



Madrone LEAVES

Madrone Audubon Society, Inc., Post Office Box 1911, Santa Rosa, California 95402

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Sonoma County Christmas Bird Count(s) 2021

West Sonoma County, Jan. 2, 2022

by Dr. Stacy Li with Team Leaders

The 55th annual West Sonoma County Christmas Bird Count was unusual. It occurred in 2022 (January 2nd) rather than 2021. It also marked the second year our CBC has been affected by the pandemic. The day began cold (some areas were below freezing), with very little wind unless you were in one of the areas experiencing heavy wind gusts, and initially very little cloud cover until it became cloudier as the day progressed. There were 102 observers (slightly lower than normal and probably due to the pandemic) who identified 175 species (about average) and 133,691 individuals (the highest number by far, at least in the last 17 years). The apparent story is that the cold only affected the terrestrial birds and the pelagic birds not so much.

2021 totals: Total species count 175. Total number of birds 133,690. Total observers 100.

2020 comparisons: Total species count 184. Total number of birds 44,572. Total observers 101.

2019 comparisons: Total species count 168. Total number of birds 28,861. Total observers 117.

How was the day for participants? Please enjoy reading narratives from each area, submitted by our area leaders.

Jonive Road, Colin Talcroft-Leader: It was a comparatively quiet day. We missed a fair number of birds we normally get. In particular, this area has consistently had all seven of the local woodpecker species (Nuttall's, Hairy, Downy, Pileated, Acorn, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Flicker), but we missed both Downy and Pileated this time. We have also very consistently had all three nuthatches every year, but we missed Red-breasted Nuthatch this year. Other species we almost always get, but missed this year, include Hutton's Vireo, Cedar Waxwing, White-tailed Kite, Mallard, Great Egret, and Pied-billed Grebe. We saw no rarities, but were pleased to see twelve Varied Thrushes, four Hooded Mergansers, three

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GENERAL MEETING

Monday, February 21, 7-8 pm.

American Badger – Let's Learn About Badgers and How to Help Them

Join Madrone Audubon President Susan Kirks, a Naturalist specializing in American Badger conservation and education, with 21 years of field study observations and experience with this rarely seen special status mammal. We'll learn about a badger's life, the importance of seasonal observations and awareness, and habitat and wildlife corridors in Sonoma and Marin Counties. Susan's experience is unique and relates to living in badger habitat and leading efforts in California to save open space, protect habitat and understand wildlife movement.



Juvenile Badger Spring 2019
Courtesy of Tom Reynolds

Zoom Meeting Link:

We'll meet via Zoom. Invitation link (copy and paste in web browser): <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87352086487?pwd=dXRleWV0c3RmcG9ZZkEwNzcyZERkdz09>

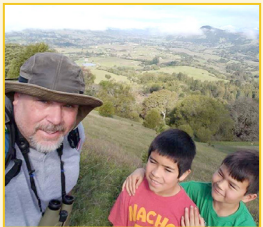
Or sign in to <http://www.zoom.us>

Meeting ID: 873 5208 6487 **Passcode:** 027410

Or phone in: 1-669-900-9128. Same Meeting ID and Pass Code as above.

Monday, March 21, 7-8 pm: Local North Bay Raptor Identification Program of West County Hawkwatch

Join Naturalist Larry Broderick, Madrone Audubon Board member and Raptor Expert, for a program of beginner novice ID features of North American raptors, along with natural history and regional updates of what's been seen this year. Special highlights will be included.



Naturalist Larry Broderick with sons Preston & Elljay
Courtesy of Larry Broderick

West County HawkWatch, established over 20 years ago, is an interpretive group for local raptor education and identification, with a special emphasis on helping people learn about natural history, current threats and identifying birds of prey.

Zoom Meeting Link:

We'll meet via Zoom. Invitation link (copy & paste in web browser) <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89732154497?pwd=a3dmQmdPRVVKdWVNSWpyeGU2cGtRQT09>

Or sign in to <http://www.zoom.us>

Meeting ID: 897 3215 4497 **Passcode:** 920039

Or phone in: 1-669-900-9128. Same Meeting ID and Pass Code as above.



SONOMA COUNTY CBC

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Red-breasted Sapsuckers, and seven sparrow species (Song, Fox, Golden-crowned, White-crowned, White-throated, Lincoln's, and Savannah)--aside from all the other birds we saw.

Freestone/Monte Rio, Brock Dolman-Leader: Area 2 consists of the area from Freestone to Occidental to Bohemia Ecological Preserve. We saw 45 species today, which may be low to average. Gordon? *Gordon Beebe (long time leader of this area) adds: Area #2 Freestone has had bird species totals from the mid-forties to high fifties in the last seven years, so it's on the low end. Five Kestrels were only matched once, in 2017. The last count we had Spotted Owl was in 2012. Barred rules...for now. Sounds like a nice (brrr) day overall.*

We recorded 1 Barred Owl on Count Week on Dec. 31st at Tony King's above Freestone. We had 3 counters (Brock Dolman, Denise Herzberg, Jim Coleman) from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and then 2 counters (Brock Dolman, Denise Herzberg) from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Frosty morning start in Occidental, but the day warmed up and was beautiful, although by 2 p.m. until 5 p.m., it clouded up completely. Little to no wind. Birdy morning and then a fairly quiet slow afternoon. Peregrine Falcon sitting in a snag at day's end on the ridge at Bohemia Preserve was lovely. Five Kestrels for this area seemed abundant :-). Nice to pish up a Marsh wren in a rush patch near the cattail swamp by Freestone. Sadly, no Dipper in Dutch Bill this year :-(. .

Valley Ford, Kaitlin Magoon-Leader: This year, the Area 3 team began our count day in the town of Valley Ford. Our territory is mostly open ranch land, so the local bird population had to contend with frost-covered fields and frozen-over ponds throughout the morning. Our mid-morning arrival at the nearby Valley Ford wetlands also coincided with a Peregrine Falcon on the hunt



Area 3 -Valley Ford Road, Northern Flicker
Courtesy of Kaitlin Magoon

for breakfast — which was fabulous to see, but probably contributed to our observing fewer passerine and shorebird species. A flock of Common Goldeneyes took off just as we got there, but otherwise, there wasn't a significant waterfowl presence. (The water level in the wetlands was surprisingly low, considering the recent rains.) Of the birds that remained undeterred by the cold or the Peregrine, the highlights were: a Loggerhead Shrike, a Wilson's Snipe, and some Western Meadowlarks (sheltering high in a willow tree). In the late morning, our team of four divided into three birding parties. Mike Hall took his scope to the Bodega farm

New Members

Sebastopol

*Molly Matheson & Daniel Schurman
Ben Prowell*

Sonoma

Mike Bobbitt

Donations

In Honor Of All Our Birds

by Richard Iverson

In Honor Of Susan Kirks

By Mary & Michael Cuoio

In Honor Of Lisa Peters & Patty Newland

by Carolyn Metz

pond, where he identified a nice range of duck species, including several Ring-necked Ducks. He also located the only American Pipit and Brown-headed Cowbird of our area's count. The creek area around the Watson School was covered by the Magoons (my mother, Diane, and me), and I was happy to find a couple Spotted Towhees and a Brown Creeper—both being species we missed in last year's count. The creekside oak trees also hosted a pair of Townsend Warblers, busy gleaning leaves alongside Bushtits. In the town of Bodega, Scott Campbell followed the call of a Hairy Woodpecker to a fruit-laden apple tree close to the church. Our team later gathered nearby for lunch, and in the time we were there, a Northern Flicker, a Downy Woodpecker, a Nuttall's, and a few Golden-crowned Sparrows all showed up to feast on ripe apples. The Cotoneaster bushes across the road were similarly popular with Golden-crowns and attracted dozens of American Robins. I had expected the number and the species diversity of sparrows to pick up as the day got warmer, but these stayed comparatively low. Red-tailed Hawks, Red-shouldered Hawks, and American Kestrels were, however, abundant. We counted 62 species in total, which was down quite a bit from last year. Post-script: In the afternoon on Sunday, I passed back through the wetlands again in the hope that slightly warmer weather would bring out more birds, but didn't find anything new. Yesterday (Tuesday), I did our entire route one more time for Count Week and found roughly the same birds as on Sunday. On the day of the count, I had driven out along Valley Ford Franklin School Road to the cut-off to Estero Road, but didn't venture up Estero Road (note: not related to Estero Lane) because it was flooded. This time I tried, but found that a nearby ranch had put up a concerning sign, so I continued down the main road to see if there was another way into the area that we had missed. No luck, but I did see a Ferruginous Hawk at the turn-off to Whitaker Bluff Road. I watched the FEHA sail off towards our count area, but I suspect it is a regular only on the Marin County side and in any event, there's little hope of us getting access to that land in the future. I have attached our data along with a photo of one of Bodega's apple-eaters.



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Joy Road, John Coddington-Leader: The Joy Road team saw significant species, including one of the few Western Screech Owls and Hutton's Vireo, and the only Barn Owl in the Circle's count area.

Salmon Creek Road, Sean Jeane-Leader: Like everyone else, we felt the day was cold and slow with seemingly few birds about, but by the end of the day we had pretty much matched our normal count numbers. There were some expected species missing, but essentially those were replaced with a few others that were unexpected! We had 10 counters for most of the morning, with a few having to leave midday. We were certainly able to cover the territory well with lots of eyes and ears. (Our youngest counter was only 8, and she did very well, though I didn't ask how old was our oldest!) Total species count was 71, with a reliable resident within our area adding a Pygmy Owl to our count from the day before, bringing our total to 72. That's better than average, so no complaints. Started owling the area at 5 a.m., which resulted in three other owl species (Great Horned, Saw-whet and Western Screech). The temps were a brisk 27° F, perhaps the reason for there not being a lot of owl activity and fairly slow birding throughout the day. With all the rain, the seasonal ponds and marshes were full, but didn't yield many ducks other than a few mallards, though we did manage a couple Virginia Rail, a single Sora, and a couple Wilson's Snipes. The Sora was a first for our area. Had two Ferruginous Hawks, one Peregrine, and then right at the end of the day, we had a Golden Eagle. It was in the same trees where we found a pair last year. While searching the trees for the Eagle, had a Merlin swoop in low and take out a sparrow, land in a tree top nearby and commence with plucking and eating it! (We erased that unfortunate bird from our count figures....) And lastly, I didn't record them, but had a big flock of Peafowl, about 16 birds. Was watching a single female standing out in a field, then the rest flew in to join her from some nearby trees. They flew probably less than 100 yards total, but was still a really colorful and impressive display! All in all, a really nice day. Hope we get to see everyone at our normal count dinner next year!

Estero Lane, Jennifer Michaud-Leader: We observed birds only on the Sonoma Land Trust (SLT) property and the upland birds (Peter Colesanti covered the water, so we didn't get to count all of the cool ducks we saw from land). We seemed to be missing a few species and larger flocks of birds this year - only a few Yellow-rumped Warblers, not a ton of sparrows, no Say's Phoebe. But, what we missed in the small birds, we made up for in the raptors. We observed both a juvenile and adult Bald Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, and good representation from other birds of prey - Cooper's, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed, Kestrel...We also had a California Thrasher (confirmed by Whitney Mortimer), and two sightings of swallows - a group of 3 swallow sp. and a single Violet-green. Other wildlife sightings included some hunting holes of American Badger and a coyote on the drive on Estero Lane.

Estero Americano, Peter Colasanti-Kyaker: Peter did Estero Americano solo. Conditions on the Estero Americano are always a surprise and this year was no exception. The place has an inverse relationship with drought: In dry times, it shoals up at the mouth,

fills slowly and becomes a long and low lake rich in cow waste. This year, the mouth was wide open for seemingly its entire width and it was fully tidal. I had to paddle against the incoming tide as high as Marsh Road. The dabblers of recent years were gone, replaced by divers and bay ducks. The few shorebirds found were at the upper reaches, as were a Common Yellowthroat and Gallinule, which were both new to me for the area. Other goodies included a Bonaparte's Gull, lots of swallows, including 3 Barns, a Rough-legged Hawk near the mouth and a flashy race of Song Sparrow with lots of red in the head and tail.

Doran Beach, Dea Freid-Leader: Our area covers the south Bodega Bay Harbor area, going from Diekmann's store in Bodega Bay through Doran Regional Park and the South Harbour Development, which includes Pinnacle Gulch and Shorttail Gulch trails. We welcomed 3 new counters this year, including one who came all the way from Inverness! We had a total of 8 counters. The day started off very cold and windy. I began at 7 a.m. to listen for rails at Doran Park, but didn't hear any. Then, we subdivided into 4 parties. We all noted reduced passerines, both in number of species and number of birds. All parties had interesting sightings. The Doran parties saw a Long-tailed Duck, male Eurasian Wigeon and an uncommon for this time of year Caspian Tern. The harbor party found a black Scoter, 6 Common Mergansers (very uncommon for this area), a Northern Mockingbird at the Tides Restaurant parking lot and a controversial "Glaucous Gull". For now, we are including this bird as a gull sp. There was also a Short-billed Dowitcher at the Tides spotted by my party and ID'd by call. While birding Bird Walk Park, which had almost no birds, we looked up at just the right moment to see an adult Bald Eagle passing overhead with prey. It flew across the street and disappeared behind the trees. I also saw a Townsend's Warbler and a disagreeable Hutton's Vireo on the opposite (east?) side of Route 1, which I would like to donate to whomever has that area. Despite my making all kinds of enticing sounds, the vireo refused to fly across the road into our area, leaving us with no vireos for the day. For count day, our species total was 104, which is on the low side for us but still pretty good, all things considered. I already have 2 additional count week birds and will look for more. A special thank you goes out to Scott Carey who donated 2 species to us that he saw at Diekmann's that we missed.

Bodega Bay, Gene Hunn-Leader: It was a beautiful morning, crisp -- 40 degrees with a stiff breeze from the east -- and clear. Our six observers met at sunrise at the Porto Bodega to plan our routes. We divided into three groups: Rob O'Donnell, Tony Briggs, and Renee Masotti covered the north cove and west shores for aquatic species, plus the rail ponds and the "Diekmann basement." Ian Morrison was responsible for the Salmon Creek beach and the Dunes campground and everything in between west of Highway 1. Nancy and I set off on foot from Spud Point, through the residential uplands behind, then over the dunes trail to the outer beach at Mussel Point. We then slogged our way north up the beach to meet Ian at Salmon Creek, about seven miles altogether.

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The ocean was flat calm, deep blue to the horizon, with smooth swells and perfect surfer curls at the shore. Our territory was quiet, though right off the bat an adult Bald Eagle flew from a roost behind Spud Point, heading northeast across the harbor. A Merlin flushed a few minutes later, off on the hunt. Through the dunes we met just a gaggle of “butterbutts” and four Western Meadowlarks. The beach had the usual scurrying gangs of Sanderlings, mixed with 24 Snowy Plovers on the higher ground. Least Sandpipers huddled in the tracks of horses and a single Semipalmated Plover -- somewhat unusual at this late date -- sheltered with them. Offshore, our best find was a distant Northern Fulmar, a chunky gray bird banking high as shearwaters do. We did a rerun of the upland residential area after lunch and turned up good sized flocks of *Zonotrichia* sparrows and two elegant Hermit Thrushes. Rob, Tony, and Renee added the persistent “**Glaucous Gull**,” the subject of some dispute since it first appeared at Porto Bodega with the Slaty-backed Gull last year. They also added a lingering Heermann’s Gull, plus a Common Yellowthroat. Ian added three loon species, a Peregrine Falcon, and a Pygmy Nuthatch. Both teams spotted the over-wintering Osprey.

Bodega Head (south), Dan Nelson-Leader: Dan did the area solo. The weather was COLD! - a steady 41°F throughout the morning, with a strong 15-20 mph – east-southeast wind. Wind from this direction typically pushes most pelagic species far from land beyond scoping range. However, there was a HUGE migration of Common Murres accompanied by lesser numbers (but still huge) of various Gull species. I was forced to conduct a multitude of “one-minute” surveys, similar to counting Pacific Loons in April and May on their spring migration. From 7:30 to 9:30, every single 1-minute survey conducted recorded over 300 individual Common Murres. This pace continued for another hour. However, after 10:30, average per-minute tallies fell to 250/minute. After 11:00, the rate per minute fell to around 75-100/min. A vast majority of the large numbers were 2-3 miles offshore and were not apparent without binoculars or scope. Total of 64,575 was a carefully tallied, conservative estimate - so that spectacle was the highlight. A count of 58 Brown Pelicans was a surprise, and a high count for mid-winter, no doubt. There was a single Sooty Shearwater, the first observed in the last 17 years at least. The female Long-tailed Duck was seen across the channel near Doran Launch ramp (but not in my territory), so 38 species in total. Due to wind, detectability of the most expected passerines was quite low. Most landbirds remained silent, concealed deep within protective cover.

Bodega Marine Lab, Jackie Sones-Leader: Jackie did the area solo because of COVID policies established by the University of California. Nothing that rare in Zone 10 yesterday, but there was a pretty spectacular offshore movement of alcids and gulls. Dan Nelson also observed this from the southern end of Bodega Head. There was a steady stream of birds flying north (including some very large flocks), and there were enough birds that it was hard to count, so I had to do some 1-minute counts and then take an average. Over a 2-hour sea watch from Mussel Point, I estimated ~12,000 alcids (primarily Common Murres, but some Rhino Auklets

In Memory Of**Martha Bentley***by Alida Morzenti***Gene Broderick***by Judith Christensen***Terry Colborn***by John Klobas***Kip Cutting***by Barbara Brooks***Jim Davis***by Catherine Vancik***Norris “Bob” Dyer***by Brigitte Dyer***Joe Mortenson***by Hazel Flett***Karen Nagel***by Diane & Bryant Hichwa**by Richard Cuneo***Marilyn Sanders***by Richard Shipp***Warren Zschach***by Jill Zschach*

and Cassin’s Auklets, too) and ~6,000 gulls. I also had at least 10 Northern Fulmars, some fairly close to shore. Around first light there were 2 Bald Eagles in a talon spiral over the ocean, which was pretty cool.

Cheney Gulch, Janeanne Erickson-Leader: We had a wonderful day in the field. We saw 43 species. We usually get 50. The Cheney Gulch team was featured in the January 3rd Press Democrat. The picture of the Rough-Legged Hawk was the one that did a nice fly-over for the group. It was a lifer for a few in the group. Thanks go to the Bodega Public Utility District and Salmon Creek Ranch for allowing us access to their properties.

Chanslor Ranch (aka Sea Horse Ranch), Scott Carey-Leader: Hope everyone enjoyed the cold, but beautiful, day on the count yesterday. Chanslor Ranch was beautiful as always, but cold, and NW winds to 20 miles per hour made for harsh conditions for insectivores. Melissa Witte and I got 49 species for the day, an all-time low. We found very few insectivore species as well as woodpeckers. An all-time low of 1 Say’s Phoebe was a shocker, as we usually get numbers in the upper teens. No rails, Common Yellowthroats or Brown-headed Cowbirds either. Duck numbers were very low as well, but I expected that. We managed one lone Tricolored Blackbird in flock around the corrals. Interesting mini flight of Varied Thrush in morning over open country, which is usually missed, and 3 Gallinules on the pond. I also can add counting week birds, a mixed flock of swallows at the Bridge Haven pond on January 1, 2022, 3 Barn Swallow, 2 Tree and 3 Violet-green Swallows.

Highway One, Lisa Hug-Leader: This is the first time that I did Highway 1 from the Salmon Creek Mouth to the Russian River (Ed. note: And she did it solo!). Former Leader Ken Wilson was leading a birding tour in Uganda. Highlights include having over

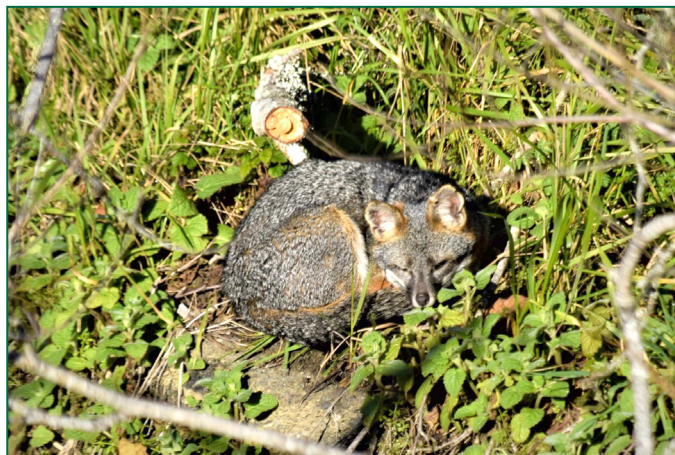
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1000 Common Murres offshore, between Goat Rock and Shell Beach. Also, seeing 8 Marbled Murrelets was a treat.

Willow Creek Road, David Berman-Leader: It started out cold, 34 degrees, clear and almost windless; the birds seemed to be at REL, buying thermal hoodies. We had an outstanding mammal day. We



Area 15, Willow Creek Road, Sleeping Gray Fox *Courtesy of David Berman*

saw a sleeping Gray fox on top of a riverbank, sunning itself in the open, an otter cruising the Russian River, and a Bobcat crouched in a meadow, apparently waiting for something to happen.

Duncans Mills, Mike Heffernon-Leader: A cold, beautiful day for us as well in Area 16, from Duncans Mills to Jenner. Fortunately, we didn't really have to contend with much wind. Our individual and species numbers were comparatively low for our area. For the 3rd straight year, our species total was around 70. Prior to that, the average had been more like 85 and we've had one or two 100+ years. Many gimme species were absent. Worth noting were one adult Bald Eagle flying right over heads in Duncans Mills, heading downriver; an interacting pair of adult Golden Eagles seen well for probably 10 minutes from the driveway of what used to be David Ranch on Hwy 116; a Virginia rail and a small flock of Violet-green Swallows at the 116/1 pond. Many gulls at the River mouth, some sallying back and forth between sides of the River, which meant going between our count area and the area directly south. Alas, after decades of birding, I'm still not proficient at gull identification. I miss Richard Kuehn!

Freezeout Canyon, Peter Leveque-Leader: Eight participants had great views of a Lincoln Sparrow early in the day, followed by an eye-level observation of a male Townsend's Warbler in perfect light. The Townsend's warbler was the showiest bird of the day with two male Wood Ducks a close second. Due to the rushing Russian River, our duck count was rather low. Expecting large numbers of Pine Siskins and Varied Thrushes with the Pacific Northwest experiencing a very wet and cold winter, neither species was present in large numbers. We had a total of 60 species, which is lower than our average, and 19 species were represented with only one or two individuals.

Coleman Valley Road, David Leland-Leader: We had two parties most of the day, with Tiffany and Matt Erickson leading the second party. Occidental Arts and Ecology Center was as frosty as we have ever seen, but still pretty birdy, with Townsend's Warblers, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and a single female Common Goldeneye on the pond a few of the highlights. The day, and our feet, warmed as we stopped at Western Hills Gardens (with new owners graciously allowing us to visit), where we had many Pine Siskins and 9 Hooded Mergansers on the pond next door. Many of the usual suspects further on, including many Kestrels, a single Ferruginous Hawk, and Meadowlarks, though very few bluebirds. On a scouting trip on Friday, I had 20 Ring-necked Ducks on the pond at Ocean Song, a pond which is usually home to a single Black Phoebe. But, the ducks were not there on Sunday. Still, a good day with good enough weather once it warmed up a bit.

Austin Creek, Linda Petrulias-Leader: The character of this area is terrestrial, so it was pretty quiet due to the cold. Only 39 species were seen. However, Austin Creek observers were the only ones to see 5 American Goldfinches to add to our circle's species count and the only area to see a Barred Owl on count day.

Harrison Grade, Carolyn Johnson-Leader: Our day began with our team of seven meeting after completing COVID home tests either that morning or the night before. We had 2 teams and 2 cars. We ventured out into clear skies and frozen ground, thankful for the rain holding off for one more day. Our individuals and species were lower than average. A total of 59 sp. (avg 64) and



Area 15, Willow Creek Road, Bobcat

Courtesy of David Berman

1265 individuals were seen and heard. Low numbers seemed mostly attributed to robins, crowned sparrows and blackbirds (which we missed altogether). We were happy to see 15 Varied Thrush and all the listed woodpecker species. One team watched a Raven aggressively chasing off a Cooper's Hawk, causing the hawk to do evasive and defensive rolls. Overall, the day was a lovely start to a new year—such as it is. This group was one of the few that saw a Pileated Woodpecker and a Hutton's Vireo

Area 22 – Bodega Bay – Boat: No boat this year.



Birder's Eye View

by Gay Bishop

After waiting several years, I was told my cataracts had ripened sufficiently to have surgery. I'd tried to impress upon the eye doctors and surgeon how my eyes were especially important, as I'm an avid birder. They quickly nodded their heads as if understanding, but more likely dismissed all such grandiose patient claims.

I ended up having both eyes done at the same time. When I returned home post-op, the world was brighter, more detailed, and the sun-struck vibrant blues of the yard's scrub jay were dazzling.

I dutifully followed instructions; taped on plastic goggles every night for a week, used preservative-free lubricating eyedrops as recommended, slept eight hours and wore extra-dark sunglasses outdoors. Eleven days later, I was scheduled to do a Beach Watch survey on South Salmon Creek beach as I've done each month for 5 years with team members Angela and Jennifer. I was excited to test out my new surgically implanted long-distance lenses, chosen especially to more easily spot high flying raptors. For some time, I'd noted my team members saw these much more easily than I did.

The day was perfect, sunny with a bit of overcast mist and not a whisper of wind. We're required to survey many things along the two-mile long beach, especially living and dead birds and marine mammals. Happily, there were none of the latter but, surprisingly, we tallied 12 dead NOFUs (Northern Fulmars), pelagic birds, one of the several tube nose species, identified quickly by their musty scent.

We'd had one or two dead fulmars on previous counts, but this was the beginning of higher numbers that have continued to the present. Why? What's the cause? To be determined by experts at Cal Academy, NOAA and Greater Farallones Association for whom we volunteer. The only soaring birds were Turkey Vultures. There were no raptors while, in previous counts, there had often been Peregrines.

After seven hours of looking through my binoculars, when I arrived home my eyes were on fire. My light-gathering bins had really done their job. For the next week, I stopped using binoculars entirely, increased the use of drops, warm compresses, and began taking fish oil.

A month after surgery, I went for a follow-up appointment and confessed my reckless behavior. I also said no eye doctor ever mentioned post-surgery binocular use during any of my numerous appointments. I suggested that, in the future, when a patient mentioned being a birder, they might consider recommending caution with binocular use post-op.

It's been two weeks now since I last used my binoculars. After 40 years of having them around my neck, it's lonely out there without them. I see the birds, I hear the birds, but most of the time, I'm left guessing who they are. I'm detached from the natural world when, for so long, I'd felt part of it in profound, joyous ways.

Next week, I'll be going to Sacramento Wildlife Refuge as I do every year. I look forward to the thousands of ducks, geese and swans I hope will be there. It is because of this outing I've

forsaken my binocular use, hoping my eyes will heal and once again be able to behold the winter spectacle of the Pacific Flyway.

Late Report: The good news to share is my eyes did recover and I see better than ever. The bad news, bird numbers at Sacramento Wildlife Refuge continue to decline. Yearly visits, however, are still a thrill.

In Memory of Karen Nagel

by Diane Hichwa

Karen Nagel was a long time member of Madrone Audubon who passed away November 13, 2021. Karen served Madrone by encouraging new members as our Membership Chair for about 15 years (1987-2002). When I became Vice President in 1990, Karen was already Membership Chair...and so we met. We found we had a mutual interest in birds, in education and in travel. In early 1991, Karen became a Bouverie Docent and later that year Karen, Gay Bishop and I went to Costa Rica with Santa Rosa Junior College. We were 3 Bouverie docents wanting to learn all about the forests, birds and other wildlife of a different country. A cherished activity of our trio became learning to ID birds by song. We worked on it together, which made it more fun. Karen enjoyed travel to learn more about birds, in and out of the country. In 1994, Madrone's first Bird-A-Thon was held and the Featherquesters team of Karen and Diane came into being. Karen was hesitant to ask for donations, and I convinced her it was ok to ask family, so her sister became her first contributor. For 16 years, we ventured out together each February, a day together that I still treasure. Karen put up numerous bird boxes and, with her curiosity to learn, she checked the boxes regularly and reported her data to Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. At Karen and her husband Ted's property in Sonoma, Karen also kept a tally of the first date every year that each species showed up in her yard and also the last date each was seen every year....a citizen scientist contributing to data on changing patterns and changing climate.

She loved hiking with children at the Bouverie Preserve and sharing her love of birds and nature. She is remembered fondly by many.



Western Bluebird
Courtesy of Craig Tooley



Santa Rosa, December 19, 2021

by Gene Hunn

The Santa Rosa CBC has run every year since 1960, so this is our 62nd consecutive count. The Redwood Region Ornithological Society (RROS) was first imagined by the participants in the 1960 count, and in 1962 they formally established the Society. Our standard 15-mile diameter circle is centered at the Santa Rosa City Hall and divided into 13 sectors, each fielding teams under an area leader.

Many individuals have coordinated the count and compiled the results since 1960. This is my second year, having taken the reins from Bill Doyle who ran things 2011-2019, so I'm just getting the hang of it. This year, we dealt once again with COVID-19. We stayed safe by birding with the familiar cautions. In lieu of the countdown pizza party, we met via Zoom instead, hosted by RROS VP Jeff Valfer. In contrast to the previous two years, we enjoyed several powerful "atmospheric rivers," beginning in October. The rains have seemed to relieve drought conditions and destructive wildfires that had reduced numbers of many species.

This year's total species count of 143 is a record high since 2020. The 11-year average 2010-2020 is 132.3. Last year's count was low-average at 128 species. The contrast was mainly due to the rain: We recorded eight shorebird species versus five in 2020 and eight gull species compared to just three in 2020. We counted 23,583 individual birds (versus 19,403 in 2020). Sixty RROS observers were in the field counted, with Ruth Rudesill, of course, owling in the pre-dawn. Ruthie spent an early hour in two locations and heard the usual suspects, plus a somewhat aberrant *Strix* vocalization, either Spotted, Barred, or, who knows, a "Sparred Owl." Brian Webb also started early on his daily hike to his favorite Santa Rosa Creek haunts. He recorded the distinctive calls of a Short-eared Owl, a first for our count.

Most of us slept in until nearly sunrise, birding from 7 a.m. until we concluded there were no more birds to count. It was chilly and cloudy most of the day, but with little or no wind and just a touch of morning fog, so we can't blame the weather for whatever we missed. Our 13 teams had varied luck, depending on the mix of habitats within their respective territories. Bill Doyle and Helen Kochenderfer hiked Annadel (area 9A) and managed just 290 individuals of 38 species, a low count for their traditional territory (but good exercise). Nevertheless, considerably better than their record low 2020 totals. By contrast, the team along Santa Rosa Creek to the Laguna (area 2) (Brian Webb, Dea Fried, and Gene Hunn) tallied 2979 individuals of 106 species, with a bounty of waterbirds on Delta Pond, including a count-first Black-legged Kittiwake. Not far behind were areas 6 (Sebastopol, 82 species and our only Cattle Egrets and a Black-throated Gray Warbler, Dan Nelson), 8 (Spring Lake and environs, 87, a Herring Gull, Great-tailed Grackles, and a wintering Western Tanager: Jeff Valfer, Peter Colasanti, et al.), 10 (Llano, 83, Western Sandpiper, Short-billed and Western Gull, Pygmy Nuthatch: Deyea Harper,

Carolyn Johnson, et al.), and 11 (Rohnert Park and Lynch Canyon, 81: White-throated Swifts, Lark Sparrows, Richard Merriss and Rick LeBaudour). Though less diverse, upland and urban areas contributed some unique finds, Ruthie's owls in areas 3 and 5; our only Snow Goose, Cinnamon Teal, and Long-billed Dowitcher in area 7 (Lisa Hug, YAMS). Area 9B, Oakmont, won the prize for the most observers in the field, 15.

Detailed data from all 61 of our previous counts is archived on the National Audubon CBC website, but for now I will limit my comparisons to the counts since 2010. It is instructive to compare our recent counts with the averages and maxima of the past 11 years. A total of 189 species have been noted on one or more counts since 2010. Of these, 88 have been seen every year since, while 19 species have been seen just once in those 11 years. If we calculate the ratio of this year's species counts to the average of the past 11 years, we get a good idea of recent trends. I note below particularly high counts ($> 2.5x$ the 2010-2020 average) and notably low counts (< 0.40 of the 11-year averages), with focus on the more regularly occurring species:

High counts (10 species) are concentrated among our ducks and shorebirds: Northern Pintail (6.33x), Greater Yellowlegs (3.87x), Eared Grebe (3.85x), Hooded Merganser (3.71x), Least Sandpiper (2.70x), American Wigeon (2.56x), Black-necked Stilt (2.54x), and Spotted Sandpiper (2.50x).

Low counts (15 species) include other ducks (Ruddy Duck at 0.16x; Ring-necked Duck at 0.37x), coots at 0.22x, and gulls (Short-billed Gull at 0.09x, Ring-billed Gull at 0.36x, Herring Gull at 0.18x, and Glaucous-winged Gull at 0.15x), despite the heavy rainfall. Other low counts are for less expected species, such as European Starling at just 0.02x of the 11-year average (skewed by the extraordinary high counts in 2010 and 2011, 279,533 and 227,188, respectively) and House Sparrow (0.33x), invasive species which may be in decline. Birds of our deep forest that lost ground include Band-tailed Pigeons, down to 0.19x of the 11-year average; Golden-crowned Kinglets at 0.26x, and Varied Thrush at 0.23x. Savannah and Lincoln's Sparrows were also low at 0.36x and 0.38x, respectively.

Are you a National Audubon member?

Please consider joining our local chapter, Madrone Audubon.

(see membership form, back page)



Sonoma Valley (incl. Petaluma), December 29, 2021

by Gene Hunn

Ninety-one observers surveyed the bird life within our 15-mile diameter circle centered off Sperring Rd. west of Sonoma. During our Zoom compilation conversation (coordinated -- thank you -- by Richard Dale of the Sonoma Ecology Center), we were certain of 149 count day species, on the low side. However, in the interim as detailed reports dribbled in and several count-week sightings were added, we have now tallied a modest **159 count-day species plus four additional count week (cw) species for a grand total of 163**, seven less than last year. I suspect the mid-day drizzle fogged up some lenses. However, the difference is largely attributable to the many quite rare species recorded in 2020 and several misses this year, notably, Blue-winged Teal, Mountain Quail, Ring-necked Pheasant, Horned Grebe, Rough-legged and Ferruginous Hawks, Spotted and Short-eared Owls, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Townsend's Solitaire, Tricolored Blackbird, and Great-tailed Grackle. Nevertheless, our lists provide a detailed picture of our local winter bird populations. A grand total of 52,897 individual birds were counted (80% of the long-term average) by our 91 volunteers.

New for the circle: a Vermilion Flycatcher: An individual first reported via the Facebook (now Meta) grapevine some weeks before reappeared behind locked gates at the Petaluma oxidation ponds at Ellis Creek.

As usual, each count records "winners" and "losers." I have taken the average of the first 16 SVCBCs (2005-2020) and the highest and lowest counts for each of the 227 (now up to 228) species recorded since 2005, then compared this year's totals by means of a ratio. A ratio greater than 1.00 indicates an above average tally; a ratio less than 1.00 a below average tally. Ratios above 2.0 are notably large (excepting species recorded in such small numbers as to defy statistical significance; these I ignore). Ratios below 0.33 are notably depressed. Numbers above the previous maxima or below previous minima (again ignoring very low incidence) are, of course, of special interest. Patterns in these statistics, however, are rarely obvious.

New maxima (N = 13) include: American Wigeon (1061), Bufflehead 920), Wild Turkey (452), American Bittern (5), Herring Gull (407), Glaucous-winged Gull (1410), Eurasian Collared-Dove 350), Horned Lark (104), Tree and Violet-green Swallows (484, 186), Rufous-crowned Sparrow (10), Purple Finch (81, tying last year's record), and Common Yellowthroat (35). Redheads at 115 and White-throated Swifts at 41 were near their all-time high counts.

New minima (N = 7) include (this year's total vs. the previous low count): Mallard (380 vs. 513), Virginia Rail (5 vs. 6), California Gull (165 vs. 17 [gull frequencies changed dramatically this year, with Herring and Glaucous-winged at record highs, California at a record low), Snowy Egret (12 vs. 32 [Great Blue Heron and Great Egret numbers were also quite low]), White-tailed Kite (16 vs. 30), Northern Harrier (20 vs. 31), Lark Sparrow (6 vs. 7 [Lincoln Sparrows were also down, 5 vs. 5]). Other notable low counts were American Kestrel (67 vs. 65), Hutton's Vireo (13 vs. 12), Loggerhead Shrike (tied all-time low at 5), Chestnut-backed Chickadee (109 vs. 105), Marsh Wren (20 vs. 16 [wrens can be tough as we recorded just single Rock and House Wrens and just two Pacific Wrens]), and Townsend's Warbler (tied all-time low at 3).

Petaluma's Christmas Bird Count for Kids, January 1

by Sheryl Nadeau

Hosted annually by Petaluma Wetlands Alliance, six young people enjoyed birding in perfect cool weather. Enthusiasm was high as we found over 28 different bird species at the Ellis Creek ponds and area. One pond had at least 35 snoozing Black-Crowned Night Herons in it. It was a real "Mass Sleepover."

The Spring Feather Fest is planned for Saturday, May 7, 2022. Sign-ups will be an email to 33sheryln@gmail.com or call or text 707-318-6760.



2021 Petaluma CBC for Kids at Shollenberger Park

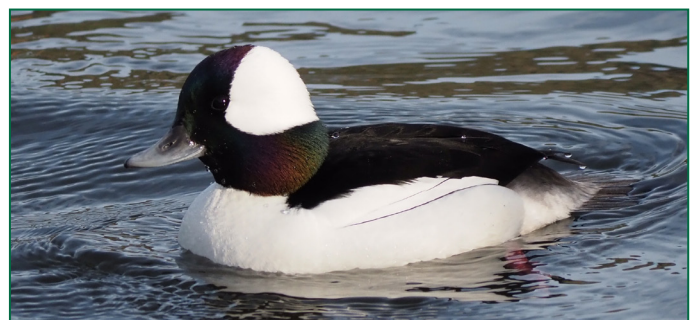
Courtesy of Len Nelson

Bird-A-Thon 2022— A New Goal

Our Spring fundraiser is coming soon. Team leaders, please anticipate hearing from Coordinator Carolyn Greene. Bird-A-Thon funds raised April to June will support two planned internships for Sonoma State University Environmental Studies students. Each internship will be an opportunity for two-semester, one year, of participation with our Chapter. We look forward to sharing details in the April-May *Leaves*.



Pied-billed Grebe Courtesy of Tom Reynolds



Male Bufflehead

Courtesy of Tom Reynolds



Final 2021 Sonoma Valley Christmas Bird Count list with numbers in parentheses. In parentheses following the name is this year's total, with the long-term average ratio (for all but rare species) following the slash. Ratios greater than 2.0 and less than 0.33 are highlighted in bold face

Snow Goose (1)	Black Rail (1)
Greater White-fronted Goose (5)	Black-necked Stilt (54/0.68)
Cackling Goose (31/0.86)	American Avocet (701/1.80)
Canada Goose (887/0.75)	Black-bellied Plover (53/0.83)
Mute Swan (65/1.24)	Semipalmated Plover (cw)
Mandarin Duck (20/1.44)	Killdeer (199/0.70)
Wood Duck (5/0.11)	Long-billed Curlew (17/0.42)
Cinnamon Teal (15/0.42)	Marbled Godwit (1/ 0.04)
Northern Shoveler (224/0.54)	Dunlin (541/0.75)
Gadwall (327/1.10)	Least Sandpiper (788/1.04)
Eurasian Wigeon (2)	Western Sandpiper (704/ 2.13)
American Wigeon (1061/ 4.68)	Long-billed Dowitcher (220/0.85)
Mallard (380/0.45)	Wilson's Snipe (17/0.74)
Northern Pintail (500/ 2.16)	Greater Yellowlegs (43/0.83)
Green-winged Teal (261/0.47)	Willet (74/ 3.75)
Canvasback (467/1.84)	Bonaparte's Gull (31/ 0.31)
Redhead (15/ 3.81)	Short-billed (Mew) Gull (147/ 3.79)
Ring-necked Duck (276/1.75)	Ring-billed Gull (314/0.60)
Greater Scaup (3/ 0.02)	Western Gull (962/ 1.97)
Lesser Scaup (58/1.66)	California Gull (165/ 0.28)
Bufflehead (920/ 2.07)	Herring Gull (407/ 15.54)
Common Goldeneye (140/1.36)	Iceland (Thayer's) Gull (3/0.61)
Hooded Merganser (61/1.41)	Glaucous-winged Gull (1410/ 3.88)
Common Merganser (89/0.96)	Western x Glaucous-winged Gull (3)
Red-breasted Merganser (1)	Gull sp. (2032)
Ruddy Duck (482/1.07)	Forster's Tern (2)
California Quail (644/1.42)	Double-crested Cormorant (32/0.58)
Wild Turkey (452/ 3.03)	American White Pelican (21/0.63)
Pied-billed Grebe (52/0.86)	American Bittern (5/ 2.50)
Eared Grebe (13/1.10)	Great-blue Heron (20/0.63)
Western Grebe (cw)	Great Egret (56/0.70)
Clark's Grebe (1)	Snowy Egret (12/ 0.19)
Rock Pigeon (245/0.63)	Green Heron (cw)
Band-tailed Pigeon (203/0.48)	Black-crowned Night- Heron (47/0.58)
Eurasian Collared-Dove (350/2.83)	Turkey Vulture (267/0.79)
Mourning Dove (134/0.53)	White-tailed Kite (16/ 0.27)
White-throated Swift (41/4.90)	Golden Eagle (3/0.47)
Anna's Hummingbird (183/0.82)	Northern Harrier (20/0.37)
Virginia Rail (5/0.34)	Sharp-shinned Hawk (5/0.47)
Sora (1/ 0.12)	Cooper's Hawk (8/0.48)
Common Gallinule (7/0.84)	Accipiter sp. (1)
American Coot (505/0.52)	Bald Eagle (cw)

**SONOMA VALLEY BIRD COUNT**

Continued from page 9

Red-shouldered Hawk (68/0.85)	House Wren (1/0.34)
Red-tailed Hawk (142/0.71)	Pacific Wren (2/0.51)
Barn Owl (2/ 0.22)	Marsh Wren (20/0.42)
Western Screech-Owl (4/0.41)	Bewick's Wren (57/1.18)
Great Horned Owl (13/0.60)	European Starling (8892/0.63)
Northern Pygmy-Owl (3/0.66)	California Thrasher (5/1.27)
Burrowing Owl (2)	Northern Mockingbird (109/0.89)
Northern Saw-whet Owl (1)	Western Bluebird (1086/1.46)
Belted Kingfisher (8/0.50)	Varied Thrush (54/ 0.33)
Red-breasted Sapsucker (20/1.09)	Hermit Thrush (157/1.39)
Acorn Woodpecker (678/1.61)	American Robin (2213/ 0.32)
Downy Woodpecker (19/0.79)	Cedar Waxwing (298/0.71)
Nuttall's Woodpecker (114/1.00)	House Sparrow (75/0.61)
Hairy Woodpecker (26/1.66)	American Pipit (186/1.12)
Pileated Woodpecker (6/0.48)	House Finch (1128/0.86)
Northern Flicker (235/0.84)	Purple Finch (81/ 2.42)
American Kestrel (67/0.55)	Pine Siskin (21/0.59)
Merlin (7/0.79)	Lesser Goldfinch (816/1.18)
Peregrine Falcon (1/ 0.25)	American Goldfinch (149/0.52)
Prairie Falcon (1)	Lark Sparrow (6/ 0.11)
Black Phoebe (157/0.75)	Fox Sparrow (69/1.38)
Say's Phoebe (56/0.79)	Dark-eyed Junco (1474/0.68)
Vermilion Flycatcher (1)	White-crowned Sparrow (1786/1.29)
Hutton's Vireo (13/0.62)	Golden-crowned Sparrow (1876/1.14)
Loggerhead Shrike (5/0.56)	White-throated Sparrow (14/1.43)
Steller's Jay (161/1.10)	Savannah Sparrow (151/0.46)
California Scrub-Jay (399/0.99)	Song Sparrow (213/1.01)
American Crow (668/0.78)	Lincoln's Sparrow (5/ 0.17)
Common Raven (304/1.45)	California Towhee (470/1.13)
Chestnut-backed Chickadee (109/0.58)	Rufous-crowned Sparrow (10/ 3.41)
Oak Titmouse (363/1.44)	Spotted Towhee (205/1.28)
Horned Lark (104/ 24.84)	sparrow sp. 30
Tree Swallow (484/ 5.06)	Western Meadowlark (789/0.84)
Violet-green Swallow (146/ 8.23)	Red-winged Blackbird (4157/0.79)
Tree/Violet-green Swallow (15)	Brown-headed Cowbird (17/ 0.15)
Barn Swallow (5/1.60)	Brewer's Blackbird (1081/ 0.20)
Bushtit (418/0.70)	Orange-crowned Warbler (1)
Wrentit (24/0.91)	Common Yellowthroat (35/ 4.83)
Golden-crowned Kinglet (7/0.37)	Yellow Warbler (1)
Ruby-crowned Kinglet (267/0.92)	Yellow-rumped Warbler (1366/0.90)
White-breasted Nuthatch (110/1.01)	Townsend's Warbler (3/ 0.18)
Brown Creeper (19/0.71)	
Rock Wren (1/0.43)	



California Native Plant Survival

by Christine Cohen

Once you decide on planting California native plants in a yard or on a property, a major consideration will be water conditions: rainfall, dryness, streams and ponds. The landscape itself will contribute to how well the native plant will endure. In much of California, we have a dry summer and fall, then at times heavy rainfall. Native plants are largely adapted to dryer climates. If you have a sloping property with low lying areas, a California native will probably do better planted on a slope. In the winter, with heavy rains and poor drainage, natives will not survive because saturated soils prevent oxygen from getting to their roots. For land that tends to become soggy and swampy during the winter, augmenting with sandy or loamy soils will increase the chances for plant survival. From my own experience, in the case of clay soil, compost vegetable matter and leaf mold will over time create soil amenable to gardens. Having done this, the soil is easy to dig in and has plenty of earth worms. A bio-swale can drain and hold rainwater, creating a rain garden and providing water for the future. Parts of your yard or land can become a watery haven for a wide range of wildlife. Water sources such as a near-by riparian habitat or a man-made bio-swale have the added attraction of providing water to plants some distance away from the water source by way of plants' lateral root system(s). This system can sustain plants throughout dry spells. An added caution is that the bio-swale should be far away from the home or property line to prevent flooding in unwanted areas.

Another major aspect of consideration for your California native plant garden does include necessary dryness, but in this case, it has to do with a symbiotic relationship that the native plant has with a fungus. This fungus, called mycorrhiza, resides underground around the root system. It helps the plant to take up nutrients and water, protects the plant from disease and even increases the plant's tolerance for temperatures, salinity, acidity and other toxic elements in the soil. Interestingly, the older the plant, the more it needs the symbiotic relationship with mycorrhiza in order to survive. The mycorrhiza has evolved in California to survive in dry conditions. Dry conditions are important to this fungus. If there is too much water and moisture, bacterial pathogens will go to work on this fungus, killing it. Once the mycorrhiza is killed, the California native plant will also die.

Plants share the water. The water may come from surface water such as ponds, lakes, streams or bio-swales. In addition, water resides underground in a water table from which larger trees, shrubs, and plants draw up water. In the process of pulling up water laterally or from deep underground, smaller plants will reach out with their root systems to partake in the water. Clustered plants will more likely benefit each other by way of a shared water source and by way of their own mulching. Native plant leaf litter provides nutrients and natural mulch. The leaf litter retains water and protects the root systems. Both the plant and the mycorrhiza benefit. During hot dry months, the canopy of larger plants works together with smaller plants for water



White-crowned Sparrow

Courtesy of Jan Casavant

retention. As described very briefly, during summer and fall there is a fine balance of dryness and just enough water to help the native plant survive. In the winter months with heavy rains, many of the run-off and drainage systems have been changed by people in their construction of roads, streets, and houses. When we choose to introduce California native plants on our property and/or in our yards, we have to take into account the type of terrain, the soil, the weather and the drainage systems for the incoming natives. Learning what California native plants will do best in your location is one of the first steps in planning a native plant garden. From there, deciding the plant's location and giving it a good start is extremely important. There is much to learn about our native plants that have successfully evolved over the eons.

(Resources: Calscape California Native Plant Gardening Guide, Spotts Tips from the Garden Managing Water with the Rain Gardens and Bioswale, Wisconsin Master Gardener, Mycorrhizae)

For planting and habitat
consideration, see our Tree and
Vegetation Planting Guide

[https://madroneaudubon.org/pdf/
Tree and Plant List.pdf](https://madroneaudubon.org/pdf/Tree%20and%20Plant%20List.pdf)



Madrone Audubon Society

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MADRONE LEAVES



Madrone Audubon Society meets on the third Monday of each month, except in June, July, August, and December. Meetings start at 7:00 PM at First United Methodist Church, 1551 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa. All membership meetings and walks are open to the public. Information: e-mail - info@madroneaudubon.org.

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Please note: We are a chapter of National Audubon, but membership in and donations to Madrone Audubon are separate and support our local chapter. Membership and donations are tax deductible.

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Our Board and Conservation Committee meetings continue to be held virtually. For Board meeting information, please contact President Susan Kirks, 707-241-5548, susankirks@sbcglobal.net. For Conservation Committee meetings and information, please contact Diane Hichwa, 707-785-1922, dhichwa@earthlink.net. Also, visit our website, www.madroneaudubon.org for updates

We continue to observe the latest health and safety protocols. Come in good health with no symptoms or exposure to someone else with COVID. Participants must be vaccinated. Masks are required. Sign-ups ahead of each outing are required. Please see contact info below for each Leader. We're pleased to offer outings free to our members and to members of the public.

A Note about Thursdays...

Attendance is limited to 12 people. Reservations will be accepted on a first call basis. There will be a waiting list. If you must cancel, please, call asap to make space for someone waiting to join. Starting time will be given when you sign up.

February-March 2022

Saturday, February 6, 2022

Ellis Creek Ponds, Petaluma, 3890 Cypress Drive, Petaluma – A winter walkabout. From Hwy 101 heading south, take exit 472B for CA-116 Sonoma/Napa. Then, turn left onto Lakeville Highway. Go to S. McDowell Boulevard and turn right. Then, turn right onto Cypress Drive and continue through gates of the Ellis Creek Wastewater Recycling Center. Go to the end of the lane and park in the lot near restrooms. To reserve a space and receive the meetup time, call Linda Fraley, 559-779-5211.

Thursday, February 10, 2022

Foothill Regional Park, Windsor. Take Hwy 101 to 1351 Arata Lane, turn right, go 1.3 miles. Parking lot is on the left or park on the street. Parking permit is required in the lot. We will walk around the pond and through the Oak woodlands. Heavy rain will cancel the walk. **To reserve a space, please call Janet Bosshard, (707) 526-5883. Please arrive on time. Use this number only on the day of the walk if you are lost or cannot attend: (707) 480-3432.



*Leucistic Female Red-winged Blackbird
Courtesy of Ron Storey*

Thursday, February 24, 2022,

Ragle Ranch Regional Park, Sebastopol. Take Bodega Highway west to Ragle Road. Parking permit is required. We will meet back by the restrooms and dog park. We will explore the park, looking for forest birds. Heavy rain cancels the walk. **To reserve a space, please call Janet Bosshard, (707) 526-5883. Please arrive on time. Use this number only on the day of the walk if you are lost or cannot attend: (707) 480-3432.

Thursday, March 10, 2022,

Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery, 1600 Franklin Ave., Santa Rosa. Meet on the corner of Pacific Ave. and McDonald Ave. (First Presbyterian Church) for street parking. We will then walk north to the entrance of the cemetery. There is always a variety of birds and native plants to see. Please be prompt to walk with the group. Heavy rain will cancel the walk. **To reserve a space, please call Janet Bosshard, (707) 526-5883. Please arrive on time. Use this number only on the day of the walk if you are lost or cannot attend: (707) 480-3432.

Saturday, March 19, 2022

Spring Lake Regional Park, Santa Rosa. Meet at the Southeast parking lot (Newanga entrance) near restrooms. We will walk along the south lake edge to Fisherman's Trail and go to the north dam. To reserve a space, call Linda Fraley at (559) 779-5211. Starting time will be given when you sign up. Please arrive on time. If you find you're unable to come to the walk, please let Linda know (number listed herein) so a waiting lister can join.

Thursday, March 24, 2022

Bodega Bay. 1500 Porto Bodega sits at the north end of Bodega Bay. From Highway 1 take Eastshore Road. At the Stop sign, after stopping, go forward for a city block length until you get to the boat launch facilities. Turn right and Janet will meet you in the big parking lot. We will bird around the Bay. Heavy rain cancels. **To reserve a space, please call Janet Bosshard, (707) 526-5883. Please arrive on time. Use this number only on the day of the walk if you are lost or cannot attend: (707) 480-3432.



*Lesser Goldfinch, Ellis Creek
Courtesy of Jan Casavant*

OUT AND ABOUT

Volunteer Opportunity with California Native Plant Society (CNPS), Milo Baker Chapter

CNPS is beginning the ice plant removal project at Bodega Head State Park. An invitation is extended to Madrone Audubon members to help out. Beginning Sunday, February 13, 2022 and ongoing, volunteers will meet the second Sunday of each month for 3 hours, 10 am to 1 pm. To sign up to help, contact Alynn Kjeldsen (call or text 707-321-1748). The meeting location is the far west parking lot near the restrooms. Volunteers are requested to bring gloves, clippers, knee pads and FRIENDS. If you do not have the supplies, Alynn suggests coming anyway and CNPS will supply volunteer needs. Additional suggestion: Bring binoculars to enjoy sightings and views!



Coastal Column, January 2022

by Diane Hichwa

Wintry weather with King Tides brought spectacular seas. There are still a few Brown Pelicans present, much later than usual! Adults have headed South to nest, but the immatures remained to feed throughout our area. It is noticeable that all have cleared out north of Pt Arena but are still to the south, indicative of the upwelling from Pt Arena to South that is so important to the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary! Also, there are many Northern Fulmars flying low over the water. The immatures have come in very close to shore to find food, and many are dying on the long sandy beaches. Two groups were rescued from our north coast and sent to International Bird Rescue. (They are reported to be doing well under care.) The



Snowy Plover

Courtesy of Craig Tooley



Bald Eagle

Courtesy of Craig Tooley

Bald Eagles are spending time perched above the Gualala River, so we hope they are on a nest. A juvenile was spotted mid-Sea Ranch but very high in the air (a time when having a camera to snap a photo and study it afterwards is most helpful). At the opposite end of the size spectrum, a little Snowy Plover was seen wandering the beach. They do not nest here, but a few visit in winter as they disperse. In the wet damp redwood forests, the first Slink Pods are blooming. The Slink Pod (also known as Fetid adders tongue) is a small lily with an interesting shape and story. The spotted leaves pop up first. Then, the flower petals and sepals of deep red can attract tiny fungus gnats that pollinate the plant - one of our earliest coastal wildflowers.

NEWS UPDATE

Farallon Islands, CA Coastal Commission meeting, December 16, 2021: The Commission voted 5 to 3 in favor of a conditional determination of consistency with the CA Coastal Act. This after reviewing the US Fish and Wildlife Service proposal for distribution of the 2nd generation anticoagulant poison, Brodifacoum, over the SE Farallon Island in an attempt to eradicate mice. The hearing lasted 7 hours. Dr. Jane Goodall was one of many speakers in opposition to the USFWS proposal. Of note, Commissioner Rice of Marin County made the motion to approve consistency with conditions. In discussion, prior to the vote on the motion, additional conditions were included with a requirement to return for an informational hearing and a potential reopening of the official hearing. Had the vote been 4 to 4, the motion would have failed in a tie vote, an expression of denial of consistency. The vote was close, and we appreciate the discussion and concerns expressed by Commissioners who voted to deny the motion – Commissioners Uranga, Hart and Groom. The Commission will require USFWS to return with plans for review and completeness, including bait spill contingency and independent monitoring. During the hearing, internal communication from USFWS professionals was revealed, expressing that such a project should **not** be carried out at the Farallon Islands and the estimated bykill of non-target species

such as Western Gulls could be as high as 3,000 from ingesting poisoned mice and bleeding to death, a much greater estimate than presented in the USFWS proposal. In addition, the USFWS put forth a video of mice at night, admitted to be an oatmeal-baited video, as well as a photograph of a mouse appearing to prey upon an Ashy Storm-Petrel chick taken at a different location, not the Farallon Islands. When questions arose as to incomplete information about the Ashy Storm-Petrel population, fluctuations, increasing and decreasing, the proponents moved the conversation to restoring native vegetation the mice have damaged and other species with data and documentation that were unclear.


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