



Madrone LEAVES

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West County Christmas Bird Count 2023

Edited by Dr. Stacy Li and Susan Kirks

The 57th annual Western Sonoma County Christmas Bird Count is complete. Sunday, December 31, 2023, was a full day of team leaders and participants (a total of 103) recording 170 species and 27,227 individuals. Compared to 2022 totals: 102 participants recorded 168 species and 26,085 individuals. The West County Christmas Bird Count was part of the 124th National Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Our deep gratitude to all team leaders and participants for your observation skills and day of service. Here are our team stories.

Area 1 Jonive Road; Colin Talcroft, leader - (Colin has been this area leader as long as Stacy has been compiling.) We saw 54 species, which is fairly typical for Area 1. We started, as usual, at a farm pond that often is rich in ducks and sparrow species, but it was oddly quiet this year. On the pond, we saw a Green Heron, but otherwise only a single Coot and a single Pied-billed Grebe. We saw only Song Sparrows around the pond and adjacent grasslands, missing both Golden-crowned and White-crowned Sparrows until later in the day at other locations, although these are usually abundant at our starting point. In general, while we saw a typical number of species by the end of the day, we all had the sense that we saw a smaller number of individuals than we often have seen in the past. We found nothing unusual this year and missed a number of species we get most years, including Hutton's Vireo, Varied Thrush, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Red-breasted Sapsucker. Most years, we get all three nuthatches and all the local woodpecker species. The highlight of the day was perhaps an extended close-up observation of a juvenile Cooper's Hawk that appeared unable to fly, although it seemed entirely healthy otherwise. It gave the impression of being quite used to moving about by running.

Area 2 Freestone/Monte Rio; Ken Wilson, leader - (This is Ken's second year leading this area. He has led the Highway 1 area and was a CBC coordinator and compiler of this West Sonoma County Circle.) This area is divided into two parts, north and south of Occidental, along the Bohemia Highway. Our team met in Occidental, a nice place to greet other teams that disperse from this town about the same time. We started birding around the town and found a lot of birds of different species, but after heading south along the highway we discovered that the day was going to be very different from what we were hoping for. Success in this area depends upon access to private properties, one of which is near the town of Freestone where Tony graciously guides us around his property of mixed grassland and

forest. This year, he commented that we should have been there the day before. By lunchtime, we had a whopping 34 species, leaving us with some work to do if we would ever reach last year's total of 45. Our final stop for the day was at the Bohemia Ecological Reserve where LandPaths had granted us permission to enter. The Reserve offered up 20 species, 5 of which were new for the day, bringing

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GENERAL MEETING

Monday, February 19, 2024

Working Together for Birds and Wildlife

Presented by Ashton Klutz, Executive Director, Bird Rescue Center of Sonoma County

6:30-7:45 p.m.

Due to the rich diversity of Northern California habitats, The Bird Rescue Center cares annually for thousands of native birds. Their patients are a combination of songbirds, raptors, and waterbirds. Most birds have injuries resulting from human-related interactions such as flying into windows, being electrocuted by utility wires, being hit by cars, being attacked by pet cats, and more. They also receive



*Black-crowned Night Heron in Care
Courtesy of BRC staff*

hundreds of herons and egrets each year from the West 9th Street rookery located in downtown Santa Rosa. For as long as the birds have been at this location, BRC has received them for initial treatments, feedings, and full transport from Sonoma County to International Bird Rescue's rehabilitation center in Fairfield, CA.

Ashton will share with us behind-the-scenes stories of bird rescues, including the West 9th Street rookery, unique avian observations from the last few years, and status of the planned new BRC facilities.

Join us on Zoom.

Location: Virtual via Zoom.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82441853555>

Meeting ID: 824 4185 3555

Or call: 1-669-900-9128 or 1-669-444-9171 (same Meeting ID)



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

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us to a total of 39 species for the day. Our team was made up of Becky Olsen, Mary Jo Jung, Elliot Yung, Mookie Fudemberg, Denise Herzberg and Ken Wilson.

Area 3 Valley Ford; Kaitlin Magoon, leader – (This is Magoon country. Ken led this area for many years. Kaitlin and her mother, Diane, continue leading and participating, sustaining the Magoon tradition.) This year, the Valley Ford team observed 58 species on the day of the count—four fewer than last year (although the count-week



Townsend's Warbler Courtesy of Kaitlin Magoon

total of 65 was roughly the same). In addition to myself (Kaitlin), our group consisted of Diane Magoon (recorder), Scott Campbell, Steve Corey, Janet Corey, Greg Jacobs, and Kathi Jacobs. We all enjoyed the good company and mild weather, but found the birds to be rather more reserved than usual. Our count area covers the territory between the towns of Freestone, Bodega, and Valley Ford, as well as a chunk of land southwest of the Estero Americano. It is mostly open pastureland—a good habitat for raptors. Red-tailed Hawks were well-represented on count day, including some eye-catching dark morphs. The heavy clouds, however, meant that raptors remained perched or even grounded until the late afternoon. It took a scope to detect our only White-tailed Kite of the day, hunkering down in a distant field. This was in striking contrast to the previous day when clear skies and a nice wind had brought out more than 30 Red-tailed Hawks to hover over a hill along Valley Ford Road. Passerine species were plentiful, but skulky. By the end of the day, the number of individual birds we counted was higher than in previous years, but this mainly reflected sizable gatherings of flocking species such as blackbirds and European Starlings. When it came to the small songbirds, we had to rely a great deal on listening. The woodpecker species we observed were identified by their distinctive calls. Not one was glimpsed all day. No nuthatches either. Townsend's Warblers bucked the trend by popping up conspicuously in a couple locations. The Bodega farm pond and Valley Ford wetlands usually attract seasonal populations of ducks and shorebirds. Besides the Mallards and Canada Geese, the main visitors to the farm pond on count day were Buffleheads and some lovely Canvasback. The American Wigeon and Green-winged Teal residing there that week had somewhere better to be on New Year's Eve day! No peeps made an appearance. The wetland area in Valley Ford was marshy with some small pools, but not flooded. Songbirds dominated. We counted a couple Say's Phoebe and heard (more than saw) Western Meadowlarks. Of the sparrows foraging in the bramble, most were White-crowned with some Golden-crowned mixed in, but we also found Song Sparrows, Lincoln's Sparrows, and Savannah Sparrows. Yellow-rumped Warblers darted out to catch flying insects, and we got our first Orange-crowned Warbler of recent counts. A flock

GENERAL MEETING

Monday, March 18, 2024

Birds of Southern Africa

Presented by Jim & Linda Thomasson

United Methodist Church-Fellowship Room
1551 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa

6:30-8:00 p.m.

Jim and Linda Thomason traveled to South Africa in July and August 2022 on a birding tour with Alvaro Jaramillo. They also traveled on their own to Zimbabwe and Botswana after the tour to see more birds in those countries. About 850 bird species have been recorded in South Africa, only slightly less than are found in Costa Rica. The group counted 304 species seen in 14 days in South Africa. While most travelers to Southern and Eastern Africa are first attracted to mammals found there, everyone we know who visits quickly finds the birds fascinating—birds of all sizes and shapes, often with exquisitely colorful plumage.



Lilac-breasted Roller in Ontawanga Delta
Courtesy of Jim Thomason

Jim Thomason has been involved in photography for more than 60 years. He and his partner, Linda, were introduced to birding in 1999 on a trip to Venezuela and have made numerous wildlife and birding trips around the world. This program will feature birds with a few images of the ever-present mammals we all anticipate seeing in Africa.

of about a dozen Wilson's Snipe was flushed, and flew past several times before vanishing into the grass. We remarked on the birds being spooked and joked that they knew something was coming. That something appeared at the end of the day in the form of a Peregrine Falcon carrying the feathered remains of its dinner, and eyeing a buffet of California Quail—more than 70 of them! The presence of a Northern Harrier also contributed to other birds lying low. Thank you to our entire team for sharp eyes and ears and tenacity in detecting a lot of birds that didn't want to be found that day! The highlight of count week was a pair of Bald Eagles that spent a few minutes on New Year's Day circling the Valley Ford wetlands before continuing on their way.

Area 4 Joy Road; John Coddling, leader – (John has been a leader of this area as long as Stacy has been compiling.) Our count number of species is on the low side, although not dramatically. I feel that the total number of birds was down, which surprised me right after having a storm. I would have thought the birds were hungry. We had 7 counters this year, my largest group since taking over this count. Last year, we had three. Three of my counters were first-time CBCers, so that is good. I used my contacts at Pepperwood Preserve, where Sean Jeane and I do a Spring survey annually, to bring in some new participation. Birds we got that are unusual for us included Pygmy Nuthatch, a Pacific Wren, and 2 different White-throated Sparrows, one of whom was reported by Mike Heffernon who lives on our route. Oddly missing included titmouse and bluebird.

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CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

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Area 5 Salmon Creek Road; Sean Jeane, leader – (Sean has been a leader of this as long as Stacy has been compiling.) We had a total of six observers, including 10-yr old June Grabill, and we tallied 67 species in total. I modified that from 68 on count day. Both Chris Grabill and I had found what we were calling a Hermit x Townsend's Warbler hybrid, but upon examination of a few bird guides and photos from the McCauley Cornell site, I think it was an immature and/or female Hermit Warbler. We did have a full-color male Hermit Warbler. Also, in amongst a very large flock of Townsend's Warblers (like at least 12 or so), so the hybrid seemed to make sense. I'm still not 100% sure, but calling a hybrid probably needs a bit more proof! I tried really hard to get a photo, but never managed to get one. I owled the area in the wee hours starting around 5:15 a.m. Had two very clear Spotted Owls very close to me, and two Northern Saw-Whet Owls from different locations. Plus, heard a Barn Owl and a few Great-horned Owls (one visual as it flew over my vehicle). Chris saw another Great-horned in the afternoon, so I added it to our list. We had the Press Democrat (PD) photographer and reporter following us around for part of the morning. They asked questions of everyone and seemed to enjoy themselves. We had a relatively low count and missed a number of species we get just about every year, like Mourning Dove, Mallards, Say's Phoebe and a couple others. We had a nice look at a Bobcat in the afternoon, and maybe a second Bobcat... we couldn't be sure if it was the same individual we'd seen previously, but the distance between the two sightings makes me think we had two different cats! One of the property owners who provides access during the count contacted me later that day to say they had a Great Blue Heron who'd caught a gopher, only to have it stolen by a Red-tailed Hawk! Then, they had a Mountain Lion show up just off the edge of their property! Would have liked to have seen the Mountain Lion, but maybe best we didn't.... Compiler's note: Despite the three Peacocks shown in the PD article, Sean did not claim them on his tally report. I wonder how National Audubon would respond if we reported them.

Area 6 Estero Americano; Peter Colasanti, intrepid canoeist—I'd put in early, having been forewarned by Craig Roth that the Marinades had put a concrete barricade 100 yards back of the old bridge abutment to restrict access to the State Marine Recreational Management Area by less desperate boaters. The extra lugging time was used and reported as owling; got 2 Great-horned Owls. It was obvious by water level that the mouth had been breached, perhaps more by rough seas than outflow, and I had a falling tide and a zephyr at my back to speed my progress, so I decided to head for the mouth directly and do more birding on the return. Every year is so different there, this time there was low diversity of raptors and waterfowl and practically no shorebirds. Pressing on, I was welcomed by a nice bathing flock of gulls on a virtual island at the mouth with good variety, excluding Thayer's, but a GLAUCOUS GULL to make up for it. The breeze had been freshening until it had become a notable howl during my seawatch and I figured it was time to return while I could. Met the Estero Lane crew at SLT property and walked a couple unposted swampy draws just above the open delta area. No Swamp Sparrow, but some Cackling Geese called me to them. About a mile

shy of the road, I stopped at a stand of cattails on the Sonoma side. Tide was high, and I paddled through a breach in the natural slough side dike onto flooded pickleweed and parked to observe the cattail and willow thicket. I was thinking of the 3 species of rails I've had here in the past when, from the dike 10' from my right ear I heard "Grrr Grrr Grrr." Of course, I'm aware that BLACK RAIL doesn't occur north of Tomales Bay along coastal marshes, but then after a few seconds it repeated the call. Pretty nice year bird!

Area 6 Estero Lane; Whitney Mortimer & Liz Lewis, co-leaders—(Jennifer Michaud was out of the country) - Three of us— Liz Lewis, Whitney Mortimer, and Alex Mortimer (age 14) had the privilege of counting the land birds in one part of CBC Area 6, a beautiful preserve of 100+ acres managed by Sonoma Land Trust at the south end of Estero Lane. This coastal prairie is bordered on two sides by a marshy slough and the Estero Americano, which Peter Colasanti covered by canoe.

Highlights included impressive numbers of Red-tailed Hawks, mostly immature birds. We enjoyed trying to up our count of "total birds seen at one time"— the high count was 11 individuals. One Bald Eagle — "Adult 1059"— was observed flying south. We all felt that sparrow numbers seemed notably low this year, although all expected species were present. One White-throated Sparrow (tan-striped) was seen, an unexpected treat.

Area 7 Doran Beach; Ruth Rudesill is leader this year. Dea Freid who has led this area since the late Pleistocene couldn't make it this year. Ruth reports they had a great day! First confirmed the Nashville Warbler was still at Diekmann's (along with 2 Orange-crowned Warblers). Three Eurasian Wigeons at the Doran Entrance pond along with good shorebird numbers (mostly Marbled Godwits). Two Bald Eagles and a Merlin were observed. Land bird numbers were down, but good variety. The tide was so high, Doran Beach disappeared under waves. This tide affected the number of gulls and shorebirds.

Area 8 Bodega Bay; Gene Hunn, leader - Our team met at 7:30 AM at the Porto Bodega parking lot to plot strategy: Gene and Nancy Hunn, Betsy Crouthamel, Ian Morrison, Brook and Orion O'Connor, and Roger Marlow. We split the territory three ways. Ian took the uplands west of Highway 1 from Salmon Creek to the Porto, the O'Connors and Roger covered the Rail Ponds and the Bodega Dunes Campground, while the Hunns and Betsy Crouthamel surveyed the harbor from the Porto around to Gaffney Point, west of the channel, on the rising tide, then back through the uplands to the west. We met for lunch in the Dunes Campground, then headed for the outer strand for the afternoon as the tide and high surf receded. Ian finished by lunch, so called it a day. The outer beach survey crews again split, with Roger Marlowe and the O'Connors surveying south from the Dunes Campground toward Mussel Point. Betsy Crouthamel and the Hunns headed north to the Salmon Creek estuary. It was a fine day for birding. Highlights included the Bald Eagle pair that has set up housekeeping in the heronry behind Spud Point. A flock of 9 Black Oystercatchers on Gaffney Point was a pleasant surprise; ditto the 7 Semipalmated Plovers along the west shore, a full complement of

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expected gull species, 430 Brant (by careful count), and the lingering Brown Pelicans. The uplands west of the harbor had large flocks of sparrows and warblers (Yellow-rumps and one Townsend's). Sixty-three Snowy Plovers on the outer strand was a nice high count, along with hundreds of roosting peeps. Two dead Cassin's Auklets likely succumbed to the storms of the week before. Most surprising were the 16 Barn Swallows foraging over the dunes.

Area 9. Bodega Head; Dan Nelson, the lone observer – (Your compiler notes Dan Nelson and Mike Parmeter, the dynamic duo, counted at Bodega Head for many years, braving the stiff winds, scoping for Pelagics that might frequent our shores.) Dan has become a solo artist for the past several years. I wonder whether a pop-tent might be a welcomed convenience to shield him from the winds or just a hindrance to lug around. Dan notes: 51°F at start, Wind 10-15 mph out of S.E., which prevented much offshore bird totals. 33 species. Low total numbers.

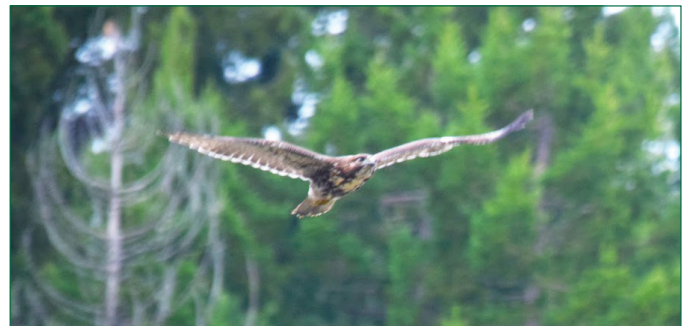
Area 10 Bodega Marine Lab; Jackie Sones, another lone observer– (Recognition must also be given to Jackie. UC Davis responded to the threats of the pandemic by prohibiting non-employees on their property, so Jackie has observed WSC CBC alone regularly.) Basic highlights for Area 10 today included 1 Parasitic Jaeger, 1 Northern Fulmar, 2 Red-necked Grebes, 3 Barn Swallows, 3 Lincoln's Sparrows, and 2 Short-eared Owls. I missed Burrowing Owl, but will try to look a bit more this week to make sure there isn't one around that I missed today. The seawatch from Mussel Point was very slow, perhaps because of this week's storm/wave conditions prior to the count? Land bird diversity was okay for this area, but I'd say overall numbers were down today. I think I've missed Short-eared Owls for at least a couple of years, so it was nice to see them this year.

Area 11 Cheney Gulch; Janeann Erickson, leader – (Janeann has been a leader of this as long as Stacy has been compiling). Here is our team's story for 2023 - The Cheney Gulch team had a great day birding in our area (the east side of Hwy 1 in Bodega Bay and Bay Hill Road). Besides enjoying the beauty of Salmon Creek Ranch, we had a real treat at the Bodega Bay Public Utility Ponds. We had just arrived at the ponds when an adult Bald Eagle flew in and grabbed a duck off the surface of one of the ponds. The eagle ate the duck at the edge of the pond and then flew off. Pretty awesome.

Area 12 Chanslor Ranch Scott Carey, leader – (Scott has led this area long enough to experience the area's name change from Seahouse Ranch to Chanslor Ranch.) We had a total of 63 species for the day on beautiful Chanslor Ranch. Some hard misses and a few surprises. Hard misses were NO Gallinules on the ponds, no Common Yellowthroats and very few duck species. Surprises were 2 Orange-crowned Warblers in the chaparral above ranch with a gang of Common Bushtits. (first for our area). An adult Golden Eagle in canyon on ridge was an easily missed bird and only seen on one other year in this area. The best surprise for us was 35 Aleutian Cackling Geese flying from North to South along Hwy 1 (towards Bodega Bay?). A first for our area. Hawk numbers seemed average. Crowned sparrows were very low it seemed. One Say's Phoebe was a shocker as well. Big number

of Yellow-rumped Warblers (107). We squeaked in one Sora at the pond. Otherwise, quiet on the pond. We did very well with the blackbird flock at the ranch proper with two Tricolored Blackbirds and five Browned-headed Cowbirds in with the expected species. 2 amphibians (Slender Salamander and Pacific Tree Frog). Mammals were Black-tailed Deer, Brush Bunny and Coyotes sounding off the New Year as the golden light of the setting sun bathed the hillsides.

Area 13 Boat. Gene Hunn and Lisa Hug tried this out for several years, but then abandoned the effort when they determined their efforts did not yield any new species. The boat is included here to show that Madrone Audubon is not superstitious.



Red-tailed Hawk in Flight

Courtesy of David Berman

Area 14 Highway 1; Lisa Hug, leader – The day began chilly despite high cloud cover, slight winds from the North and shifting to the East at times. Stacy Li is driving Lisa Hug's car for her because Lisa broke her right ankle several months ago and driving is still uncomfortable. Lisa is a bird savant and is very much needed for gulls and pelagic identification. We began at the northern end of the Highway 1 area overlooking a sandbar at the mouth of the Russian River. It was completely covered with Brown Pelicans and gulls. Stacy Li counted the pelicans and Lisa Hug, because she is adept at gull identification, counted and sorted the gulls. "Holy Cow! There are over 600 pelicans!" (I say). "Are you sure?" (asked Lisa). "Yeah, I counted the wings and divided by two," (I replied). "I thought you had to count the legs and divide by two. You have to do it all over again!" (Lisa laughed). It was the start to a great day. The birds seemed to be affected by the recent storm. More birds resting on the sand than in the air. We saw two shoals of about 300 each of Common Murres swimming in the lee of the offshore rock outcrops. Our count was a Murre estimate because it's harder to count wings or legs when they are in the water. Very few shorebirds, only 1 Black Turnstone and a small handful of Black Oystercatchers. The normal plethora of Loons and Grebes were absent. The routine is to start at the northern end of the area and stop to bird at the pull-outs that were proximal to rock outcroppings until you reach the southern end of the area, then return North and bird the communities such as Carmet by the Sea, the only access for land birds. Our proudest moment was our Barn Swallow identification. We only had a brief moment to see the salient field marks. It made us happy.

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Area 15 Willow Creek Road; David Berman, leader – (David has led this area since 2015.) Route: Started at Route 1 in Bridgehaven (Jenner), walked/drove up Willow Creek Road to the blocked off end, with detours on foot to the Environmental Campground off Willow Creek Road, Pomo Canyon along the river, and 3/4 mile into the forest beyond the blocked off part of Willow Creek Rd.

Area 16 Duncan's Mills; Mike Heffernon, leader – (Mike has led this area before Stacy became the compiler.) Six of us began our birding around 7:30 in the south side of Duncans Mills. We spent a couple of hours counting in the campground, where we observed many of the local suspects, in addition to 8 Evening Grosbeaks in a tree with several Robins. Most of the grosbeaks were males. We walked down to the small neighborhood close to the river, where two of our participants have a house and several bird feeders. There were two White-throated Sparrows, Pygmy Nuthatches and many others. We dipped on the Golden-crowned Kinglets that we typically see there. Across from the house is a trail which leads to the river. Interestingly, we saw a Red-throated Loon. This is over 4 miles from the mouth of the river. On the north side of DM, we were granted access to a pond behind the stores. We observed 10 Hooded Mergansers and a few other duck species, but no Wood Ducks, which isn't usual. We also had good views of an adult Golden Eagle flying overhead close to a Red-tailed Hawk. The size comparison was fun. Next, we made our way west on Hwy 116 to the intersection with Hwy 1, stopping a couple of times along the way. In the main rail pond, we had good looks and listens to two Virginia Rails (but no Soras). We drove to the Harbor Seal overlook just north of Jenner and I was pleased to see the great majority of the gulls on the other side of the river, leaving us responsible for maybe only 100. We got 5 or 6 gull species. Our last bit of birding was up at Jenner Headlands,



Resting River Otters

Courtesy of David Berman

accessed from town. We got a few new birds, such as Ferruginous Hawk and Cooper's Hawk, but gone are the days when we were virtually assured of Pipits, Horned Larks and Canyon Wrens. Still, being up there is always a spiritual thrill. 74 species in total.

Area 17 Freezeout Canyon; The leaders of this territory were Dr. Peter Leveque and Giel Witt. The rest of the team included Marie Witt, Erv Peterson, Mo Flanery, Hilary Smith, Vicki Chung, Sophie

New Members

Healdsburg

Sandra Young

Windsor

Pamala Milia

Donations

In memory of

Gary Haag

by Teresita Salter-Haag

In memory of

Jack Osborne

by Jill Osborne

In honor of

Diane Hichwa

by Deidre Harrison & Tom Crane

Leveque-Eichorn, Monica Schwalbenberg-Peña, and John Lundblad. The dry weather was much appreciated by all. We had a goal of 60 species. Peter said he really wanted a Green Heron this year. We started off with a quick lesson of Entomology - evidence of 2 Horned Oak Gall Wasps. Like last year, the river was high, swift, and murky, and thus led to the result of low counts of ducks and water species. We also saw very few raptors; just 2 Cooper's Hawks, 3 Red-shouldered Hawks, and 2 Red-tailed Hawks. No falcons were seen. We were blessed to be invited on the riverfront property belonging to Rick and Leslie. Thank you so much. We saw 5 species of woodpeckers, including 1 Red-breasted Sap sucker. We indulged in a quick Irish coffee break and toasted Giel to a 69th birthday. There, we visited a bird feeder to see 1 White-throated Sparrow and 1 Fox Sparrow. We were blessed by the repair to Moscow Road, as birding the river was a lot easier. We stopped at Villa Grande, and Sophie found the elusive Brown Creeper in the Redwood grove. The count and diversity at Casini Ranch were noticeably low this year, but we did get 1 Wood Duck in the pond and 1 Wrenit on the edge of the property. When asked about the highlights, Peter reflected and said "The Common Goldeneyes were sure beautiful during lunch at Casini's, but the highlight was the community of birding friends." We finished with 60 species, but no Green Heron. Next Year! (Written by John Lundblad).

Area 18 Coleman Valley Road; David Leland, leader – (David has led or shared lead with Diane Hichwa at least since 2011.) The Coleman Valley Road team consisted of Tiffany and Matt Erickson, Gay Bishop, and me (David Leland), with help from Phyllis Hughes. We saw a total of 48 species. Highlights included many Townsend's Warblers, good numbers of Varied Thrushes, 3 Ferruginous Hawks, many Red-taileds (including at least 4 courting pairs), and many Kestrels, too. Several Red-breasted Sapsuckers and many Western Bluebirds, among others, added variety and color to our day.

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Area 19 Austin Creek; Brock Dolman, leader – (Linda Petrulias was the leader of this area for many years, but needed to reduce her responsibilities. Brock has helped out all over our circle.) Brock reports: I hope you had as nice a day out there as I did! While it was seemingly quiet, I did end up with a reasonable number of species at 44, considering I just did Neely Rd., Mays Canyon & Guerneville town. Best birds of day for me were great looks at a fresh White-throated Sparrow and the 3 wood ducks (2 males/1 female) in the woody swamp at start of Mays Canyon Road with a Pileated chipping away at the snap right above them. I did do the Treatment Plant and not much there, but did get a Hermit Thrush. I ended up working the neighborhoods off Neely Rd. pretty hard to pick up the smattering of other yardbird species, which is where the White-throated Sparrow was with Golden-crowned Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow and Fox Sparrow the Red-breasted Sapsucker on an apple tree. Also had to get an Anna's Hummingbird on a feeder cuz, well, ya know... :-)

Area 20 was the result of some mathematically challenged person. There has never been as far as we can determine an area 20.



Wood Duck and Mallard

Courtesy of Brock Dolman

Area 21 Harrison Grade Territory; Carolyn Johnson, leader – (Carolyn Johnson has been a leader of this as long as Stacy has been compiling.) The morning began just before dawn when 2 Great-horned Owls were calling back and forth as they prepared to hunker down for the day. As dawn broke, passerines were slow to come out. The day progressed just as quietly. In one backyard, we found the cause for the absence of birds as we watched a Cooper's Hawk perched strategically over the bird feeder. From there, it felt as though the Cooper's was following us around all morning. There was a striking absence of Crowned Sparrows and Towhees in a territory that normally has them emerging from every roadside blackberry patch. That said, there was a remarkable flock of two dozen Townsend's Warblers and near equal numbers of Ruby-Crowned Kinglets out Bones Rd. We were able to find all the expected woodpeckers, thanks especially to the few remaining habitat-rich, old, abandoned apple orchards. Every year, I hold my breath that they will be there. Midday, we watched a Bobcat in a vineyard while it watched us. And just as we were finishing up the day, we saw two Hooded Mergansers displaying with their hoods expanded, bobbing up and down and chasing each other around a small pond as two females looked on. It was a very special sight.

In the final analysis, we saw 62 species, 2 fewer than our 8-year average. Our Crowned Sparrow numbers were markedly low. It was one of those days you felt you had to work pretty hard to get your birds. Even so, it was a beautiful day to be out—not too cold and no rain—and enjoying the company of friends.

Christmas Bird Count Day on December 31

by June Zelda Grabill (age 10)



My name is June and I just turned 10 years old. This was my third time doing the Christmas Bird Count on Salmon Creek Road with my papa. It was so cold, but right when we started, we found a Red-breasted Sapsucker! I got to talk to a reporter from the newspaper for a long time and she was fun to talk to about the birds and why more kids should help with science and nature. I'm glad she wrote about our bird count so other people will read about it and want to help. My favorite part was searching for the little Pacific Wrens in a secret, and probably magical Redwood forest. The tiny dark brown wrens were like fairies who hide at the bottom of the ferns and make a very loud chirp. My Dad's favorite bird was a Hermit Warbler, but I didn't see it because I was looking down in the bushes at a Hermit Thrush, and I didn't know to look up in time?! We were both looking at different hermit-birds at the same time, so then we got to laugh about it.

I also helped find two Bobcats, and one of them had a longer tail and orange fur on its legs. I didn't know Bobcats could have such long tails! When I was walking down one of the trails, I found a Banana Slug and picked it up to hold it for a little while. Sometimes, when you're looking for birds, you find lots of other beautiful creatures. I really, really love the Christmas Bird Count and next year, I hope more kids will come, I think they'll like it, and we need their help.

(Editor's Note: The Press Democrat covered Sean Jean's team on Salmon Creek Road in Bodega, and June and her Dad, Chris Grabill (a 30-year West County CBC participant) were team participants. Photos from the Press Democrat article also revealed a doe followed June as she was walking along – We suggest a Nature Whisperer is among us.)

Everyone in Madrone Audubon is grateful to **Dr. Stacy Li and Peter Leveque** for co-coordinating the West Sonoma County CBC since 2015! Stacy and Peter will be "retiring" and our new Co-Coordinators will be **Chris Grabill and John Lundblad**. We look forward to continuing the tradition – We know this national community science project directly contributes to climate action pathways and conserving birds in our lives.



Our Board and Conservation Committee meetings are held virtually. For Board meeting information, 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, please visit our website, www.madroneaudubon.org for updates.

February & March 2024 Outings

Bring binoculars and wear outdoor clothing suitable for the weather forecast. Our outings are free for members and the public. (We may have binoculars to loan for your outing.)

Thursday, February 8 Crane Creek Regional Park

8:30-10:30 AM
5000 Pressley Road, Santa Rosa
Leader: Janet Bosshard

Take Petaluma Hill Road to Pressley Road (Rohnert Park). Use your County park pass or buy a day pass there. Mostly level to easy rolling hills. Rain cancels. More info: (707) 526-5883.



White-throated Sparrow
Courtesy of Scott Carey

Thursday, February 22 Doran Beach Regional Park

8:30-10:30 AM
201 Doran Beach Road,
Bodega Bay
Leader: Janet Bosshard

Use your County park pass or buy a day pass there. Park in the first dirt lot on your left. We will scan the beach for birds, then cross the road to walk the paved trail to the east. Rain cancels. More info: (707) 526-5883.

Thursday, March 14 A Place to Play

8:30-10:30 AM
2375 West Third Street, Santa Rosa
Leader: Janet Bosshard

No parking pass is required. There are a wildlife pond and grass areas to look for water birds and local birds. We can also walk along Santa Rosa Creek for a ways to see what's near the water. More info: (707) 526-5883.



Surf Scoter

Courtesy of Tom Reynolds

Saturday, March 23 Santa Rosa Creek Trail

8:30-10:30 AM
West of Willowside Road, Santa Rosa
Leader: Linda Fraley

Drive on Willowside Road to the junction with Santa Rosa Creek Trail (just north of the Waldorf School). For parking advice and information, please call Linda Fraley (559) 779-5211.

Thursday, March 28 Helen Putnam Regional Park

8:30-10:30 AM
411 Chileno Valley Road,
Petaluma
Leader: Janet Bosshard

Parking permit is required and can be purchased at the park. We will walk the paved path to look for raptors, bluebirds, and meadowlarks. If group would like, we can continue over the hill and around, back to the parking area. More info: (707) 526-5883.



Female American Kestrel
Courtesy of Tom Reynolds

Thank you, Donors!
End-of-2023 donations
were almost \$6000.
Our gratitude to all who included Madrone Audubon in your end of year giving.

Save the Date! May 19
Annual Picnic, Shady Oaks
Spring Lake Regional Park



Madrone Audubon Society

Post Office Box 1911
Santa Rosa, California 95402

February/March 2024

Madrone *Leaves* is published bimonthly from October through May, plus one issue each in June and September.



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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.

- President:** Susan Kirks - susankirks@sbcglobal.net 241-5548
- Vice President:** Position open
- Recording Secretary:** Claudia Rannikar - pinchipelon@comcast.net
- Corresponding Secretary:** Position open
- Treasurer:** Position open
- Membership:** Questions to Susan Kirks (Position open) - susankirks@sbcglobal.net .. 241-5548
- Conservation:** Diane Hichwa - dhichwa@earthlink.net 785-1922
- Renewable Energy Subcommittee:** Susan Kirks & Larry Broderick, Co-Chairs.... 241-5548
- Education Kits:** Barbara Novak - b.novak34@gmail.com 795-3996
- Programs:** Position open
- Junior Audubon:** Position open
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- Bird Walks – Thursday:** Janet Bosshard 707-526-5883
- Bird Walks – Saturday:** Varied, check monthly calendar 707-241-5548
- Bird-A-Thon Coordinator:** Carolyn Greene – cgnpark@yahoo.com 805-443-7289
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- BBA:** Madrone Board, info@madroneaudubon.org
- IMBD:** Veronica Bowers - vlbowers@gmail.com 829-2955
- Christmas Bird Count:** Peter Leveque and Stacy Li - stacyli@sonic.net 566-7937
- Bird Rescue Center:** 523-BIRD
- Native Songbird Care & Conservation:** 484-6502
- Northern California Rare Bird Alert** 415-681-7422
- Audubon-California:** Gaylon Parsons - gparsons@audubon.org 415-644-4605
- Publicity Chair:** Susan Webb - ofsummer@att.net 707-540-5854
- National Audubon Society:** 225 Varick Street, NY, NY 10014. 212-979-3000

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Please complete this form if you wish to join Madrone Audubon or renew your Madrone membership

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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