



Madrone LEAVES

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

VOLUME 53

April – May 2020

Number 5

Plastic Pollution a Serious Problem for our Oceans and Birds

by Autumn Iverson

We are lucky to live in Sonoma County for many reasons, including the great weather, beautiful open spaces, and gorgeous coastline. Our coast, with rocky intertidal areas, sandy beaches, lagoon mudflats, saltmarshes, coastal scrub and more, provides a productive and bountiful habitat for many seabirds and shorebirds. Sonoma County has more than 60 seabird and shorebird species that regularly use our coast. This includes birds like Surf Scoters that spend most of their time on the ocean, diving for benthic invertebrates and the Semipalmated Plover that scurries along the shoreline to pick off prey.

Sadly, despite all the beauty of the Sonoma coast, our shorebirds and seabirds are still exposed to marine plastic pollution. Plastic pollution enters the ocean from sources on land and sea, ranging

system, because of our large coastal populations and high amount of waste produced per person, the U.S. is in the top 20 of 192 coastal countries for mismanaged plastic waste, with an estimated 0.04 – 0.11 million metric tons becoming marine debris each year.

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Ingestible plastics

Courtesy of 5 Gyres

from people littering to plastic accidentally dropped in transport over land and sea. You've probably seen pictures of trash-filled rivers from less economically developed countries. While these are startling and it may seem that we don't come close to this, the U.S. actually has the highest per capita waste generation of all coastal countries. Even though we have a well-managed waste

GENERAL MEETING

First United Methodist Church • 1551 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa
Monday, April 20, 2020, 7:00 PM

“Birds of Prey - Identification and Seasonal Highlights”

Join Raptor expert Larry Broderick for a real-time update on Birds of Prey in Sonoma County and the Bay Area. We will learn about renewable energy, shootings, poisonings, population trends and rare sightings, and impacts from the Sonoma County wildfires. Larry will include identification review for our many enthusiasts who continue to develop skills to determining who and what we are seeing when a raptor soars by or overhead or is observed, perched on a post, in a tree or in our natural county settings.



Kites sp.

Courtesy of Tom Reynolds

Larry Broderick, Ex Officio member of our Madrone Audubon Board of Directors and Co-Chair of the Renewable Energy Subcommittee of Conservation, started West County HawkWatch with Jesse House in 1996. A considerable number of over-wintering Buteos (Rough-legged and Ferruginous Hawks) were in West Marin and Sonoma Counties then, but there was little mention of them in bird guides and publications. Over almost 25 years, Larry and his team have broadened and deepened awareness and documentation of raptors, contributing to seasonal migration observations and threats to raptor populations in the San Francisco Bay Area. This has included founding the Jenner Headlands HawkWatch. For the last 15 years, Larry and his team have researched and focused on protection of rare leucistic and dilute plumage raptors. Additional action includes saving Swainson hawk nesting sites, protecting Peregrine Falcon nesting locations, and support for re-nesting of displaced raptors. Larry is a certified UC Naturalist and has also been certified for wildlife rehabilitation with the Bird Rescue Center of Sonoma County and Kenwood Wildlife Center. He leads outings for Solano and Sonoma Land Trusts, RROS and Audubon and the Bird Rescue Center.



PLASTIC POLLUTION

Continued from page 1

Plastic pollution causes two main problems for animals in the ocean: entanglement and ingestion. Entanglement can happen especially with plastic bags, balloons and fishing gear. For example, a colony of Northern Gannets in the UK was found to prefer synthetic rope for nesting material. Over 8 years, 525 birds were entangled, most of which were nestlings. Ingestion of plastic pollution is also a big problem, with plastic bags and plastic utensils considered the biggest offenders. In the northeastern Atlantic, researchers found that 74% of the seabird species studied ingested plastic. Perhaps the most haunting images of this are those of artist Chris Jordan, showing a dead juvenile albatross, still in the nest, with decaying flesh and exposed bones twisted around a small pile of brightly colored plastic.

Fortunately, Sonoma County has passed legislation to stop our contribution to this marine debris problem. This has included plastic bag bans across the County and banning single-use plastics in Sebastopol. California passed a law to give straws by request only. There is also an exciting new Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act that was introduced to Congress in February 2020 and includes national reform such as some bans, restrictions on shipping waste to other countries, and pausing new plastic facilities. We encourage you to check this out and contact your representatives about it!

It is incredibly encouraging to see these large-scale changes. However, there is still much work to be done to protect marine animals. As things stand now, the amount of plastic entering the ocean is expected to increase by an order of magnitude in the next five years (from 2015 levels). Unfortunately, “compostable” plastics are not a solution for Sonoma County. These materials can only be broken down in industrial facilities that reach very high temperatures – and according to the Waste Zero Manager of Recology Sonoma Marin, we don’t have those facilities. Therefore, these products get sent to the landfill. Worse, when littered or otherwise accidentally introduced to the environment, these seemingly “green” products take years to break down and when



Fish and net ball

Photo by Sergio Izquierdo

they do, they can become harmful microplastics. Also, “reusable” plastic bags that are simply heavier in weight cause the same problems in the marine environment as other plastic bags, and should not be considered effective alternatives.

ANNUAL MEETING and POTLUCK

First United Methodist Church • 1551 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa
Monday, May 18, 2020, 6:00 PM

Ernestine I. Smith Lecture Series

Bring a dish to share (entree, salad or dessert), and if possible, bring your own plate, cup and utensils. We will provide drinks; sorry, no alcoholic beverages allowed at the church. Help with set-up before dinner (beginning about 5:15 PM), or with cleanup afterwards, is appreciated. Arrive 5:15-5:30 PM – we’ll give you a task! During dinner, enjoy our Chapter awards presentation and announcement of recipient of the 3rd annual Ernestine Smith/Madrone Audubon scholarship. Installation of officers and speaker 7:00 PM.



Condors Courtesy of Mike Stake

First annual Ernestine I. Smith Lecture

Once on the brink of extinction with a global population of 22 birds, California Condors are on the road to recovery. In 1997, Ventana Wildlife Society of Monterey began releasing captive-bred condors to restore a wild population along the central California coast. They continue to manage the population with Pinnacles National Park, and now celebrate the milestone of 100 wild condors in central California. Join biologist Mike Stake as he describes what it’s like to handle a bird with a 9.5-foot wingspan, and how the greatest challenge is reducing their exposure to lead poisoning. Mike will share his outlook for the full recovery of a self-sustainable condor population for future generations to enjoy.

Growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area, Mike became interested in birds when he was 10 years old. He went on to receive a B.S. Degree in Biology at the University of Nebraska and a Master’s Degree in Fisheries and Wildlife from the University of Missouri. He worked for several years with The Nature Conservancy in Texas, for another five years with a non-profit organization in New Mexico, and also lived and worked in South America, Australia, and Russia. In 2009, Mike returned home to California to join Ventana Wildlife Society. In his 12th year with Ventana, he assists condor recovery efforts by leading non-lead ammunition outreach efforts.

So what do we do? Local organizations like Clean River Alliance, Coastwalk and Surfrider provide opportunities for beach cleanups. We can join these efforts and help prevent more plastics from entering the ocean. We can think about alternatives to plastics wherever possible – there are products like bamboo toothbrushes, bar shampoo and metal razors to name a few. As we encourage for our post-Christmas Bird Count dinner and annual membership meeting potluck each year, we can bring our own utensils, cups, to-go containers and bags and say no to straws and plastic lids. And of course, we can support measures that will reduce plastic pollution. Together, we can individually and collectively make choices and take action to ensure the Sonoma County coast remains a beautiful and safe place for our coastal birds and beyond.

For more details: <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/csp2.45>

Coronavirus Precautions

As the *Leaves* goes to press, we are carefully monitoring the U.S. public health crisis. We hope to be able to hold our meetings and outings in April and May. Please visit the Alerts and the Field Trips section of the Madrone website (<http://www.madroneaudubon.org/>) for up to date information.



Ernestine Smith Remembered through new Environmental Lecture Series

by Diane Hichwa and Linda Curry

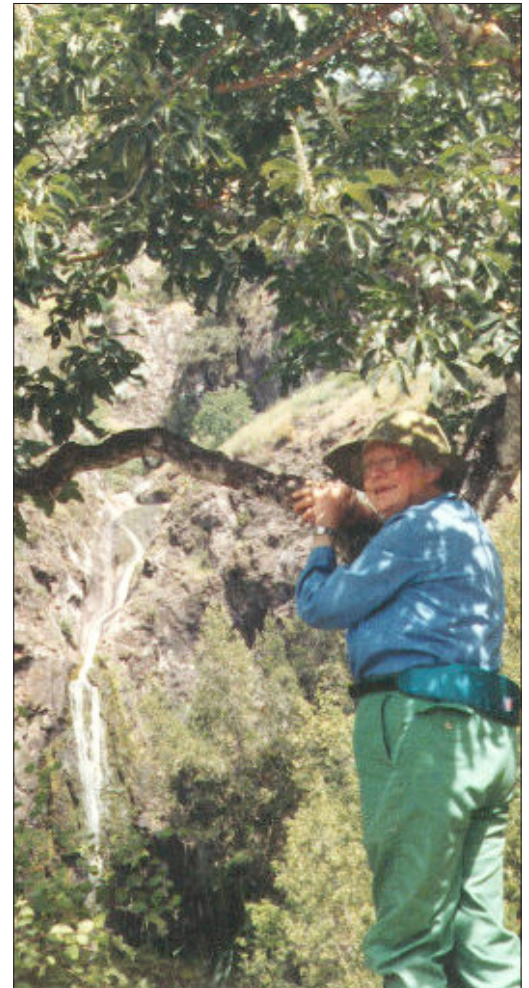
Ernestine Smith, known by all as Ernie, passed away in 2015 but her support of our natural world, of Madrone Audubon Society, and of the value of education continues on. As you read the list of her accomplishments in her 100 years on Earth, you can imagine the role model and inspiration she was to women and to all in Sonoma County as our local environmental movement was established. We both feel privileged to have known Ernie and worked alongside her on environmental issues as well as in outdoor education at the Bouverie Preserve in Glen Ellen. This remarkable woman also thought to the future and left Madrone a significant donation from her estate. A gift she provided to our Madrone Chapter enables us to fund a scholarship for a Santa Rosa Junior College student to continue their education in natural or environmental sciences.

This May 18, 2020, please join us as we recognize Ernie's strong interest in nature with a new tradition. We will present the FIRST in our annual Ernestine I. Smith Environmental Lecture Series. At each annual membership meeting we plan to host a speaker who can inspire us, as Ernie has done, to take action to help Earth and her creatures.

Please see the program description for this special occasion on p. 2 of *Leaves*, and please join us in establishing and enjoying this new tradition, in Ernie's memory and honor.

Ernie Smith: Highlights of a life well lived

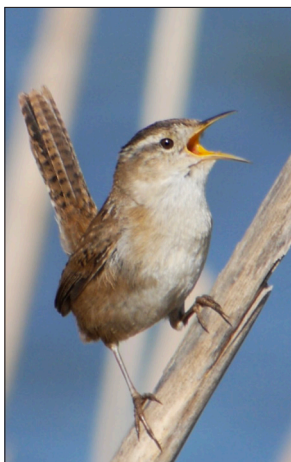
- Born and raised in California
- BS in Entomology from San Jose State University
- Santa Rosa High School teacher
- Santa Rosa Junior College Sports Hall of Fame inductee
- Helped found Madrone Audubon and Audubon Canyon Ranch
- Founded COAST with Bill Kortum and Chuck Rhinehart
- Helped establish Sonoma County Open Space District, CA Coastal Commission, Sinkyone Wilderness, and Sonoma County Tomorrow
- Lifelong environmental educator to all generations
- Passionate protector of species
- 100-year love affair with Nature



Ernie at the Bouverie waterfall

Courtesy of Linda Curry

BIRD-A-THON - BAT - a fun/fund-raising event!



Marsh Wren at Las Gallinas
Courtesy of Gordon Beebe

Madrone Audubon's annual marathon fundraiser, Bird-A-Thon, has begun! From now until the end of May 2020, our teams will be out identifying and counting species. Funds raised are all used locally and help support our programs and activities, including the Lincoln Elementary School Bird and Nature Festival, our youth and family bird walks, Christmas Bird Count, Phenology Project and W. 9th Street nesting support project, along with many conservation efforts throughout the County.

We will miss the late Ted Eliot who always helped with donations and located many species with the Grey-headed Seersuckers. If you haven't joined a team to help, please consider joining this year.

For donations to help the Bird-A-Thon, you can sponsor any team by making a single donation, or pledge per species observed. Contributions of any amount are welcomed!

Our teams are:

Roadrunners – led by Carolyn Greene (formerly Betty Groce & the late Don McCarthy)

Featherquesters – led by Diane Hichwa

Grey-headed Seersuckers – led by Ken Wilson, Becky Olsen & Ian Morrison

Burrowing Owls – led by Susan Kirks & Art Slater

March Madness – Gene Hunn's 1-person phenomenon

Zonotropias – led by Bill Doyle, Helen Kochenderfer & Don Kirker.

So, we have six great Bird-A-Thon teams! Please consider donating to one or several teams if you can. And, to join a team or learn how to sponsor and pledge a donation, please contact Carolyn Greene, Bird-A-Thon Coordinator, cgnpark@icloud.com.



Lincoln Elementary School's Annual Bird Day

by Janet Bosshard

Friday, May 8th, is Lincoln Elementary School's Annual Bird Day event. Madrone Audubon is the lead organization to sponsor the event. Lincoln School is located just east of the West 9th Street egret/heron colony that nests there each year.



Great Egret with nestlings

Courtesy of Tom Reynolds

Several organizations take part in the exciting day. Living with Lions does a special presentation for the sixth graders. Audubon Canyon Ranch leads the students down to the rookery to learn about and view the nesting birds. The Laguna Foundation will do a hands-on class about bird nests, and the Bird Rescue Center will bring live Ambassador birds, which is always exciting for the students. Tom Reynolds will show his new birding video, teaching the students about many local birds and wildlife. Janeann Erickson and I are stationed at the garden. We teach the younger grades about worms and composting, butterflies and bats. The older grades learn about birds by the Birdo Bingo, Life Cycle Lottery, and the Vulture games. There are art projects and origami sessions going on. It is a full morning, 8:30 AM to noon.

This is a very special day for the students, which they look forward to each year, and we can all volunteer and help make this day a great one for the school. We need extra volunteers at each activity to assist the lead volunteers.

Please call me if you can help by volunteering or would like more information -Janet Bosshard, 526-5883. There will be a pre-event meeting to present the schedule and assignments and to help familiarize the volunteers to the school on Thursday, April 30th, 2:45 PM, room 605, staff lounge.

Donations

In Memory of

Joannie Dranginis by Sandra Martensen

Don Langendorf by Cynthia Langendorf

Phil Temko by Gay Bishop

Volunteer for Native Songbird Care & Conservation

Native Songbird Care & Conservation (NSCC) is dedicated to the conservation of native songbirds through rehabilitation, release back to the wild, and community outreach. Each year we care for approximately 1,000 injured and orphaned songbirds from Sonoma County and beyond.

NSCC's work is supported entirely by volunteers. The greatest need for volunteers is May through August - Baby Bird Season! Help is needed with the hands-on care of the birds, aviary cleaning and enrichment, transport of birds to the hospital, releasing birds back to the wild, and housekeeping tasks such as food preparation, folding laundry, and doing dishes. A variety of volunteer opportunities are available for adults, juniors, and teens.

Register for a Volunteer Orientation on one of the following dates:

Thursday, April 16, 6:30 to 8:00 pm

Saturday, April 18, 10 to 11:30 am

Saturday, May 16, 10 to 11:30 am

To register, email volunteer@nativesongbirdcare.org or call 707-484-6502. Please review the information on the NSCC website, www.nativesongbirdcare.org, to learn more about requirements and training needed to volunteer. The work is challenging, but very rewarding!

Sierra Nevada 2020 Field Campus Summer Study

The opportunity to enjoy time at the Sierra Nevada Field Campus (SFNC), sponsored by San Francisco State University, is coming up. Friends of SFNC will offer 5 scholarships of up to \$500 each for the 2020 session. Each scholarship can be applied to any class or workshop at the field campus, and cover cost of tuition, room/board up to a total of \$500. The scholarships are being offered, one per person, for individuals who have not received a scholarship in the past.

There are 2 steps to take to apply and be considered for the campus field program:

1. Register and pay for your class.
2. Send an email titled "SNFC Scholarship" to jsteele@sfsu.edu, stating your interest in the scholarship and identifying the class in which you enrolled, and how much you are applying for (up to \$500).

Application deadline is April 30, 2020. Learn more about the summer study program at <https://sierra.sfsu.edu/course-calendar>.

On May 1st, a random drawing of registered applicants will determine scholarship recipients. All applicants will be notified of results on May 2nd. Recipients will receive a check for the scholarship on their first day of class. If someone applies for a scholarship and has paid for a class, but is not a recipient via the drawing on May 1st, and needs to cancel their registration as a result, a refund will be processed in accordance with the SFNC cancellation policy.

(Information kindly provided by Madrone Audubon member Sabrina Hearst, also with Friends of Sierra Nevada Field Campus. Questions about the field study program experience? sabrinahearst@earthlink.net.)



Please see the Madrone website (<http://www.madroneaudubon.org/>) for Alerts and the Field Trips Section for possible postponements and cancellations due to the current U.S. public health crisis.

All walks and membership meetings are open to the public. Bird walks are recreational and educational in purpose, and all levels of expertise are welcome. Bring field equipment and wear comfortable shoes and layered clothing for variable weather conditions. Please carpool whenever possible. Forecasted heavy rain cancels. There is no charge for activities unless otherwise specified, but some parks have day-use fees.

April 2020 Calendar

Thursday, April 2, 7:00 PM

BOARD MEETING. Sonoma County Environmental Center, 55A Ridgway Avenue, Santa Rosa. For agenda information, contact Susan Kirks at susankirks@sbcglobal.net.

Saturday, April 4, 8:00 AM to Noon

SANTA ROSA CREEK at WILLOWSIDE ROAD. We will walk from Willowside Road to Delta Pond gate and back. Expect a variety of riparian residents and recently-arrived migrant species. Meet on the southwest side of the bridge over Santa Rosa Creek, on Willowside Road, mid-way between Hall Road. and Guerneville Road. Please do not leave valuables visible in your car at this location. Leader: Gordon Beebe, 583-3115 call or text msg.

Saturday, April 11, 8:00 AM to Noon

RIVERFRONT REGIONAL PARK, Windsor. Spring should be in full swing, with lots of singing birds and nesting activity. Meet in the parking lot near the redwoods and picnic area. From Windsor, take Windsor River Road west, then head south on Eastside Road for about one mile. The park entrance will be on the right. We will walk the loop trail around the lakes, and check out the Russian River view as well. There is an entry fee of \$7 if you do not have a park pass. Leader: Gordon Beebe, 583-3115 call or text msg.

Thursday, April 16, 8:30 to 10:30 AM

RIVERFRONT REGIONAL PARK, Windsor. We will meet at the parking lot, near the Redwood grove. We will walk along the dirt road to the ponds. This road can be muddy (if we get rain), so bring shoes that can get dirty. We'll have a chance to see if the herons are nesting nearby. Use your park pass or buy a day pass. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Janet Bosshard, 526-5883.

Saturday, April 18, 9:00 to 10:30 AM

ROSELAND CREEK PRESERVE. Join us for this Earth Day activity - an introductory bird and nature walk. The 19.49-acre community park has strong community support for a nature preserve, with passive recreation, habitat and creek restoration, and education. We'll meet across from the Roseland Creek Elementary School (1683 Burbank Ave). Look for Madrone Audubon table outside Preserve. Light refreshments provided after walk. Leader: Suzanne Reta. Questions: Susan Kirks, 707-241-5548, call or text msg.

Monday, April 20, 7:00 PM

GENERAL MEETING. First United Methodist Church, 1551 Montgomery Drive, Santa Rosa. "Birds of Prey – Identification and Seasonal Highlights." This is a free event and all are welcome.

May 2020 Calendar

Saturday, May 2, 7:30 AM to Noon

SPRING LAKE REGIONAL PARK. We will walk the loop around the lake, looking for spring migrants. Parking fee (\$7) for non-permit holders. From Summerfield Road in Santa Rosa, go east on Hoen Avenue, turn left on Newanga Avenue, turn right inside the park entrance gate, and meet in the parking lot near the restrooms at the top of the hill. Leader: Gordon Beebe, 583-3115 call or text msg.

Thursday, May 7, 7:00 PM

BOARD MEETING. Sonoma County Environmental Center, 55A Ridgway Avenue, Santa Rosa. For agenda information, contact Susan Kirks at susankirks@sbcglobal.net.

Friday, May 8, 8:00 AM to 12:30 PM

LINCOLN SCHOOL BIRD DAY. Annual half-day nature celebration at Lincoln Elementary School on West 9th Street in Santa Rosa. Contact Janet Bosshard - bosshard@sonic.net or 707-526-5883 – to see how you can help.

Saturday, May 16, 7:30 AM to Noon

RAGLE RANCH REGIONAL PARK, on Ragle Ranch Road, in Sebastopol. Join us to look for spring migrants, as well as a wide variety of our resident county birds. Meet in the parking area near the dog park and Peace Garden (from entry kiosk, the road slowly veers left - continue to the parking lot). Parking fee (\$7) for non-permit holders. We will be walking the Blackberry Trail, about 1.5 miles long. Leader: Gordon Beebe, 583-3115 call or text msg.

Monday, May 18, 6:00 PM

ANNUAL MEETING and POTLUCK, Ernestine I. Smith Lecture Series. First United Methodist Church, 1551 Montgomery Drive, Santa Rosa. Dinner is at 6:00 PM and announcements and election of officers at 7:00 PM, followed by the presentation – "Return of the Condor." This is a free event and all are welcome.



Wilson's Snipe

Courtesy of Gordon Beebe

Thursday, May 21, 8:30 to 10:30 AM

SPRING LAKE REGIONAL PARK. Meet at the restrooms, by the swimming Lagoon. Use your park pass or buy a day pass (\$7). May is always a good time for a bird walk at this park. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Carolyn Greene, (805) 443-7289.

Saturday, May 30, 7:30 AM to 3:00 PM

WILLOW CREEK and DUNCAN'S MILLS. Meet at the Duncans Mills parking lot off of Moscow Rd. Turn right as you enter the lot, to the right of the Gold Coast Bakery. We will carpool to Willow Creek Road, then walk sections of the road, covering riparian and chaparral/grassland habitats. Bring lunch for Duncans Mills, with a final stop at Cassini Ranch for Wood Ducks. Leader: Gordon Beebe, 583-3115 call or text msg.

Saturday, June 6, 7:30 AM to Noon

SALMON CREEK ROAD. Another beautiful rural road in Sonoma County, with riparian, grassland, and mixed forest habitats. If possible, please carpool before arriving in the town of Bodega, as there is limited space on Salmon Creek Road (Contact leader to arrange carpool from Sebastopol). Meet on Salmon Creek Road at the corner of Bodega Highway, in the town of Bodega (not Bodega Bay). We will then combine into as few cars as possible. Leader: Gordon Beebe, 583-3115 call or text msg.



Please check the websites of sponsoring organizations for possible postponements or cancellations for the events listed below.

OUT & ABOUT

11th Annual Pt. Reyes Birding and Nature Festival

Pt. Reyes National Seashore
April 23-26, 2020

Keynote Speakers Jack Dumbacher & Katie Fallon and numerous birding activities for children and adults. Sponsored by Environmental Action Committee of West Marin. For a full list of festival activities and locations, go to <https://www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org/>

Heron Days 2020 – Lake County

Lakeside County Park in Kelseyville: *April 25-26*
Clear Lake Campground in Clearlake: *May 2-3*

Held during the peak breeding season for Western and Clark’s Grebes, Clear Lake’s popular Heron Days features boat tours led by experienced Audubon guides that offer a great chance to see these birds’ courtship displays. Contact Redbud Audubon at redbudaudubon.org/heron for a schedule of events and to purchase tickets for boat tours.

“Winging It Wednesdays” Bird Walks

Enjoy leisurely, family-friendly bird walks for all levels of experience on the last Wednesday of the month at one of Sonoma County’s beautiful regional parks. Upcoming walks include:

April 29, 2020, 8:30 to 10:30 AM at Crane Creek Regional Park

May 27, 2020, 8:30 – 10:30 AM at Sonoma Valley Regional Park

Additional information at <https://parks.sonomacounty.ca.gov/Play/Bird-Watching/>

Garden Events at Native Songbird Care & Conservation

8050 Elphick Road, Sebastopol, 95472

April 11, 2020, 10:00 to 11:30 AM

The April Songbirds in the Garden event will celebrate California Native Plant Week. *The Wildscaping for Songbirds* presentation will include a tour of NSCC’s native habitat gardens to view native plants and chat about their vital role in supporting native songbirds and biodiversity. Reservations required, space is limited. Call 707-484-6502 or email info@nativesongbirdcare.org to reserve a spot. Admission is free, but donations are sincerely appreciated.

May 9, 2020, 10:00 to 11:30 AM

The May Songbirds in the Garden event is a gathering to enjoy a bird walk, coffee, and pastries in the garden. This event is in celebration of World Migratory Bird Day. Take a bird walk in the NSCC habitat gardens with NSCC volunteer and Madrone Audubon bird walk leader, Gordon Beebe. Observe resident species such as Spotted Towhee and Black Phoebe, and neotropical migrants like Black-headed Grosbeak and Hooded Oriole. The garden will be bursting with birdsong and nesting activity. Enjoy bird-friendly certified coffee and fresh pastries in the garden. Bring binoculars, hat and water bottle. Beginner to advanced, all levels of birders welcomed! Reservations required, space is limited. Please call 707-484-6502 or email info@nativesongbirdcare.org to register. This event is free, but donations are gratefully accepted.

Phenology Project Volunteers

Madrone Audubon sponsored citizen science research

Two Petaluma Locations

Paula Lane: 9 avian, 2 mammal, 4 plant species
(This Nature Preserve project is currently modified & continuing.)

Petaluma River Bridge: Cliff Swallows (March-August)

Both Projects are in our 4th Year!

Accepting new volunteers for long-term, climate change impact project.

Visit 1 hour monthly, observe, record data for National Phenology Project

To volunteer, contact: Susan Kirks,
Madrone Audubon President.
707-241-5548, susankirks@sbcglobal.net
(Beginning birders/naturalists welcomed)



Peregrine Falcon

Courtesy of Dennis Lutz

A note to all Madrone members...

Do you have bird observations or nature experiences to share? Something seen in your backyard, on a walk or hike in one of Sonoma County’s parks or open spaces, or on a recent vacation? Please send a brief description (and a photo if you have one), and *Leaves* will include as many of these contributions as we can in the **Members’ Column** in future issues.

Enjoy Visiting Taylor Mountain Regional Park?

Look for the Bird Checklist at kiosks soon...provided by Madrone Audubon and Sonoma County Regional Parks



Welcome to our new Chapter Vice President

Madrone Audubon welcomes Autumn Iverson as Vice President. Autumn joined our Board of Directors in February 2020 and will continue in this role for 2020-2021. Autumn is a Ph.D. candidate and researcher at UC Davis. Her doctoral focus is Golden-crowned Sparrow migration, with GPS-tagging of wintering birds in California and stable isotope analysis of birds across their winter range. Her analysis will also include Christmas Bird Count data. Tagging stations locally are in Olema Valley (Pt. Blue Conservation Science field station) and at UC Davis.



Golden-crowned Sparrow Courtesy of Gordon Beebe

Autumn's educational background also includes an M.S. in Biology from UC San Diego, a B.S. in Biology: Ecology, Behavior, Evolution, from UC San Diego, and an A.A. in University Studies: Communications from Mira Costa College.

Recent additional professional experience includes working as a Wildlife Ecologist contracted to US Geological Survey, researching endangered, threatened and invasive species, primarily sea turtles in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean. Autumn has received several fellowships and scholarships, including from National Geographic and the MENSA Education and Research Foundation. Her travels have taken her to many global locations, and she has authored several scientific and ecology articles. We appreciate Autumn's depth of environmental connections and willingness to serve our Chapter. Please look for Autumn at our membership meetings, and say hello. She resides in Santa Rosa with her partner, Kaare, and their daughter, Sequoia. Welcome, Autumn!

Madrone Audubon Society 2020-2021 Officers

- Susan Kirks, *President*
- Autumn Iverson, *Vice President*
- Suzanne Reta, *Treasurer*
- Recording Secretary (*vacant*)
- Corresponding Secretary (*vacant*)

Madrone Audubon is grateful to

Kochenderfer Business Services
100 E St., Santa Rosa, CA 95404
(707) 578-5904

*for excellent assistance with our bookkeeping
and financial management.*

In Honor of Al Hesla

Dedicated birder, volunteer & leader of
Petaluma Wetlands Alliance
February 2020

Ways to Help our Audubon Chapter

Our Board of Directors meets once monthly. Our usual meeting location is the Environmental Center in Santa Rosa on Ridgway Avenue. However, with our Board members living throughout the County, we frequently hold our monthly meeting these days by conference phone call. This method is convenient for everyone and saves miles traveled and gas expense.

Might this may make your decision to help our Chapter, serving on our Board, an appealing one? We would appreciate volunteers to serve as **Recording Secretary** and **Corresponding Secretary**.

The Recording Secretary writes or types notes for our Board meetings, produces draft minutes, and then, following distribution and review, finalizes the minutes as our meeting record. Skills include typing, basic computer skills and Microsoft Windows. Alternative programs or adapting to your computer familiarity may be fine.

The Corresponding Secretary manages correspondence for our Chapter and works closely with the President. Letters expressing gratitude for donations, new memberships and other communication, along with handwritten notes, are produced. Skills include typing, computer skills, Microsoft Windows, and a printer.

We also continue to seek a *Newsletter Editor*, as Asenath LaRue continues to edit the Leaves from her home in Wisconsin. If you value learning about local environmental news and events and have an interest in editing and writing, we need you to volunteer! You'll be helped by an excellent production editor and the many Madrone members who contribute articles.

If you have been thinking of how to support our Chapter, with a reasonable time commitment of a few to several hours a month, please contact Susan, our President, at susankirks@sbcglobal.net or 707-241-5548, for more info and to receive responses to any questions.

New Members

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Cazadero | Healdsburg | Santa Rosa |
| Heidi Van Dyke | Joann Wilson | Connie Gilmore |
| David Horvitz | | Barbara Wendt |

Review of Proposed Poison Drop over Greater Farallons

California Coastal Commission will meet June 10-12, 2020. Meeting location: Graton Resort & Casino, 630 Park Court, Rohnert Park. Agenda will be posted on the Commission's website: www.coastal.ca.gov. The Commission will receive an update on the US Fish and Wildlife Service proposal to spread 2,900 pounds of cereal pellets laced with brodifacoum, a rodenticide partially banned in California. The goal of the rodenticide is to eliminate the mouse population on the South Farallon Islands. Central to the plan is the intent to protect the Ashy Storm Petrel, a small seabird with half of the world's population on the Farallons. Also central is a strong concern for unintended consequences, including death of other birds and wildlife who would ingest the poison and the potential for the poison to move into the ocean and food chain, among other concerns.



NEWS UPDATES

Protecting Migratory Cliff Swallows - 2020 Update

We Madrone Audubon members are sensitive to migratory bird nesting season, generally considered February 15 to the end of August. Cliff Swallows have a particularly special place in our minds, hearts, and actions, in concert with Veronica Bowers of Native Songbird Care & Conservation. (Veronica is a past Madrone President as well as exceptional birder and contributor to many, many activities, ranging from Christmas Bird Count coordination/reporting to organizing and providing Migratory Bird Day in Sonoma County.)

In Spring 2019, two significant tragedies occurred for nesting Cliff Swallows at the Sebastopol Community Cultural Center and Alta Mira Middle School in the Sonoma area. These tragedies were caused by people. Here's our update.

Sebastopol

In May 2019, an employee of the Sebastopol Public Works department destroyed the active Cliff Swallow colony located on the Youth Annex building at the Sebastopol Community Cultural Center. The Community Center is adjacent to the Laguna Wetlands Preserve, owned by the City of Sebastopol. The preserve is connected to the Laguna channel through a series of hiking trails where visitors can observe dozens of native bird species and other wildlife, including the beloved Cliff Swallow colony.



Community Center with swallow nests & sign
Courtesy of Veronica Bowers

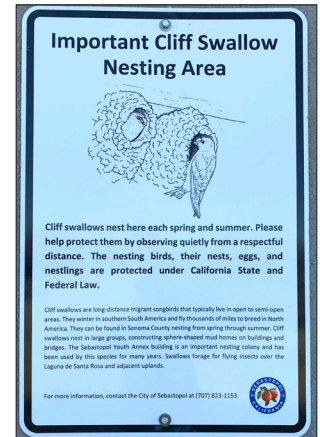
The Youth Annex Cliff Swallow colony has been a cherished and admired fixture of our local community for many years. When the active colony was destroyed last spring, Native Songbird Care & Conservation (NSCC) was immediately contacted by dozens of community members, expressing outrage and seeking help for the swallows. After receiving the first call about the incident, Veronica Bowers, Director of NSCC, launched into action to investigate the situation. Sadly, the entire colony was destroyed and all that remained were broken eggshells on the ground below.

In response to this disaster, Native Songbird Care & Conservation scheduled a meeting with the City of Sebastopol to determine what went wrong in their operating procedures that would result in such a careless act. In 2016, the City of Sebastopol adopted the Laguna Wetlands Preserve Restoration and Management Plan, which clearly detailed the existence and protection of the Cliff Swallow colony. Unfortunately, this was not observed by the Public Works Department and they cited their Standard Operating Procedures lacked clear direction and guidelines for work in proximity or directly involving the nesting Cliff Swallows, which are a state and federally protected species.

NSCC met with City Officials and the Public Works Department to discuss the incident and methods to ensure such a tragedy would never occur again. The City agreed to publish a letter of apology to our community and install signage at the Cliff Swallow colony, using language provided by NSCC, explaining the species and their active colony are state and federally protected. The Public Works Department agreed to issue an annual reminder to employees about the protection of the colony. NSCC also

provided materials to Sebastopol Public Works to aid in determining nesting activity of songbirds during the breeding season.

As of January 2020, the City of Sebastopol has followed through on all of their agreed-upon commitments to demonstrate good stewardship of the Cliff Swallow colony and ensure their protection. Now, we will observe and hope to see the Cliff Swallows return to their longstanding nesting site, to nest for the 2020 season. Madrone Audubon also acknowledges Sebastopol City Councilmember Sarah Glade Gurney for directing her 2019 \$500 individual council project fund grant to NSCC to support restoration of the Cliff Swallow colony. Madrone President Susan Kirks and Treasurer Suzanne Reta also attended a Sebastopol City Council meeting to express our concern and sorrow for the 2019 tragic nest removal incident, with a request the City follow through and ensure changes, receiving expert guidance from Native Songbird Care and Conservation



Swallow sign close-up
Courtesy of Veronica Bowers

Sonoma

In the process of local news coverage of the Sebastopol Cliff Swallow nest removal, we learned of another tragedy at Altamira Middle School in the Sonoma Valley Unified School District. A member of the maintenance staff power washed active Cliff Swallow nests off a building on the Altamira campus and, when the swallows, dedicated to their nesting time and responsibility, tried to rebuild their mud nests, the maintenance staff continued to power-wash off any nest trying to be re-constructed. Once again, members of the community expressed outrage and we followed through with the School Superintendent, Ms. Shields, and the maintenance supervisor, along with the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, to assure immediate stopping of the power washing and provision of information and a path to ensure this did not occur again. The School District cooperated fully, maintenance staff members were provided important information, and thanks to the Sonoma Index Tribune and reporter Anne Ward Ernst, the public was also informed of what had occurred and facts related to migratory Cliff Swallow and other nesting birds during the important time of the year when our County is the nesting home for countless birds who need no disturbance and our support to complete their instinctive and often very longstanding process in their carefully selected nesting sites.

In early March, Veronica Bowers of Native Songbird Care and Conservation (NSCC), supported by our Chapter and President Susan Kirks, met with the maintenance staff members of the Sonoma Valley Unified School District in Sonoma, thanks to Maintenance Supervisor David Sandoval, also with the School District's support. The purpose of our meeting was to provide information and facilitate understanding about the upcoming nesting season and Cliff Swallows who may be building nests and raising their young on Altamira's and other school campuses. Veronica Bowers provided a 15-minute presentation, full of interesting information, and brought hand-outs for staff to be able to take with them. We appreciate the

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**CLIFF SWALLOWS**

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Sonoma Index Tribune, once again, reporter Anne Ward Ernst, publishing an update for the greater community about this proactive effort, to help the Cliff Swallows. The recent news article can be read here: www.sonomanews.com/news/10747230-181/swallow-nests-get-reprieve-from.

Petaluma and Petaluma Wetlands

Our members may recall the several years-long litigation and settlement process related

to deaths of migratory Cliff Swallows at the Petaluma River Bridge, 2013-2016. The litigation was settled, to our satisfaction, to ensure the Caltrans was accountable and the exclusionary process used by Caltrans, as well as the nesting season and experience were not disturbed or severely negatively impacted again; Cliff Swallows have been returning seasonally now and safely nesting. This colony is part of Madrone Audubon's Phenology Project in Petaluma.

We can all feel heartened by the sensitivity to and feeling of responsibility of so many Sonoma County citizens toward migratory nesting birds and all wildlife who need access to and no disturbance of their nesting and birthing territories. Thank you, Madrone Audubon members, for caring - and being willing to communicate and take action.

(Information for these updates provided by Veronica Bowers of NSCC, www.nativesongbirdcare.com and Susan Kirks of Madrone Audubon.)

ObservationsWinter 2020 • Dan Nelson • 479-2918 • birdsurf64@sbcglobal.net

Eurasian Wigeon (1 male)	1/10	Doran Park entrance area	DN
Redhead (1)	1/9	Bodega Harbor, N. end	SC
Blue-winged Teal (1)	2/2	Las Gallinas treatment ponds, Marin Co.	J Clark
Blue-winged Teal (3)	3/5	Las Gallinas treatment ponds, Marin Co.	D Edelstein
Blue-winged Teal (1 male)	3/4	Sebastopol; Laguna Wetlands Preserve	SC
Garganey	2/25	White Rd., Colusa Co.	M. Ob
Tundra Swan	1/9-10	N. of Sebastopol Community Center	GH, et al
Glaucous Gull	1/16	Shollenberger Park, 1st or 2nd yr.	LH
Glaucous Gull	1/16	The Sea Ranch, classic 1st yr.	BL, PL, DH
Glaucous Gull (2)	1/31	Shollenberger Park	NA
Black-legged Kittiwake (5)	3/1	Jenner, Russian River mouth	NA, et al
Black-legged Kittiwake (juv.)	1/29	Stony Gorge Reservoir; 1st Glenn Co. record	LK, AK
Forster's Tern (1)	1/20	Walker Creek mouth, Marin Co.	PC
Caspian Tern (1)	1/20	Walker Creek mouth, Marin Co.	PC
Northern Fulmar (1)	2/24	Muir Beach, nearshore	AH, HB
Rough-legged Hawk (1)	1/23	Bodega Head; dark-morph	SC
Rough-legged Hawk (1)	2/22	Bodega Head; continuing dark-morph	PP, et al
Bald Eagle (2)	1/12	over Corte Madera, Marin Co.	NW
Lesser Yellowlegs (1)	2/22	Hudemann Slough	DK
Common Poorwill (1)	2/26	Limantour Beach Rd., Marin Co.	DN
Lewis's Woodpecker (121+)	1/29	S. of Ladoga, Colusa Co. (tallied in 5-mi. stretch)	LK, AK
Allen's Hummingbird (1 m)	1/31	Camp Meecker	D Troi
Allen's Hummingbird (1 m)	2/29	Petaluma, Paula Ln. residence	DN
White-throated Swift (4)	2/25	San Rafael; 101 downtown overpass	RC
White-throated Swift (2)	2/26	Petaluma, 101 at Petaluma River bridge	DN
Tree Swallow (15)	1/21	Ellis Creek treatment ponds	D Shuford
Violet-green Swallow (8)	1/21	Ellis Creek treatment ponds	D Shuford
Barn Swallow (6)	1/21	Ellis Creek treatment ponds	D Shuford
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	3/5	Mill Valley, Marin Co.	DE
Cliff Swallow (3)	3/1	Laguna de Santa Rosa; near Five Creek	S Sorby
Cave Swallow (1) stakeout	1/31	Near Porterville, Tulare Co.- 1st Tulare Co. record	M. Ob
Tropical Kingbird (1)	2/9-12	Lakeville Highway S. of Petaluma (#s 4062-41260)	AW, JS
Black-and-White Warbler	2/20	Stony Point pond trail, just N. of Hwy. 116	M & TT
Black-and-White Warbler	2/24	Muir Beach, Marin Co.	AH, HB
Wilson's Warbler	2/24	Muir Beach, Marin Co.	AH, HB
Summer Tanager (imm. male)	1/5	Brown St. bend, St Helena; Napa Co.	F Hayes
Hooded Oriole (male)	1/29	Windsor residence	R Bevans
Lark Bunting	2/2	Rd. 86, Yolo Co.	SH, MP
Great-tailed Grackle (6+)	2/23	Spring Lake	DN, SM
Chipping Sparrow (15+)	1/22	W. County Trail, off Ross Station Rd., Graton	SC
Grasshopper Sparrow (2-3)	2/16	Tolay Regional Park	MC
Evening Grosbeak (10+)	Dec.-Jan.	Salmon Creek Rd.	SC, DN, et al
Evening Grosbeak (10+)	Jan.	Pt. Reyes Station area; near Love Field	DN, et al
Painted Bunting (1 fem.)	1/4	Mendoza Ranch, Pt.Reyes	D Singer

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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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