



November 15, 2011

To All Madrone Audubon Society members:

The past year has once again been a busy one for Madrone Audubon with many projects both new and continuing. Here are some accomplishments:

- We completed a Member Survey with results that will be critical in decisions that reflect the wishes of our membership.
- The first year of the Sonoma County Breeding Bird Atlas Revision was completed, with 70 volunteers participating. There are four more years to go; more volunteers will be needed.
- The five-year project to monitor and record census data for breeding seabirds in our part of the California Coastal National Monument is nearing completion.
- Madrone actively supported and participated in the second annual “point survey” at the Modini Ranch, adjacent to the Mayacamas Mountains Audubon Sanctuary.
- Madrone continues to support legislative efforts and legal actions that protect birds and their environment.
- We are involved in efforts to promote and develop environmentally safe alternative energy systems.

The above conservation efforts will provide continuing support for the health of bird populations in Sonoma County. A few more success stories:

- The Petaluma Wetlands Alliance, a committee of Madrone Audubon, continues its outstanding work at Shollenberger Park and the wetlands along the Petaluma River. The number of volunteer hours dedicated to PWA efforts this year exceeded 6,000, which includes wetlands education to all third grades in the Petaluma River watershed and habitat restoration in Shollenberger Park and Alman Marsh.
- Our Junior Audubon program is once again active. We have an enthusiastic and creative new Junior Audubon Coordinator and we anticipate programs that will bring young people to connect with our organization.
- This past year our chapter distributed over 100 Audubon Adventures kits to local classrooms—the 6th highest rate of sponsorship in the country.
- Once again Madrone hosted a day of birding education programs in May at Lincoln School in Santa Rosa. Over 300 children participated.

Our ongoing program activities—weekly bird and nature walks, monthly evening meetings and monitoring of conservation issues that arise—will continue, and we encourage and truly appreciate your active participation. All of our programs are made possible by the generous donation of time, talent, and financial support of our members.

Publishing our popular chapter newsletter, *Madrone Leaves*, continues to be a major focus. Costs are rising; we hope to reduce publishing expenses while providing an even more accessible and informative publication.

Once each year we come to you seeking the financial support to keep our Society functioning. We ask that you return the enclosed envelope with a check that will allow Madrone to continue to offer conservation and education programs to our chapter and our community.

Thank you in advance for your generosity,

Bob Speckels  
Madrone Audubon President



# Madrone LEAVES

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

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## A Special Coastal Migrant — the Peregrine Falcon

By Diane Hichwa

If you've always wanted to see a Peregrine Falcon, NOW is the time! Watch for a fast-flying, streamlined bird. It ranges the entire length of The Sea Ranch right along the coast and is regularly sighted on the islands of our California Coastal National Monument. A regular "hangout" is Gualala Point Island (GPI), with southern rest spots at Black Point and Albatross Reach.

Volunteering for surveys by The Sea Ranch Stewardship Task Force (in a cooperative agreement with Madrone Audubon) has its rewards. When I looked back through my notes of sightings, a Peregrine has been reported every year of our monitoring—from 2007 to 2011. Gualala Point Island is the largest island off our coast in the National Monument. The tall rock island provides a viewing platform, a plucking perch and a resting area for the Peregrine that visits each winter.

On October 21 the monthly monitoring team of the Task force watched the Peregrine sit atop GPI for the entire hour that they counted all birds and mammals using this island in non-breeding season. Another team, walking the length of The Sea Ranch in a quarterly Coastal Island Survey, spotted the falcon perched in the far southern parts of the Ranch.

This large, long-winged falcon (14-18") feeds mostly on birds, from shorebirds up to small geese. Frequent food items are the alcids (seabirds which include the Common Murres and Pigeon Guillemots of our area) as well as gulls and sandpipers. Even though it is feeding on other birds that we enjoy watching, it is exciting to know the Peregrine has made a comeback.

In 1971 there were only five successful breeding pairs remaining in all of California, their decline caused when the pesticide DDT accumulating in their bodies resulted in eggshells so thin that the

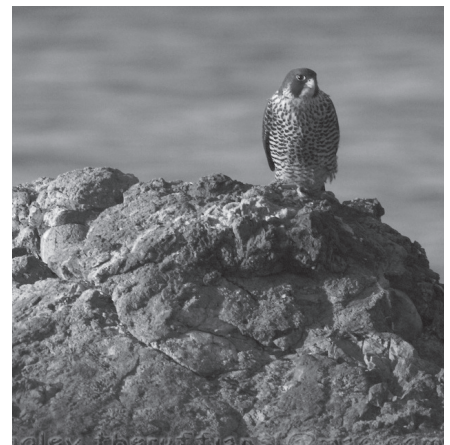


Photo courtesy of Craig Tooley

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### JANUARY GENERAL MEETING

#### "The Islands of San Francisco Bay"

Monday January 16, 7:30 PM • First United Methodist Church  
1551 Montgomery Drive, Santa Rosa

James Martin's book, *The Islands of San Francisco Bay*, aims to capture the wildness of the Bay's 48 island habitats, in the hope of boosting environmental awareness of their unique island ecology. His "Islands" slide show includes many images from the book, which will be available for signing at the meeting.

A photojournalist, rock climber and Bay Area native, James Martin envisioned a reference book that would draw the readers in with imagery and keep them there with rich stories. It focuses on island ecology, the birds, animals, plants and

island topography. Over 400 images show dramatic nature scenery coupled with in-depth information on migration, nesting and history of many bird species.

James Martin's vision was a long-awaited dream; he began shooting images for the book in 2000. Thousands of slides, several talented writers, and six years later the book was completed and published. ACR's John Kelly says, "...an exquisite photographic display of the islands... and a valuable review of the importance of the Bay islands and marshes to native wildlife."

**Coming in February: Dr. Shawn Smallwood will talk on  
"Wind Turbines and Wildlife."**

To receive *Leaves* via email in pdf format just email your request to:

**madroneaudubon@  
um.att.com**

You will get your copy faster and save paper as a bonus.



# calendar

All walks and 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.

**CONSERVATION COMMITTEE** exchanges information by phone and email as soon as possible when an issue surfaces. Please contact Diane Hichwa at 785-1922 or dhichwa@earthlink.net.

### *Wednesday and Thursday, November 30 & December 1*

**SACRAMENTO VALLEY WILDLIFE REFUGES.** Auto birding tours (with stops at designated observation points) at Sacramento Valley National Wildlife Refuges. Meet at the Sacramento NWR headquarters at 9:30 AM on Wednesday. Bring lunch. Exit from I-5 at Princeton (approximately 17 miles north of Williams), turn north on the county service road and proceed to the NWR headquarters on the right. Driving time from Santa Rosa is about 2.5 hours. Many of us will stay in Yuba City and bird Gray Lodge State Wildlife Management Area on Thursday. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

### *Wednesday, December 7, 7:00 PM*

**BOARD MEETING.** Sonoma County Environmental Center, 55A Ridgway Avenue, Santa Rosa. For agenda information, contact Bob Speckels at robertspeckels@yahoo.com.

### *Thursday, December 8, 8:30 AM - 2:30 PM*

**BODEGA BAY.** Bird Walk. From the center of the town of Bodega Bay, drive north on Highway 1, turn left at East Shore Road (the Bodega Head turnoff), turn right at the stop sign, and continue 0.3 miles to the unpaved parking lot on the right. Bring a lunch. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

### *Saturday, December 10, 9:00 AM*

**SHOLLENBERGER PARK.** Petaluma Wetlands Alliance/Madrone Audubon leads a nature walk. Meet at the first kiosk. Rain cancels. Contact Gerald Moore at 763-3577.

### *Saturday, December 10, 9:30 AM to Dusk*

**CENTRAL VALLEY: GRAY LODGE and SACRAMENTO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE.** This is our annual winter trip to the Central Valley to enjoy the enormous concentrations of waterfowl, raptors, cranes, geese, and other interesting birds seldom seen in Sonoma County. Directions to Gray Lodge: from the junction of Interstate 5 and Highway 99, take Highway 99 north to Live Oak. Turn west on Pennington (North Butte) Road, right on Almond Orchard Avenue and continue to entrance. The distance from Live Oak is about eight miles. After birding Gray Lodge, we will go to Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge for the afternoon, hopefully enjoying good views of the fly-out at dusk. Some of our group will stay overnight in Willows Friday and/or Saturday to visit parts of the nearby Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge. Call one of the leaders for more information: Tom Cashman, 217-5103; Bill Doyle, 483-8773; and Bob Speckels, 569-0563.

### *Wednesday, December 14, 8:30 AM - 2:30 PM*

**SHOLLENBERGER PARK/ELLIS CREEK.** Bird Walk. We'll search for wintering birds at the Shollenberger Park ponds and wetlands in Petaluma. After lunch, we will bird the wetlands of the adjacent Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility. Meet at the Shollenberger Park parking lot. Take the Highway 116 exit (Lakeville Highway) east off 101, turn right at the South McDowell traffic light, and turn right at the City Park sign into the parking lot. Bring a lunch. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

### *Saturday, December 17, 10:00 AM*

**SHOLLENBERGER PARK.** Petaluma Wetlands Alliance leads two children/family nature walks. One-to-two hours, depending on the age of the children. Meet at the first kiosk. Rain cancels. For the children/family walk in English, contact Gerald Moore at 763-3577; for the walk in Spanish, contact Connie Peabody at 338-2237.

### *Wednesday, December 28, 8:30 AM till Noon*

**SPRING LAKE REGIONAL PARK.** Bird Walk. Parking fee (\$7) for non-permit holders. From Summerfield Road in Santa Rosa, go east on Hoen Avenue, turn left on Newanga, turn right inside the park entrance gate, and meet in the parking lot near the restrooms at the top of the hill. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

### *Sunday, January 1, dawn to dusk*

**MADRONE AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT.** See page 5 for details. Volunteers are needed for the potluck in the evening at the Sebastopol Community Center; contact Veronica Bowers at vlbowers@gmail.com or 829-2955 if you can help.

### *Thursday, January 5, 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM*

**ISENBERG CRANE PRESERVE and COSUMNES RIVER PRESERVE NEAR LODI.** Bird Walk. Meet at McDonalds in the Sunset Shopping Center in Suisun City at the

intersection of Highway 12 and Sunset Avenue/Grizzly Island Road. Driving time to meeting point from Santa Rosa is approximately 1.25 hours. Bring a lunch. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

### *Saturday, January 7, 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM*

**PETALUMA CBC FOR KIDS.** Madrone's Junior Audubon will participate in this Christmas Bird Count. See article on page 5 for details.

### *Wednesday, January 11, 8:30 AM - 2:30 PM*

**RUSH CREEK AND STAFFORD LAKE IN MARIN COUNTY.** Bird Walk. Meet at Rush Creek Preserve at Novato. From Highway 101, drive east on Atherton Avenue; turn left on Bugelia Lane, which becomes Bahia Drive. Continue to the Rush Creek trailhead at end of Bahia Drive. Parking fee (\$5) at Stafford Lake. Bring a lunch. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

### *Saturday, January 14, 9:00 AM*

**SHOLLENBERGER PARK.** Petaluma Wetlands Alliance/Madrone Audubon leads a nature walk. Meet at the first kiosk. Rain cancels. Contact Gerald Moore at 763-3577.

### *Monday, January 16, 7:30 PM*

**GENERAL MEETING.** "The Islands of San Francisco Bay." Photojournalist James Martin presents the unique island ecology of San Francisco Bay's 48 islands. First United Methodist Church, 1551 Montgomery Drive, Santa Rosa. Please see the front page announcement. The public is always invited to attend these programs.

### *Thursday, January 19, 8:30 AM - Noon*

**ELLIS CREEK WATER RECYCLING FACILITY.** Bird Walk. We will bird the wetlands and adjacent areas of this facility in Petaluma. From Santa Rosa on Highway 101, take the Highway 116 exit (Lakeville Highway), go left under Hwy. 101, turn right (south) at the South McDowell traffic light, turn right on Cypress Drive, which ends at the facility gate. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

### *Saturday, January 21, 8:30 AM to Noon*

**LAKE SONOMA.** Beginners Bird Walk. Meet at the Lake Sonoma Visitor Center. From Highway 101, take Canyon Road to Dry Creek Road, then Rockpile Road to the Center. Leaders: Bill Doyle, 483-8773 and Bob Speckels, 569-0563.

### *Saturday, January 21, 10:00 AM*

**SHOLLENBERGER PARK.** Petaluma Wetlands Alliance leads two children/family nature walks. One-to-two hours, dependent on age of children. Meet at the first kiosk. Rain cancels. For the children/family walk in English, contact Gerald Moore at 763-3577; for the walk in Spanish, contact Connie Peabody at 338-2237.

### *Wednesday, January 25, 9:00 AM - 2:30 PM*

**BOLINAS LAGOON IN MARIN COUNTY.** Bird Walk. Note 9:00 AM starting time. Meet at the first large turnout south of the Bolinas turnoff on Highway 1. Bring a lunch. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

### *Saturday, January 28, 9:00 AM*

**ELLIS CREEK WATER RECYCLING FACILITY, PETALUMA.** Petaluma Wetlands Alliance leads a walk at the Ellis Creek ponds. Go to the end of Cypress Drive and through the gates. Parking lot is on the left. Contact Bob Dyer at 763-2934.

### *Thursday, February 2, 8:30 AM - 2:30 PM*

**HUICHICA CREEK UNIT OF NAPA-SONOMA MARSHES/HUDEMAN SLOUGH.** Bird Walk. Meet at the Huichica Creek Unit parking lot. From Sonoma, take Highway 12 (Carneros Highway) toward Napa, turn right (south) on Duhig Road, turn left on Las Amigas Road, and turn right on Buchli Station Road, which leads to the wildlife area. We will bird the Hudeman area in the afternoon. Bring a lunch. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

### *Saturday, February 4, 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM*

**BODEGA BAY.** Come explore with us one of Sonoma County's richest bird areas. See December 8 Bird Walk for directions. Informal carpools leave Santa Rosa at 7:15 AM, from the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District Office, 747 Mendocino Avenue, Santa Rosa. To participate, please arrive by 7:05 to make arrangements. The parking lot is behind the office, accessed from Carrillo Street. Bring a lunch. Rain cancels. Leaders: Bill Doyle, 483-8773; and Bob Speckels, 569-0563.



## PEREGRINE FALCON

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adult's body weight cracked the eggs as it settled down to incubate. After DDT was banned it took more than 20 years for sufficient recovery of population numbers for removal from the Federal Endangered Species list; not until 2008 was it delisted from California.

This year on November 7, as we approached the bluff, the falcon stood on GPI. While we turned to look at grebes on the water, the falcon launched off the heights of GPI, flying BELOW us over the water! As it turned back towards the island it made contact with a bird that had taken off from the water. The long strong toes of the falcon held onto the fluff of feathers. When it landed back atop the island, one foot contacted the rock and the other held its meal. With a little time to study color and shape we determined that a Common Murre was the lunch item this day.

Falcons have swept-back wings for speed and this falcon can dive at 200 mph. The adult has a dark head that appears hooded and a dark mustache or malar mark. The width of that malar stripe helps identify the subspecies: it is wide in our local *anatum* subspecies and narrow in the migrant *tundra* subspecies that visits from the north in the very middle of winter. It's Latin name *peregrinus* means "to wander", and this bird wanders through its migration and onto every continent except Antarctica.

A few sightings in spring or summer are likely visits from a pair nesting in our area. This would be the *anatum* subspecies. Bodega Bay is another great spot to watch for a Peregrine. When the shorebirds go up "en masse," the Peregrine may be overhead. Most sightings occur from August to April, as migrants move into our area. As their prey moves in migration, so moves the falcon. So if YOU want to see a Peregrine in action, now is the time to watch our coast.

## Bird Kill at Wind Facility Triggers Better Lighting Practices

From Audubon Chapter Services, Wednesday, November 9

News of a recent bird kill of Blackpoll Warblers and other species at a wind facility in West Virginia spread quickly through birding lists and caught the attention of the birding community in the region. Audubon staff learned of this unfortunate event and contacted the facility owner, AES Wind Generation, to investigate the causes of the incident and to work toward developing solutions that will help ensure such an incident doesn't happen again. From all indications, a combination of lighting and poor weather conditions was the primary causes of the bird kill.

AES representatives told Audubon they have taken immediate corrective actions to curtail excessive night lighting, replace equipment with preferable downward-shielded lighting fixtures, and will modify other site specifications. They will increase monitoring and take additional steps to reduce or eliminate lighting the facility during migration seasons to avert future bird kills of this type.

Now, actions need to be taken to minimize the likelihood of similar events in the future at other wind power facilities. Audubon is in discussions with AES and others about sharing the lessons from this event with the broader wind industry and emphasizing the importance of the lighting practices in the forthcoming federal wind guidelines. We hope that, as a result, new facilities will be written to specs that incorporate lighting practices that have been shown to minimize bird mortality during migration. This is a straightforward

corrective action that will significantly lessen the negative consequences to birds, while delivering carbon-limited sources of renewable energy. We will be working to help make this a standard practice across the industry.

**NOTE:** Wind energy and wildlife will be Madrone's February program. Read more about this incident and the actions taken at:

<http://www.audubon.org/documents/audubon-summary-aes-bird-kill-incident>.

<http://www.abcbirds.org/>

<http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/>

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## A Good Show at Ellis Creek, Saturday, November 5

Submitted by Linda Hammer

Sixteen hardy birders braved the cold at Ellis Creek and were treated to an incredible morning! The number of birds on the ponds was unbelievable. The first pond alone had a least 200 Coots. Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Mallard and American Wigeon were also seen. We saw a total of 64 species and had first of the season looks at Green-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal and a Lincoln's Sparrow. Wilson's Snipe was plentiful, as we saw at least 18. They were very vocal and afforded us with good viewing. Sora was also present in good numbers and we had some up-close looks. Greater Yellowlegs were close to the bank in the open and gave me the best view ever. Common Gallinules were along the reed-line with their bright red bills showing.

We saw five White-tailed Kites along with Merlin, Northern Harrier, Peregrine Falcon and American Kestrel. American Pipits were seen several times (with a fly-over of two dozen) and the Marsh Wrens were seen singing in the reeds. A few of us saw a beautiful Common Yellowthroat and heard the elusive Clapper Rail. We saw six sparrow species: Golden-crowned, Lincoln's, Savannah, Song, White-crowned and White-throated. It was a wonderful walk and the rain even held off!

### Guaranteed Peregrine "sightings" at BRC

If you can't get out to the coast right away, the Bird Rescue Center in Santa Rosa has two peregrines among their resident birds, one an *anatum* and one a *tundrius*, to see and compare. The mews at BRC are all newly constructed, the birds are all in them, and visitors are welcomed on the Center's regular visiting hours: the first Saturday and the third Sunday of every month, from 1-4 PM.



## 'Tis the Season for... Coots!

These familiar waterbirds are generally present in good numbers in our area, but November found them in "fleets", "shoals", "flocks" and "rafts"! Rich Stallcup thinks there's not an environmental issue to the coots, but most likely water here and not there that has brought them to our area. Here are some of the reports that came in on emails to North Bay Birds, a local online birding exchange.

November 4 and 5 at Rodeo Lagoon in Marin County: "We conservatively counted 650 American Coot at the Lagoon, an unprecedented number."

From the North Coast: "A fleet of that contained 128 coots in the Pacific Ocean itself and shoals of them totaling more than 300 birds within the Gualala River estuary... in normal years we may have 30-50 max!"

November 9 at Spring Lake Park: "...a large flock ... over 100 together, young and adults in the north end of the lake and another two dozen in other parts of the lake."

October 31, Richardson Bay Audubon Sanctuary: "We counted 1043 during a regular survey..."

November 7 near Oroville, Butte County: "I estimated 4400 on the Thermilito After Bay ... I could only see about 20% of the water."

Russian River near Jenner: "Between 250 and 300 birds and three rafts further down the river of about 100 each group. I wasn't even really looking that hard, they were everywhere."

Reported after Madrone's November 5 Bird Walk at Ellis Creek:

"The number of birds on the ponds was unbelievable; the first pond alone had a least 200 Coots."

A "flock" of sightings!

## Birding for Fun and Profit 2012 BIRD-A-THON

By *Marcia Johnson,*  
*Bird-A-Thon Coordinator*

Be a part of Madrone's 2012 Bird-A-Thon. Money from this event is used for Madrone's educational and conservation programs. It supports the popular Junior Audubon programs, provides Audubon Adventures resource kits for teachers to use in 3rd, 4th and 5th grades, mentors our wonderful and popular morning at Lincoln School, and boosts our efforts to study environmental issues.

Widespread support is the key to a successful Bird-A-Thon. We need a good number of participating counters, and lots of sponsors! The birders are either teams who race the clock any day in February to find the most species, or individuals who watch feeders or go out on their own for a few hours to count birds. These people take pledge sheets to their friends, co-workers and family members who pledge a wide range of per-species amounts, from pennies to dollars, or simply a flat sum for a day of birding.

Competitive birding begins any day in February. Last year's teams collected a bit over \$8,000, and every penny was needed. So far, we have Diane Hichwa, heading the ever-faithful "Feather Questers." She is hoping that Lisa Shiffrin, her teammate from last year will continue. It looks like "The Wandering Tattlers" with Barbara Arbunich and Carol Zeidman will continue also. Last year was their first year, and they must have had fun, we think, since they will be returning this year. The team of Betty Groce, heading the "The Road Runners" with Don McCarthy, will continue their long-standing commitment. The rumor is true...our esteemed President, Bob Speckels, will head a team with Don Kirker, Helen Kochenderfer and Bill Doyle. See box for information. **WE NEED MORE TEAMS!**

Clipboards will be at monthly meetings and walks with the name of the teams and members, asking for your support. You will be recognized in the April or May *Leaves* and the names of any supporting companies will be highlighted.

### How to be part of Bird-A Thon 2012

#### For Birding Teams:

Contact Bird-A-Thon Coordinator Marcia Johnson at [owlsnest@hughes.net](mailto:owlsnest@hughes.net) or 829-3808, and she will send you a sponsor sign-up sheet. Start signing up your sponsors.

After your "big day" tell your sponsor how many species you saw and how much they owe you.

Send your checks to Marcia at 1460 Big Cedar Lane, Sebastopol, CA 95472, or bring them to the next General Meeting.

#### For Sponsors:

Say "Yes!" to anyone who asks you to pledge. If no one asks, you can sign up to support a team at the General Meeting or contact Marcia.

## Owls and More at the Erickson Ranch

By *Scott Campbell,*  
*Junior Audubon Chair*

The first Junior Audubon event of the year was a great success, in large part to the wonderful hospitality of the Erickson Ranch in Valley Ford. Lee, Janeann and their daughter welcomed us with open arms. First we received a little background on the ranch and learned that sheep and cattle can be raised together with the correct management. We also learned that it is very difficult for a small farm to succeed in today's market, so Lee is not giving up his day job (the farm, though, is a day and night job).

We had a group of 10 children and 12 or more adults that were introduced to a resident Barn Owl, and we studied two fledgling owls that didn't make it to adulthood. We also learned about owl pellets and that they were made from the indigestible parts of animals that the owls have eaten. We also

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## OWLS AT ERICKSON RANCH

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found raven pellets and observed the differences between pellets.



Photo courtesy of Craig Tooley

Then it was on to our walk along the former rail bed of a small gauge train used to transport lumber and other products out to these rural areas. We were able to see five Barn Owls and two Great Horned Owls and hear their calls to each other. There was plenty of bat activity as well. The eerie screech of the Barn Owls made for an exciting walk back to the ranch house where we were given some wonderful apple cider and more information on owls.

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## Those Confusing Young Sparrows...)

*Some thoughts from birder and photographer Len Blumin about distinguishing local hatch year sparrows.*

At a Marin Audubon walk at Las Gallinas on November 3, one of our first birds was a young White-crowned Sparrow, not intimidated in the least by 15-20 birders lined up staring through their optics just yards away.

Sparrows can vary from easy-as-pie to difficult, depending on a number of factors. There is no confusing the adult White-crowned Sparrow with its bold black and white head stripes and yellow to yellow-

orange bill. The other adult Zonotrichias seen here, the Golden-crowned and White-throated Sparrows, are also pretty distinctive.

But the “juvenile” White-crowned’s plumage is very different, with a lot of streaking on the chest for a few months, which we don’t see much unless we bird out along the coast in the summer. By September the young White-crowned is losing the streaks on the chest and has molted into what Sibley refers to as “1st winter” plumage. Some prefer the term “hatch year” for young birds, which makes a bit more sense than first winter if you are seeing the bird in September! In any case, this young White-crowned looked quite fresh, but rather undistinguished. The head had brown and gray-tan stripes that are not well defined, and if it weren’t for the yellow-orange bill I would probably be puzzled about the identification.



Photo courtesy of Len Blumin

Recently in Mill Valley we’ve been seeing a few hatch year White-throated Sparrows in our yard (*Z. albicollis*), which are more streaked in the chest than the adults, and have tan stripes on the head. All first winter birds of this species all have tan stripes, as Rich Stallcup recently reminded those of us who follow North-BayBirds, whereas full adults can be either the White-striped or Tan-striped variety, but you can’t tell with the youngsters.

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT WRAP-UP

*Sunday, January 1, dawn to dusk  
45th Western Sonoma County CBC  
(A detailed map of our count area can be found on Madrone’s website.)*

**Don’t miss out on the fun—celebrate the New Year with Madrone’s CBC!** There is still time to sign up for this year’s Christmas Bird Count.

The quickest and easiest way to sign up is by using our website at [audubon.sonomona.net](http://audubon.sonomona.net). An invitation to count has been sent to all of last year’s counters. If you did not receive an invitation and wish to count this year, please register online via our website.

We are returning to our post-count potluck dinner tradition. The dinner will NOT be catered this year. If you attend the post-count dinner, please bring a dish to share. Hot soup, chili and casseroles are always popular items, but feel free to dazzle us with dessert or tantalize our taste buds with a salad or appetizer. As always, please bring your own glasses, cups, plates, utensils and beverages (wine and beer are OK). Volunteers to help set up for the dinner and clean up after dinner are still needed. Please contact Veronica Bowers at [vlbowers@gmail.com](mailto:vlbowers@gmail.com) or 829-2955 either with questions or to volunteer to help.

*Saturday, January 7, from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM*

### Petaluma Christmas Bird Count for Kids

Petaluma Wetlands Alliance is currently planning for the Third Annual Petaluma Christmas Bird Count for Kids. Madrone’s Junior Auduboners will also be coming down to Petaluma to participate (see note below). Last year Petaluma’s CBC for Kids was a success, with 14 kids participating in the event.

The teams will cover designated trails at both Shollenberger Park and Ellis Creek after the 9:00 check-in time at the Kenilworth Recreation Center. If we have enough kids, we’ll expand to include the

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### BIRD COUNT WRAP UP

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Alman Marsh trail. The walk concludes at 11:00, at which point the teams return to the Center. We had an enthusiastic response last year to the Bird Bingo game that included prizes for all. The Bird Rescue Center was also a big hit, and Bird Rescue has already committed to providing a live-bird demonstration for this winter's event.



Photo courtesy of Gerald Moore

We are looking for docent volunteers to serve as team leaders, recorders, or assistants in other ways. For instance, we need three people to staff the check-in desk the morning of the event. We also need someone for compiling the data. Ideas are welcome.

Please call Al Hesla at 765-9411 or email him at a.hesla@comcast.net if you are interested in participating.

#### Saturday, December 17 42nd Point Reyes Christmas Bird Count

Co-sponsored by PRBO Conservation Science, the Marin and Golden Gate Audubon Societies. Sign up online at [www.forest-data.com/cbc](http://www.forest-data.com/cbc). You can contact the compilers, John Longstreth and Tom Gaman, at [ptrayescbc@gmail.com](mailto:ptrayescbc@gmail.com). Please put "CBC RESPONSE" in the subject line.

#### Friday, December 30, dawn to dusk 7th Sonoma Valley Christmas Bird Count

To participate, contact Tom Rusert or Darren Peterie at [www.sonomabirding.com](http://www.sonomabirding.com) or 939-8007. Potluck tabulation dinner at the Sonoma Community Center's Andrews Hall.

#### Saturday, January 14, 8:00 AM - 1:00 PM Sonoma Valley CBC 4Kids

## Decision on the Dutra Asphalt Plant: December 9, 2:20 PM, at Sonoma County Superior Court in Santa Rosa

Judge Rene Chouteau will decide for or against the asphalt plant to be built 200 yards from Shollenberger Park in Petaluma. No public comments will be allowed; however, we encourage everyone who is against building this plant at this location to come to the courtroom. Your presence will speak volumes.



## Enrich Your Life – Become a Petaluma Wetlands Docent

By Gerald Moore

The Petaluma Wetlands Alliance, a committee of Madrone Audubon, has a very active wetlands docent program that serves not only the community, but offers its docents many rewarding experiences.

The program is so popular with grade school teachers that we are booked up for the year within 30 days of opening our schedule in the fall. Our major focus is a third-grade, hands-on program with both classroom visits and wetlands exploration. We also do children/family nature walks and bird/nature walks for adults. In addition, our docents have the opportunity to participate in educational workshops, field trips, and stewardship activities at the wetlands.

Meet and work with some great, enthusiastic amateur naturalists in our community. Our annual new-docent training will start on Thursday, January 5, and run for eight consecutive Thursdays from 8:30 to Noon. Training sessions are held either at Lucchesi Community Center or Shollenberger Park.

Please join us in this rewarding, fun, educational adventure. We ask docents to make a minimum two-year, 20-hours-per-year commitment spread out in any way

among the many activities we support. There is a \$40 charge for course materials. For more details contact Bob at 763-2934, Gerald at 763-3577, or see our great website: [www.petalumawetlands.org](http://www.petalumawetlands.org).



## 13th Annual Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway

January 26-29, in Chico

It will be a "Big Year" for our 13th Annual Snow Goose Festival, featuring over 65 field trips and workshops. Greg Miller, one of three birders chronicled in the book *The Big Year* and the movie of the same name, will be our keynote speaker. Greg has also offered to co-lead a field trip for us and he will be available for book signing.

Online registration begins in December at [www.snowgoosefestival.org](http://www.snowgoosefestival.org).

### Welcome New Friend of Madrone Audubon Society

**Forestville**  
Susan Jackson

**Kenwood**  
Ruth Rudesill

**Occidental**  
Nancy Prouty

**Petaluma**  
Maureen Moon, Angela &  
Thomas Swan

**Santa Rosa**  
Scott Campbell, Claudia Marie  
Norby, Roseanna Woods

**Sebastopol**  
Richard Shippes

**Sonoma**  
Nancy Bass

**Windsor**  
Judy Wallen

**Princeton, New Jersey**  
Victor Silverstein



## Observations

Fall – Early Winter • Dan Nelson • 479-2918 • birdsurf64@sbcglobal.net

Blue-winged Teal	10/24	Shollenberger Park	AW
Eurasian Wigeon	10/21	Bolinas lagoon near Pine Gulch Creek	KH
Long-tailed "Oldsquaw"	10/20	Point Reyes Fish Docks Lifeboat Station	JE, RS
Black Scoter (5)	10/2	Off Wright's Beach	RO'D, GH
Tundra Swan (1 imm.)	10/30	Abbott's Lagoon pond	RS, HC
Ferruginous Hawk (6)	10/26	Jenner Headlands overlook ( 1 dark morph)	KM, DH
Ferruginous Hawk (1)	11/3	Stage Gulch Road	RR
Peregrine Falcon (fem.)	10/18	Downtown Petaluma, "D" Street towers w/ shorebird	DN, CN
Peregrine Falcon (2)	10/29	Miwok/ Salmon Creek beaches ( 1 ad., 1 imm.)	DN
Burrowing Owl (1)	10/30	Field SW of Abbott's Lagoon trailhead	RS, HC
Short-eared Owl	10/12	Fairfield Osborn Preserve, flushed from high grassy ridge	AJ
Short-eared Owl	10/29	Hunting at dusk, fields S of Salmon Creek	DN
White-faced Ibis (1)	10/22	Bolinas sewer ponds	LS, KH
White-faced Ibis (1)	10/23	Bodega Farm pond	G & NH
Pacific Golden-Plover (2)	10/25	Shollenberger Park	DB
Pectoral Sandpiper (3)	10/25	Shollenberger Park	DB
Pectoral Sandpiper (2)	10/24	Sonoma Mountain Road pond	GH
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	10/1	Shollenberger Park	M.Ob
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (2)	Oct.	Shollenberger Park	TE
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Oct.	Pond at NW end of Mare Island, Solano County	RM
Ruff	10/26	Drake's Bay Oyster Works	RS
Pileated Woodpecker	10/10	Rio Nido	PD
Black-chinned Hummingbird	10/27	Bolinas Art Studio	KH
Willow Flycatcher (1)	9/12	Campbell Cove (very scarce this fall)	DN
Tropical Kingbird	10/29	Duncan's Landing	RL
Say's Phoebe	9/13	Salmon Creek	DN
Red-throated Pipit (1-2)	10/26	Spaletta Plateau, heard in pipit flock	RS
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	9/24	Bodega Head N of Owl Canyon	DN
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	10/30	Pinnacle Gulch	SC
Tennessee Warbler	9/13	Owl Canyon	DN
Nashville Warbler	9/1-12	Owl Canyon	DN
Townsend's Warbler (4)	9/5	Rio Nido	PD
Blackpoll Warbler	9/12	Bodega Marine Lab entrance trees	DN
Prairie Warbler	9/16	Owl Canyon	DH, et al
American Redstart (ad. male)	9/1-2	Owl Canyon	DN et al
Yellow-throated Warbler	Oct.	San Francisco, Ferry Park (cooperative, around all month)	M.Ob
Great-tailed Grackle (10+)	Sept.	Ellis Creek water treatment ponds	M.Ob
Hooded Oriole (2-3)	9/13	Petaluma, Paula Lane residence	DN
Hooded Oriole (1)	9/13	Bodega Marine Lab entrance trees, utility pole	DN
Summer Tanager (imm. male)	10/2	San Francisco, N side of Corona Heights Park	DM
Swamp Sparrow (1)	10/24	Ragle Ranch Park	LH
Swamp Sparrow (1)	10/26	Pine Gulch Creek mouth	RC, PRBO
Clay-colored Sparrow	9/24	Shollenberger Park	BD, MEM, RR
Clay-colored Sparrow	10/26	Nunes Ranch, Point Reyes	RS
White-throated Sparrow (2)	10/26	Nunes Ranch, Point Reyes	RS
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow	10/26	Pine Gulch Creek mouth	RC, PRBO
Lapland Longspur (1)	10/30	Plowed fields SW of Abbott's Lagoon trailhead	RS, HC
Chestnut-collared Longspur	10/30	Plowed fields SW of Abbott's Lagoon trailhead	RS, HC

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**Madrone Audubon Society**

Post Office Box 1911  
Santa Rosa, California 95402

December/January 2012

**TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL  
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY  
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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 7:30 PM at First United Methodist Church, 1551 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa. All meetings and walks are open to the public. Information: telephone answering service - 546-7492, e-mail - madroneaudubon@um.att.com.

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Please complete this form if you wish to join Madrone Audubon, renew your Madrone membership or make a contribution to Madrone.

**Joining or renewing with Madrone only.** Basic Madrone Audubon membership dues cover the cost of your subscription to the Madrone Leaves newsletter. Please consider joining or renewing at a higher level to support the important work of Madrone Audubon in environmental education and conservation critical to the protection of wildlife and the environment. **Note: By joining Madrone you will not become a member of National Audubon.**

I am a new member \_\_\_\_\_ I am renewing my Madrone membership  
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