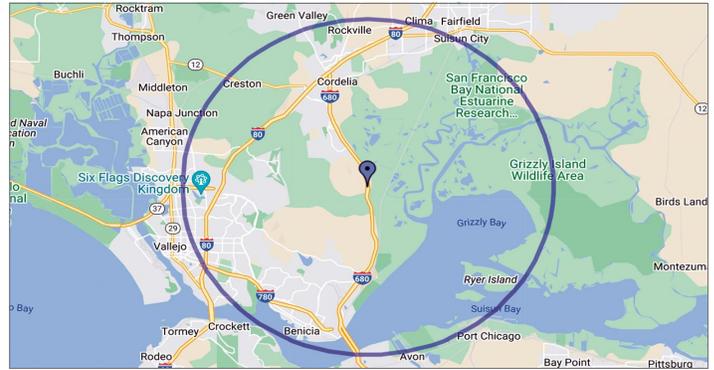
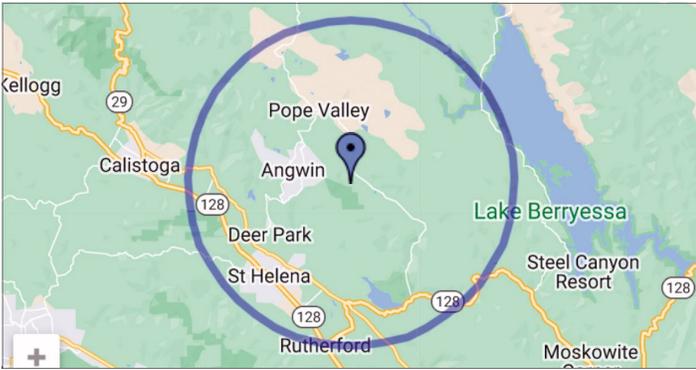
1. Open eBird (<https://eBird.org>).
2. Select “My dBird” from the menus at the top of the window.
3. Select “Manage My Checklists” (the first option from the Menu on the left side of your screen).
4. Select the specific checklist from which you want to enter breeding bird observations by clicking on the “Blue Date” in the left column.
5. Click on the Blue Checklist Tools Drop Down Menu at the top right of your screen.
6. Scroll Down this drop down menu to “Change Portal” and the California Bird Atlas will be the first option.
7. Click on the Edit Species Button near the top right of your screen.
8. Voilà! Every species will have an “Add Breeding Code” or “Details” button next to their name.
9. Click the “Add Breeding Code” or “Details” button for all species you observed breeding bird behaviors.
10. Simply select the highest code from the hierarchical list of of breeding bird behaviors or add any details observed not listed. These range from a flyover, to a bird seen in the appropriate breeding habitat, to a singing bird, to a courtship display, to nest building, and so on, to finding a nest with eggs or young. The Atlas protocol is to select the highest breeding behavior observed.
11. Don’t forget to click on the SAVE Button!

Many thanks for helping us to collect this valuable breeding bird data in Napa and Solano Counties as well as any other California counties which you visit and observe breeding bird behaviors. You are now a member of our California Breeding Bird Atlas Team! ▲

Hierarchical Code List

NY: Nest with young	CN: Carrying Nesting Material	T: Territorial Defense
NE: Nest w/eggs	PE: Physiological Evidence	P: Pair in Suitable Habitat
FS: Carrying Fecal Sac	B: Woodpecker/Wren Nest Buidling	M: Multiple (7+) Singing Birds
FY: Feeding Young	A: Agitated Behavior	S: Singing Bird
CF: Carrying Food	N: Visiging Probable Nest Site	H: Appropriate Habitat
ON: Occupied Nest	NB: Nest Building	F: Flyover
UN: Used Nest	C: Courtship Display	

NSAS's Christmas Bird Counts 2025-26 Results



ANGWIN CBC RESULTS / JAN. 01, 2026

by Murray Berner

Thirty-seven birders found 129 species on count day plus a count week Rock Pigeon. Rarities include returning Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Mountain Bluebirds in Pope Valley. A female(!) Eurasian Wigeon was on the water near St Helena.

Overnight rain turned to clouds and occasional showers during the day. With few exceptions, aquatic species were present in normal numbers. Despite the clouds, many raptors totals were above average. Six Least Sandpipers were at Berryessa.

Few of us were out looking for owls in the early rain and the low numbers reflect that. The 7,400 robins and 5,200 starlings were the most abundant birds.

Passerines in general, held to recent averages. A lot of missed species have become easier to miss over the past few years. Greater Scaup and Golden Eagle to name two.

My thanks to all the birders, All of us thank the dinner people: Claudia and her family, Ava, and Betty.

Mark Stephenson, NSAS President, also merits our appreciation. ▲

Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour

FREE (donations gladly welcomed)

Saturday, May 2, 2026 | Tour of 50 Bayside Gardens

Sunday, May 3, 2026 | Tour of 20 Inland Gardens

April 4-5, 2026 | 10am-3pm | Online Tour

This delightful collection of native plant gardens ranges from established wildlife oases to brand new installations, large lots in the hills to small front-yard gardens, local native plants to natives from throughout California, and gardens designed and installed by owners and those designed and installed by pros.

For more info and to register:

<https://bringingbackthenatives.net/>

BENICIA CBC RESULTS / DEC. 15, 2025

by Tom Slyker

This year 80 birders turned out early on a Monday morning to participate in the Benicia Christmas Bird Count. Even though they faced a foggy morning they were saying “Hallelujah” because we avoided the wind and rain that has plagued the past few Benicia Christmas counts.

Most of the birders remained at lower elevations where the fog lifted early and the birding was excellent. Unfortunately, some birders were counting birds in the hills between Benicia and the Fairfield / American Canyon area, and they spent the entire day in the fog. For the count day our birders found 165 species and counted over 57,000 birds. For the count week, we were able to add 5 additional species for a grand total of 170 species during the week. The five most populous species were Coots, Starlings, Ruddy Ducks, Red-winged Blackbirds, and Goldeneyes. We counted more than 2,500 of each species. We only counted 81 Pintails, which was the lowest total for this species since the count was started in 1930. One of the highlights of the day was a flock of 9 Cattle Egrets visiting the farm fields along Cordelia Road. For the day it was a good mix of ducks, shorebirds, raptors and songbirds that enabled us to achieve our count results.

Our thanks go out to all the birders who participated in this year's count. They are the people who make this count a successful event year after year!

Also, we need to thank: Anne Cope and Cindy Slyker for putting together our dinner event, Joe Valdez for driving his boat for the count on Suisun Bay, Regina Brinker for her organizing skills, Eric Pilotte for his help in getting the final count results submitted to National Audubon, and Robin Leong for his continued input to making the Benicia CBC a success! ▲

Who's Your Evolutionary Neighbor?

By Pam Condos | Adapted from *Living Bird*, Summer 2024

Evolution is a fascinating process whereby living organisms change their heritable traits over time, typically generations. It is, in essence, descent with inherited modification.

One of the most famous examples of this is the different beak shapes among Darwin's finches which evolved to match different food sources, adapting to drought and rain on the Galapagos islands.

Although these evolutionary changes typically take place over generations, recent research from UCLA published in the PNAS (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences) journal in January 2026 has shown that Dark-eyed Juncos in Los Angeles rapidly changed their beak shapes in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This species from the sparrow family is not usually found in dense cities. But as the climate crisis affected their more mountain forest habitats, they started taking up residence in Southern California's more urban settings, including colleges such as UCLA. The authors of the study hypothesized that, compared with the longerbeaked mountain-dwelling birds, the shorter beaks on campus birds might be better suited for a wider range diet of human food scraps. But in 2020, when classes first went online and dining halls closed, the beaks of newborn birds evolved back to their longer state fitted for their natural diets. Juncos that hatched in 2021 and 2022, after the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, had longer beaks similar to those seen on the mountain birds. But as pandemic restrictions eased at UCLA and students returned to classes, the city bird traits returned, and the beaks of the birds hatched in 2023 and 2024 were shortened once more. This is a rare example of rapid evolution.

There appears to be two different forces of evolution at play; Divergent evolution is pushing closely related species away from each other. This can be as simple as enhancing survival by better exploiting food sources or evading predators, thus creating natural selection. On the other hand, convergent evolution can push distantly related species to resemble each other. For example, bird species that eat flying insects tend to have similar body shapes.

This push and pull of divergent and convergent evolution can make for interesting realizations for birders when observing some of our favorite birds.

Take a look below and see if you can match which species are most closely related. Answers are below (don't peek).

1. Who is the closest relative of the Downy woodpecker?
 - a) Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
 - b) White-Headed Woodpecker
 - c) Hairy Woodpecker
2. Who is the closest relative of the Peregrine Falcon?
 - a) Osprey
 - b) Sharp-Shinned Hawk
 - c) Red-lored Parrot
3. Who is the closest relative of the Chimney Swift?
 - a) Leach's Storm-Petrel
 - b) Northern Rough-winged Swallow
 - c) Ruby-throated Hummingbird
4. Who is the closest relative of the American Goldfinch?
 - a) Saffron Finch
 - b) Verdin
 - c) Iiwi

No peeking until you take the test.

1. (a) The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker.

For many years the Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers were considered close relatives, but near-perfect matching plumage is an example of convergent evolution. The Downy likely evolved feather patterns to make it look like a Hairy to confuse predators or competitors for food. Recent molecular DNA research shows that these two species actually split apart over 6 million years ago and the Downy belongs to a clade with the Lesser-Spotted Woodpecker.

2. (c) The Red-lored Parrot.

Several decades ago researchers thought that falcons, hawks, and other birds of prey were closely related. But recent DNA analysis shows falcons in a separate clade from hawks and eagles. Falcons are more closely related to parrots, sharing some features of skeletal anatomy.

3. (c) The Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

Although swifts and hummingbirds look and behave very differently, they are connected by a common ancestor. Their anatomy holds some clues; both have tiny feet covered in bare skin, and both have short, thick humerus bones in their wings that facilitate their flying abilities.

4. (c) The Iiwi.

This gorgeous honeycreeper of the Hawaiian islands is included with goldfinches in the Fringillidae family.

Saffron Finches and Verdins, although sharing many physical characteristics with the American Goldfinch, are both members of different families.

MARK STEPHENSON



Western Bluebirds Need Your Help: Spring Volunteers Needed!

Do you love wildlife and birds? Are you someone that can't help but to stop and watch when a flock of birds flies over? Does the sound of songbirds lighten your spirits? You may be the right fit for this fun volunteer opportunity. The Napa-Solano Audubon Society is looking for spring volunteers to help with our Bluebird Trails throughout Napa & Solano County.

Volunteers are needed to visit nest boxes weekly, from March until August, and monitor the progress of the nesting bluebirds. We have a number of trails at local parks in Napa and Solano Counties. Training will be provided on how to carefully check on the nesting birds. Volunteers record the nesting progress for each box along their trail. Results can be recorded on paper or directly into the Nestwatch App if you are "App-savvy"!

Many volunteers enjoy a little handywork, and may sometimes straighten leaning poles, build or make minor repairs to nestboxes, and clean out old nests.

If you'd like to 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 | Citizen Science Coordinator | tcslyker@comcast.net

Why is it important to monitor a bluebird nestbox?

Monitoring increases the chances of success for bluebirds using the box. Monitoring nestboxes will alert you to problems birds may be having with predators and competitors.

A box that is not monitored may do more harm to bluebirds than good. Bluebirds are tolerant of humans, and will not abandon a nestbox that is properly monitored.

Good records are valuable for determining population trends.

Our Tireless Volunteers, Betty Labastida and Pam Condos, at the Winged Migration Event



BETTY LABASTIDA



PAM CONDOS AND SOME OF HER ARTWORK



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

napasolanobirds.org

Napa Solano Audubon's mission is to share the joy of birding, promote conservation and scientific understanding of wild birds and their habitats, and provide engaging, science-based education throughout Napa and Solano counties.



PHOTO BY MARK STEPHENSON

Happiness is spending time on the trails with other birders.

Explore a world of happiness. Experience a world of joy and beauty. Your membership helps protect the wilderness and all who live there.

Become a member today.

<https://napasolanobirds.org/membership/>

NSAS Annual Elections Coming Soon in May!

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 6 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. ▲



A Big Thank You To Our Members

Your support, generosity of time, and infectious enthusiasm, contributes enormously to the success and growth of our Chapter.

You are awesome & appreciated!