



Madrone LEAVES

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

VOLUME 54

February/March 2021

Number 4

It's Been a Year...

January 20, 2021 is a year from the first recorded U.S. coronavirus case (January 20, 2020). By the time our members receive the February-March *Leaves*, 400,000 lives lost, recorded in January 2021, will have risen. The pandemic continues, families' and individuals' lives changed forever. The vaccination effort needs to be more expedient and more efficient.

Many of our Madrone Audubon members are managing distance learning for children and teens, college students' lives have been dramatically altered, adult professions needing to change, jobs lost, new jobs occurring for many. Global warming has not slowed, impacts from climate change are present, demanding attention and action. As the pandemic continues and adverse impacts have once again revealed discrepancies in healthcare, the economy and our society, intersectional environmentalism resonates.

"Intersectional Environmentalism is an inclusive version of environmentalism that advocates for both the protection of people and the planet. It identifies ways in which injustices happening to marginalized communities and the earth are interconnected. It brings injustices done to the most vulnerable communities, and the earth, to the forefront and does not minimize or silence social inequality. Intersectional Environmentalism advocates for justice for people and the planet." (Leah Thomas, @greengirlleah)

The new Biden-Harris Administration, inaugurated January 20, 2021, pledges to prioritize racial justice, climate action, addressing the pandemic and relief for individuals, businesses and families, and reversing environmental damage caused by the outgoing Administration. Executive orders will be able to undo some of the last Administration's destructive actions. Reversing many destructive actions, policies already now "in the books," will take time – and these are some of the worst new policies related to new rules on methane emissions, carbon dioxide pollution, and protected waters. Some estimates are 1-3 years to reverse some of the worst actions of the last Administration. Nevertheless, action begins and must continue. Rejoining the Paris Climate Accord as a big and expedient action is a beginning.



Great Blue Heron

Courtesy of Gordon Beebe

It's also been a year since we in Madrone met together in person and enjoyed each other's company at monthly membership meetings. We miss seeing you, enjoying the evening program and sharing homemade snacks with cups of hot tea. We've also missed our co-sponsored Regional Parks youth and family outings at Spring Lake and in-person Lincoln Elementary Bird Festival. Fortunately, Gordon Beebe and Janet Bosshard, conscientious about health, are leading bird walks when they can. While we monitor our organizational situation and

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GENERAL MEETING

First United Methodist Church
1551 Montgomery Drive, Santa Rosa

NOTE: In-Person Meetings at First United Methodist Church are postponed. Please check our website, www.madroneaudubon.org, for updates and to view any of Gordon Beebe's Nature Narratives.

We appreciate staying in touch with our members via *Leaves*, email/phone, our bird walks, and website. We will provide updates on possible in-person meetings in the future. We miss everyone!



IT'S BEEN A YEAR

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practice patience, safety and staying in touch as we can, We're grateful to you, our members – for staying together with us and supporting Madrone Audubon Society. Our end-of-year fundraising for 2020 was over \$5,000! Many



Great Egret

Courtesy of Tom Reynolds

Fall membership renewals arrived just before the end of December. Spring membership renewal letters will be mailed in March. Bird-a-thon, our main annual fundraiser, begins soon! New memberships continue to be steady – we are welcoming new members from Sonoma County and the Bay Area! A saving grace for many of us in Audubon is the existing, deep connection we feel to our natural world, nurturing that connection to help us sustain and taking care of our yards, volunteer areas, etc.

New Members

<p>Kenwood <i>Karin Weidner</i></p>	<p>Santa Rosa <i>Peggy Albright</i> <i>Teddy O'Malley</i> <i>Charmaine Rable</i> <i>(Gift membership from Mary Wade)</i> <i>Carole Sheehan</i> <i>Ronald Simpson</i></p>	<p>Rohnert Park <i>Conner Cimmiyotti</i></p>
<p>Petaluma <i>Gordon Cohen</i></p>	<p>Sebastopol <i>Barbara Arbutich</i> <i>Dangers Oncken</i></p>	

**Thank you, Members,
for your 2020 donations and
membership renewals!**

Stepping outside into the morning air, foggy and fresh, hearing and seeing birds and other wildlife, is a way many of us begin each day. Visiting familiar areas where we know birds and wildlife, observing, listening, renewing, also part of our daily lives, with an eye to appreciation and protection. We are together in our patterns of daily life, albeit not physically together as much right now.

Sonoma County Christmas Bird Counts 2020

How grateful we are that Peter Leveque, Dr. Stacy Li and Gene Hunn, with designated team leaders, coordinated and completed West County, Santa Rosa and Sonoma Valley (incl. Petaluma) CBCs. Stringent COVID protocols were implemented and followed.

West County Christmas Bird Count – December 27, 2020 by Dr. Stacy Li (with Team Leader reports)

The 54th Western Sonoma County Christmas Bird Count was extraordinary in so many ways. COVID-19 affected the count. How could we prevent it from becoming a spreader event? Our plan was to perform this survey and remain true to CDC pandemic guidelines. So we masked up and did all the other CDC stuff, cleaned our optics, and prepared to bird while socially distancing. Rain was predicted, but the weather was perfect: clear, warm and almost breezeless. Our team sizes were smaller than normal and our observation hours were fewer because most observers were birding alone

and we needed assurance that they were safe, so check-in times were established and observation time was shortened. Fewer observers and fewer hours looking and the absence of our pelagic boat yielded a surprising increase in species seen over last year. We totaled 183 species, a good number for our area. Carolyn Johnson liked the area summaries in *Leaves* of the recent past and requested highlights from each area. Here's what happened in each area in the words (for the most part) of each team leader.

Colin Talcroft is the leader of Area 1, around Jonive Road and Barnett Valley Road. His counters found 64 species this year, about normal for this area. Most common bird by far was American Robin, accounting for 51% of total (1,002 individuals counted). Comparatively unusual birds for Colin's team included 4 female Hooded Mergansers, a Slate-colored Junco, a flock of 40 Meadowlarks, 2 Canada Geese,

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CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

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and a Killdeer. As usual, got all three nuthatches and all the common woodpeckers (Acorn, Downy, Hairy, Nuttall's, Pileated, Flicker, and Red-breasted Sapsucker). Fewer than usual were: White-throated Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, and Collared Dove (one each), and only 10 Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Unexpected misses were Lincoln's Sparrow, Pied-billed Grebe, White-tailed Kite, Mallard, and Purple Finch.



Purple Finch

Courtesy of Gordon Beebe

Gordon Beebe is the leader of Area #2 Freestone. His team of four divided up, covering maybe a little more area than usual, but totaling 55 species, right on average. Highlights were 3 adult Golden Eagles spotted by Brock Dolman at 12:40 pm on a ridgeline property west of Freestone. The birds split up: One flew east, one flew west, and one (apologies to Ken Kesey) flew North. Gordon had the Bohemia Preserve area, and decided to hike to the "top of the world." On the way, examining a strange lump at the top of a 45-foot Douglas fir, he discovered a Northern Pygmy Owl in full sun. Upon his return 25 minutes later, the owl was still there, looking around. Denise found our only representative of the Falconidae, a single American Kestrel. Varied Thrush and Dark-eyed Junco were in high numbers; many normally-seen species were not found (don't we say this every year?). All in all, a good day, desirable weather, but we all hope to be back to maskless, group activities soon!

Steve Corey is the leader of Area #3 Valley Ford. Steve stepped in to lead after Ken Magoon passed away. Steve Corey is assisted by Kaitlin Magoon, Ken's daughter, on this day. Stacy is heartened to know that Kaitlin maintains the Magoon presence in the Valley Ford area. Kaitlin shares: We had a Loggerhead Shrike in our area, which we

haven't had in recent years at least. We saw some Western Meadowlark and Wilson's Snipe near Valley Ford, a nice little flock of Pygmy Nuthatches in the town of Bodega, as well as a flock of Cedar Waxwing in Freestone. I also had a Great Horned Owl at the end of the day. At the Bodega Farm Pond, Mike Hall recollects seeing a Red-tailed Hawk feeding on the ground, while a Raven and a Turkey Vulture stood back, waiting for the leftovers. The next time Mike looked, the Red-tailed was still feeding, but now 2 Ravens and 21 Turkey Vultures were in line! All in all, 73 species for the day!

John Coddling is the leader of Area #4 Joy Road. Highlights included an irrigation pond that provided a mix of Ring-necked Ducks and Hooded Mergansers, along with one Kingfisher who had caught an extremely yellow/orange fish and was going from perch to perch showing it off. Almost looked like it had accessed someone's koi pond.



Kingfisher

Courtesy of John Coddling

Sean Jeane is the leader of Area #5 Salmon Creek Road. Highlights for Salmon Creek Road included a pair of Golden Eagles roosting in the top of a tree, a White-throated Sparrow only seen because of a very willing resident who allowed us into her backyard to see all the birds around her feeders, and the Red-naped Sapsucker that has been in the same place the last couple of years. Had a very good look at it; he is really a handsome bird! Also, did some owling in the early morning and only managed a few Great-Horned Owls, but also heard a series of strange screeches that I couldn't identify. Spoke with the expert (Gene Hunn) who suggested Northern Saw-whet Owl. Listened to some recordings and that's exactly what it was! So we give a big thank you to Gene for helping us identify that call.

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**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

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We had 6 counters in 2 groups and had a much nicer day than we had anticipated, given the rain never materialized. Overall I think we had 68 species, just about average for the area. We were fortunate to get 2 unlikely species in fly-overs – a single White Pelican and a small group of Common Mergansers – that helped our species total reach our average for the day. All-in-all, despite the small group and social distancing, we had a pretty good day and lots of fun on the count.

Jennifer Michaud is the leader of Area #6 Estero Lane/landside. The land team for Estero Lane had epic weather as well. Two teams birded the Bodega Water Company pond and Sonoma Land Trust property and a portion of the road. There was nothing too terribly exciting to report. We had Ferruginous Hawks, lots of Kestrels, but fewer other hawks than usual. A flock of Tree Swallows. Lots of grassland sparrows. Lots of American Badger activity on the Sonoma Land Trust property (Madrone President Susan Kirks pleased to receive this news). Unfortunately, we had some access issues along Estero Lane, so we weren't able to explore all of the block, but a beautiful day outside.

Peter Colasanti is the leader of Area #6 Estero Lane/Canoe side. Highlights for the canoe on Estero Americano: The weather was perfect! Water levels have remained high and optimum, apparently since summer, on upper Estero. There were lots of American Pipits, Wilson's Snipe, Lesser Scaup, over 600 coots, several hunters (people) and skittish Green-winged Teal (justifiably so). Many Peregrine sightings, an adult Bald Eagle, some Shovelers, Cinnamon Teal, Pintail and a pair of Oystercatchers at the mouth. Final highlight was crawling into bed early.

Dea Freid is the leader of Area #7 Doran Beach. Our team was a bit smaller this year, 8 people, and we subdivided into smaller than usual subgroups to cover our area. The weather was much nicer than expected since the rain held off. We got some great birds and some interesting misses. Leah and Linda spotted 3 Cedar Waxwings flying over Shorttail Gulch, a species we usually don't see. I spent about 10 minutes at Diekmann's and was thrilled to see some warblers still there, mainly 2 Orange-crowned Warblers and a beautiful male Townsend's Warbler. Ruth found an uncommon Northern Mockingbird along the harbor and a Golden Eagle at Shorttail (rarely seen in our area). Mario and Taylor saw Purple Finches, a good bird for our area, a very uncommon Common Merganser, and the most unexpected bird – a Wilson's Snipe flying in the South Harbour Development. I spotted a male Eurasian Wigeon at Doran and a Pigeon Guillemot from the South

Donations*In Memory of...***Myreleen Ashman***by Bob Ashman***Gene Broderick***by Judith Christensen***Harry Bacas***by Alex Bacas***Frank Repling***by Barbara Brooks***Bill Bevans***by Teresita Salter-Haag***Dale Rhinehart***by Lillian Rhinehart***David Frost***by Fred Park***Phyllis Schmitt***by Diane & Bryant Hichwa***Kathryn Baumgardner***by Lawrence Bulinski***Mildred S. Vyverberg***by Mary & Michael Cuoio***George Batchelder***by Richard Hurley**by Teresita Salter-Haag*

Harbour Development along with a House Wren at the same spot. Bob and Julie found some great birds at Doran – Pigeon Guillemot and Marbled Murrelet (!) at the Doran Jetty and a Pacific Golden-Plover also at Doran. They also had 2 Orange-crowned Warblers at Doran, giving us a total of 5 for the day. Some years we miss Western Bluebirds completely, but this year we saw a grand total of 29 of them glowing in the sunlight.

Some of the birds we missed this year include Black-crowned Night Heron, Virginia Rail and Northern Harrier. The most perplexing miss was Snowy Plovers. We looked for them 4 times over the course of 6 hours, but they were nowhere to be found. I saw 22 of them on Saturday despite the large number of people on the beach, but none on Sunday. What can one say? Birds will be birds. (Dea got them as a week-bird.) Our species total was 113, which would be a good showing for a regular year and excellent for this one.

Ian Morrison is the leader of Area #8 Bodega Bay. Highlights were 2 Long-tailed Ducks at the south end of the bay and a single Pacific Golden Plover along Salmon Creek Beach. Other unusual birds for us were a Long-billed Curlew, a Spotted Sandpiper, an Orange-crowned Warbler and a House Wren. Our total of 106 species is a little below average, but overall numbers seemed normal with a high of Brant at over 1500. Some obvious misses were Red-throated Loon, Townsend Warbler, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Varied Thrush.

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Dan Nelson is the leader of Area 9 Bodega Head. Dan Nelson, Mike Parmeter and Jonathan Parmeter have birded this area for years. They spent much of their time scoping out to sea for pelagic birds. On this CBC, they were rewarded with balmy weather with only wisps of breeze. Most years, however, the winds howl off the head and suitable waterproof and rainhat gear would be donned. Bird species numbers are usually lower than other areas, but the number of species this area sees are important because of the habitat they represent.

Jackie Sones is the leader of Area 10 Bodega Marine Lab. Many years, Jackie has birded this area alone. This year, Stacy had 2 observers for Jackie. Then, University of California disallowed non-UC- employees from their property due to pandemic concerns. So once again, Jackie was on her own. Area 10 is the area surrounding the Bodega Marine Laboratory, so it's a pretty small area. I haven't tallied everything yet, but I think I ended up with around 55 species. It felt like a fairly typical year. During a morning sea watch, I counted 4 Northern Fulmars. At times, it was tough to see between the large swells, but I eventually located 6 Marbled Murrelets. There were hardly any loons or murrets. (I also missed Black Turnstone and Surf-bird this year, but the tide was very high with very large swells, so I'm guessing they were elsewhere.) I check one small freshwater pond in the dunes and most years there isn't much there, but this year I was somewhat surprised to see ~125 Green-winged Teal, 9 Northern Pintail, and 2 American Widgeon -- for Area 10 that's pretty good. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers have been regular in Area 10 for quite a few years now and this year was no different -- at least 2 (possibly 3) birds. I ended up with 10 Marsh Wrens for the day. I tried hard to find Burrowing Owl on count day, but struck out -- however, there are a couple of them around this winter and I had at least one during count week. I ended the day with 2 Short-eared Owls. I'm never sure if they're going to be around, but I have been surprised at how regular they have been over the years since I've been helping out with Area 10. I agree with all of the other observers -- the weather was ideal for a Christmas Bird Count.

Janeann Erickson is leader of Area 11 Cheney Gulch. Five women walked 9 miles yesterday, or so says my Fitbit. I have to say one of the highlights was the incredible weather in Bodega Bay. No wonder those houses on the hillside in the Bodega Harbour development can command such high prices. Avian-wise, the highlights were probably the flyover by approximately 50 Robins at the Bodega Bay School and the Golden Eagle seen at the Bodega Bay Public Utility

Ponds. Species total was 52, which is about average for the area. Again, we thank Leslie and John at Salmon Creek Ranch for letting us roam their property. They have a Hip Camp along the creek for any hardy individuals interested in a rustic campground. We have been invited back for owling some time. They said we could use the Eagle's Nest treehouse. We all responded enthusiastically to that idea.

Scott Carey is leader of Area 12 Seahorse Ranch (Chanslor Ranch). I am so happy to get out on the Ranch again this year. After last year's soggy trundle, it was nice to have a pleasant day there. Melissa Witte and I birded at distance, but together, covering the area fairly well. Cold weather and deep shade in the Salmon Creek canyon upstream made for slow birding. Several large flocks of Pine Siskins did brighten it up there and for our list. Fairly diverse waterfowl on the ranch with several Common Goldeneye, Common and Hooded Mergansers and always welcomed. Mallard, American Widgeon, Ring-necked Duck, Green-wing Teal, Northern Shovelers also seen. Six Common Gallinule did their part for the day. Sparrow numbers seemed low this year for the ranch. Purple Finch is hard to come by in our area, so a singing female/imm male was a surprise. We had very high numbers of Yellow-rumped Warblers with a few of the Myrtle race in among them. Townsend's Warblers were a no-show. Raptor numbers seemed average for the year and the weather. Expected species we missed were Common Yellowthroat and Tricolored Blackbird. Several scope-throughs in the a.m. and p.m. finally pulled out 4 Brown-headed Cowbirds in the blackbird flocks. Highlight species for the day was a tag-along Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in a patrol or parade of Common Bushtit.

There is no leader for Area 13 because of superstition.

Ken Wilson is leader of Area 14 Highway 1. From Salmon Creek to the Russian River, we found a total of 71 species, of which gulls were present in the highest numbers - over 4000 in one flock at the Russian River mouth. Bill Doyle and Helen Kochenderfer counted the northern section of the territory while Becky Olsen, Steve Einstein and I counted the south. High surf made counting on the ocean difficult, but alcids, cormorants and grebes were just not there. The exception was Western Grebe in flocks as large as 180 birds, totaling 1,021 sightings. Raptor numbers were low, though we did find 10 species, including 2 adult Peregrines and a distant Merlin and Ferruginous Hawk. Black Oystercatchers numbered 28 and we found 37 Black Turnstones. Our one unexpected bird was a House Wren. In a residential neighborhood, a large flock of blackbirds consisted of mostly Brewers Blackbird and Starlings, but did



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include 6 Red-winged Blackbirds, 2 Tri-colored Blackbirds and 8 Brown-headed Cowbirds. One residence had a feeder in the front yard with a very nice garden statue of a Great Blue Heron. We watched and counted at the feeder for about 10 minutes before the statue came to life and quickly captured a rodent of some type.

Dave Berman is leader of Area 15 Willow Creek area. Eight of us met at the Russian House (Brookhaven Bridge). Lying stone cold in the parking lot was the body of a Cooper's Hawk. It was donated to Peter Leveque's teaching collection. We were greeted by a pair of adult Bald Eagles (we later saw them up river with 2 immature Bald Eagles). We had 3 teams, everyone in separate cars, with cool masks. There was a beautiful raft of 250+ Coots on the river. In the afternoon, on upper Willow Creek, we followed a



Bald Eagle

Courtesy of Dave Berman

flock of Bushtits, Juncos, and a Townsend Warbler in the bays. Beautiful day! I had 5 new bird count folks and one who hadn't been on a count since the '60's. I went owling Saturday night and didn't hear much, but saw a beautiful Great-horned Owl near Freestone.

Mike Heffernon is leader of Duncans Mills. Highlights from Area 16 - Duncan's Mills to Jenner: A scrubby-looking male Black-headed Grosbeak photographed on a feeder at a private residence in Duncans Mills. This was my first ever observation of this species in winter. In the field between the 116/1 rail ponds and the river, we had Snow Goose, White-fronted Goose, a few Cacklers, and a Merlin. We saw a Peregrine Falcon between at that intersection and Jenner, and a Red-necked Grebe on the river. We found 3 Ferruginous Hawks up at the Jenner Headlands. There were thousands of uncooperative gulls. Some gulls were

Donations

In Honor of...

Susan Kirks
by Arthur Slater

Beth Milligan
by Julia Pollock

Peter Leveque
by June England

Millie Smith
by Eileen Anderson

Bird-a-Thon 2021 Begins Soon!



unwilling to cross over to our side of the river (so someone else's responsibility), some floating on the water too distant to be made out. Only two gull species identified, the rest being recorded as gull species. 79 species for the day - a little below average species numbers.

Peter Leveque is leader of Area 17 Freezeout Canyon. Freezeout Canyon lives up to its name because the sun only reaches it later in the day. Peter had 5 observers in 4 parties. Peter birded with his granddaughter, Sophie, because they are in the same social bubble. They got 61 bird species plus 4 otters and a Harbor Seal. Because of the mild weather, and when they usually pick up birds, Peter has decided to start next year at 10:00 instead of 8:00. In years past, Peter and his crew typically had Irish coffees to fend off the cold. The test next year will be whether they have Irish coffees even if the weather is mild.

David Leland is the leader of Area 18 Coleman Valley Road. Highlights for Coleman Valley Road have to start with the weather - sunny, warmish, with little wind, a rare trifecta out there. Brock and crew at Occidental Arts and Ecology had two Count Week Wilson's Snipes at their pond. It is very unusual to see any shorebirds in this area. We saw 8 Hooded Mergansers on Still Life Pond near Western Hills Nursery, and had 2 Ferruginous Hawks in the western grasslands. And the topper was a flock of Red Crossbills at Star Mountain. Our scouts had told us they had been around off and on for a month or so, but no sign when we first arrived. After an hour of searching, then waiting near the Douglas firs loaded with cones where they had been seen, a rain of cones and cone scales helped us find them and then get good looks at both males and females at



During the COVID-19 pandemic, 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, 785-1922, dhichwa@earthlink.net. Also, please visit our website, www.madroneaudubon.org for updates. Please see special instructions below for bird walks.

February/March 2021 Calendar

Saturday Walks

Gordon Beebe has not scheduled Saturday walks for February/March 2021. Please refer to Madrone’s website for updates or changes. www.madroneaudubon.org.

February and March Thursday Walks

COVID-19 Precautions

The walks will be limited to 7 birders. Please drive by yourself. Reservations will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis. Future walks, if there are no changes regarding the COVID-19 situation, will favor those who have not joined a walk before. Your name will be put on a waiting-list, if a space becomes available. We will follow the COVID-19 protocols, staying 6 feet apart, wearing masks, and respecting passing trail visitors. Come in good health, with no recent exposure to COVID-19.



Mallard

Courtesy of Richard Strunin

February 11th

Cloverdale River Walk, parking pass required. From Santa Rosa, take Hwy #101 to exit #522, just north of Cloverdale. Turn right on Redwood Hwy, then first right on McCray Road. Follow it to the end. Parking lot is on your left. It is a flat 1.1 mile (one way) asphalt path. ** To reserve a space, please call Janet Bosshard (707) 526-5883.

February 25th

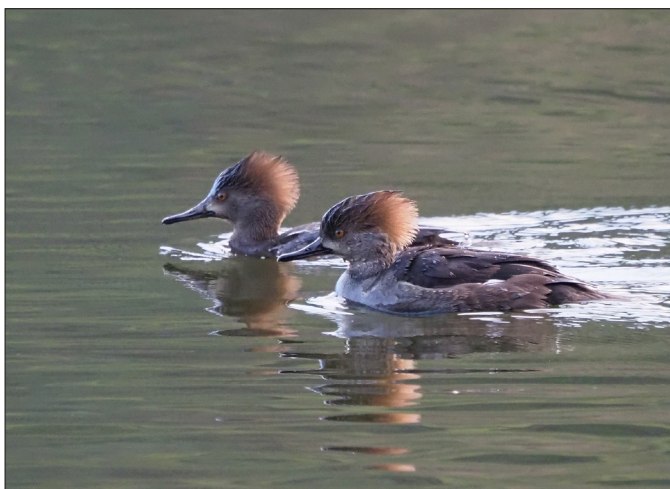
Laguna de Santa Rosa, meet at the parking lot off Hwy #12. Be prepared for winter weather, with appropriate wet weather clothing. ** To reserve a space, please call Janet Bosshard (707) 526-5883.

March 11th

Doran Beach, Bodega Bay, parking pass required. Meet in the first parking lot, with the rest rooms. We will walk the Bird Trail and scope out Doran Beach. Wear warm clothing and expect variable weather conditions. ** To reserve a space, please call Janet Bosshard (707) 526-5883.

March 25th

Ellis Creek Ponds, Petaluma. From Hwy 101 south, get off at Hwy 116 left on Lakeville Hwy, turn right on S. McDowell Blvd. Ext, right on Cypress Drive and follow to end through the gates, park near the restrooms. ** To reserve a space, please call Janet Bosshard (707) 526-5883.



Female Hooded Mergansers

Courtesy of Tom Reynolds

**Are you a
National Audubon
member?**

Please consider joining our local chapter,
Madrone Audubon.

(see membership form, back page)

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

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neck-straining heights in the treetops. We had 60 species altogether, at the high end of recent years.

Linda Petrulias is leader of Area 19 Austin Creek. Pamela Conley is on Linda Petrulia's team and she asked me to send you our highlight of the day. Mary Ann Sobieraj was down on Rien's Beach when a lovely fox ran across the sand in front of us.

There is no leader for Area 20 because somebody in the ancient past couldn't count? Is 20 an unlucky number too?

Carolyn Johnson is leader of Area 21 Harrison Grade. We had 7 observers and divided the territory three ways instead of two to minimize the single-occupant car caravan on tight roads. Seemed to work well. We saw a total of 70 species, a good number. Highlights included 2 adult Bald Eagles on Stoetz Rd—a first. Most of our farm pond ducks were in two ponds, including 11 Common Goldeneye, 9 Hooded Merganser, and 2 Wood Duck. Other ponds were very low or covered in invasive azolla pond-weed. We were overwhelmed with robins and bluebirds feasting on unpicked Pinot Noir grapes on Morelli Lane. On an old Acacia tree full of sapsucker holes, we watched a Townsend's Warbler chasing a Ruby-crowned Kinglet around the trunk protecting its sap-filled holes. Hardly a highlight, but an interesting sighting, we watched a Sharp-shinned Hawk catch a bird and immediately was swooped down upon by a Red-shouldered Hawk, appearing to try steal the catch, but was unsuccessful. The real highlight was to be out in beautiful weather with other birders.

**Sonoma Valley (incl. Petaluma) Christmas Bird Count #16
December 30, 2020***by Gene Hunn*

Ninety-odd field observers, carefully observing COVID-19 precautions, surveyed bird life within our 15-mile diameter circle, centered off Sperring Rd. west of Sonoma. During our Zoom compilation conversation (coordinated -- thank you -- by Richard Dale of the Sonoma Ecology Center), we were certain of 158 count day species, a bit on the low side. However, in the interim, as detailed reports came in from the hotspots of the Wingo-Donnell and Petaluma Wetlands-Tolay areas, plus Noah Arthur's late afternoon gull sightings and several count-week additions, we have now tallied a highly respectable 167 count-day species plus 4 additional count week species for a grand total of 171.

New for the circle: Red-necked Grebe (count week), Lesser-black-backed Gull, Hammond's Flycatcher, Mountain Bluebird.

As usual, each count records "winners" and "losers." I have taken the average of the first 15 SVCBCs (2005-2019) and the highest and lowest counts for each of the 223 (now up to 226) species recorded since 2005, then compared this year's totals by means of a ratio. A ratio greater than 1.00 indicates an above-average tally; a ratio less than 1.00 a below average tally. Ratios above 2.0 are notably large (excepting species recorded in such small numbers as to defy statistical significance; these I ignore). Ratios below 0.25 are notably depressed. Numbers above the previous maxima or below previous minima (again ignoring very low incidence) are, of course, of special interest. Patterns in these statistics, however, are rarely obvious. Drought and fire likely involved somehow. You be the judge.

New maxima (N = 13) include: Ring-necked Duck (755 v. 205), Greater Scaup (958 v. 624), Common Goldeneye (394 v. 282); Acorn Woodpecker (817 v. 715, perhaps the highest in the world!), Hairy Woodpecker (35 v. 25) [Nuttall's Woodpecker was also high but not a record, 150 v. an average of 111]; Horned Lark (41 v. 10, perhaps just a fluke of finding a large flock); Oak Titmouse (372 v. 328), White-breasted Nuthatch (171 v. 140); Bewick's Wren (89 v. 68); Purple Finch (81 v. 55), Pine Siskin (261 v. 102, not unexpected), Lesser Goldfinch (1189 v. 959); Lark Sparrow (156 v. 71).

New minima (N = 8) include: Mourning Dove (108 v. 159; while Collared-doves were above average at 157; competition?); Killdeer (111 v. 116), Western Sandpiper (2 v. 3 and v. an average of 352; Least Sandpipers were double their average at 1274; curious), Hutton's Vireo (6 v. 12), American Crow (515 v. 538), Bushtit (360 v. 468), American Robin (1466 v. 1507 and an average of 7388), and Western Meadowlark (544 v. 593). Other notable low counts were for Bonaparte's Gull (8 v. an average of 106), Mew Gull (17 v. 40), and Western Gulls (170 v. 511); Rock Pigeon (96 v. an average of 405; go figure); Golden-crowned Kinglets (3 v. an average of 20).

I append the list with numbers in parentheses and ratio of this year's tallies to the average of the previous 15 years, ignoring species recorded in very small numbers. Max and Min indicate tallies beyond the recorded range over the past 16 years.

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**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

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Snow Goose (30)	Killdeer (111)	Northern Pygmy-Owl (5)	California Thrasher (4)
Ross's Goose (1)	Long-billed Curlew (29)	Burrowing Owl (1)	Northern Mockingbird (106)
Greater White-fronted Goose (2)	Dunlin (1400)	Short-eared Owl (3)	Western Bluebird (926)
Cackling Goose (97)	Least Sandpiper (1274)	Northern Saw-whet Owl (5)	Mountain Bluebird (7)
Canada Goose (822)	Western Sandpiper (2)	Belted Kingfisher (13)	Varied Thrush (81)
Mute Swan (42)	Long-billed Dowitcher (166)	Red-breasted Sapsucker (24)	Hermit Thrush (142)
Mandarin Duck (2)	Wilson's Snipe (14)	Acorn Woodpecker (817)	American Robin (1466)
Wood Duck (22)	Spotted Sandpiper (29)	Downy Woodpecker (38)	Cedar Waxwing (288)
Cinnamon Teal (25)	Greater Yellowlegs (40)	Nuttall's Woodpecker (150)	Phainopepla (3)
Northern Shoveler (372)	Lesser Yellowlegs (3)	Hairy Woodpecker (35)	House Sparrow (47)
Gadwall (414)	Bonaparte's Gull (8)	Pileated Woodpecker (19)	American Pipit (225)
Eurasian Wigeon (2)	Mew Gull (17)	Northern Flicker (203)	House Finch (1499)
American Wigeon (608)	Ring-billed Gull (440)	*Northern Flicker Intergrade (1)	Purple Finch (81)
Mallard (802)	Western Gull (170)	American Kestrel (109)	Pine Siskin (261)
Northern Pintail (14)	California Gull (459)	Merlin (12)	Lesser Goldfinch (1189)
Green-winged Teal (1002)	Herring Gull (83)	Peregrine Falcon (4)	American Goldfinch (138)
Canvasback (243)	Iceland (Thayer's) Gull (8)	Prairie Falcon (1)	Chipping Sparrow (2)
Redhead (1)	Lesser-black-backed Gull (1)	Hammond's Flycatcher (1)	Lark Sparrow (156)
Ring-necked Duck (755)	Glaucous-winged Gull (196)	Black Phoebe (194)	Fox Sparrow (52)
Greater Scaup (968)	Glaucous Gull (1)	Say's Phoebe (50)	Dark-eyed Junco (2701)
Lesser Scaup (136)	Forster's Tern (2)	Hutton's Vireo (12)	*Dark-eyed (<i>Slate-colored</i>) Junco (1)
Bufflehead (700)	Double-crested Cormorant (63)	Loggerhead Shrike (6)	White-crowned Sparrow (1571)
Common Goldeneye (394)	American White Pelican (12)	Steller's Jay (146)	Golden-crowned Sparrow (2343)
Hooded Merganser (59)	American Bittern (2)	California Scrub-Jay (409)	White-throated Sparrow (6)
Common Merganser (58)	Great-blue Heron (24)	American Crow (515)	Savannah Sparrow (281)
Ruddy Duck (378)	Great Egret (58)	Common Raven (280)	Song Sparrow (248)
California Quail (605)	Snowy Egret (41)	Chestnut-backed Chickadee (130)	Lincoln's Sparrow (38)
Wild Turkey (111)	Green Heron (2)	Oak Titmouse (372)	California Towhee (345)
Pied-billed Grebe (90)	Black-crowned Night-Heron (99)	Horned Lark (41)	Rufous-crowned Sparrow (3)
Red-necked Grebe (cw)	White-faced Ibis (2)	Tree Swallow (56)	Spotted Towhee (151)
Eared Grebe (10)	Turkey Vulture (454)	Violet-green Swallow (4)	Western Meadowlark (544)
Rock Pigeon (96)	White-tailed Kite (47)	Barn Swallow (3)	Bullock's Oriole (Count Week)
Band-tailed Pigeon (433)	Golden Eagle (8)	Bushtit (360)	Red-winged Blackbird (3933)
Eurasian Collared-Dove (151)	*Golden Eagle <i>adult</i> (4)	Wrentit (16)	Tricolored Blackbird (1)
Mourning Dove (108)	*Golden Eagle <i>immature</i> (3)	Golden-crowned Kinglet (3)	Brown-headed Cowbird (59)
White-throated Swift (1)	Northern Harrier (32)	Ruby-crowned Kinglet (276)	Brewer's Blackbird (3164)
Anna's Hummingbird (256)	Sharp-shinned Hawk (5)	Red-breasted Nuthatch (1)	Common Yellowthroat (9)
Virginia Rail (10)	Cooper's Hawk (17)	White-breasted Nuthatch (171)	Yellow Warbler (Count Week)
Sora (cw)	Red-shouldered Hawk (69)	Brown Creeper (40)	Yellow-rumped Warbler (1234)
Common Gallinule (15)	Red-tailed Hawk (185)	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (4)	*Yellow-rumped (<i>Audubon's</i>)
American Coot (752)	Rough-legged Hawk (2)	House Wren (4)	Warbler (323)
Black Rail (2)	Ferruginous Hawk (3)	Pacific Wren (3)	*Yellow-rumped (<i>Myrtle</i>)
Black-necked Stilt (78)	Barn Owl (5)	Marsh Wren (48)	Warbler (26)
American Avocet (482)	Western Screech-Owl (18)	Bewick's Wren (89)	Townsend's Warbler (10)
Black-bellied Plover (4)	Great Horned Owl (18)	European Starling (14,650)	

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

Continued from page 9

Santa Rosa 61st Christmas Bird Count – December 20, 2020

by Gene Hunn

The Santa Rosa CBC has run every year since 1960, so this is our 61st consecutive count. The Redwood Region Ornithological Society (RROS) was first imagined by the participants in the 1960 count and in 1962 they formally established the Society. Our standard 15-mile diameter circle is centered at Santa Rosa City Hall and divided into 13 sectors, each fielding teams with an area leader.

Many individuals have coordinated the count and compiled the results since 1960. This is my first year, taking the reins from Bill Doyle who ran things since 2011. This year, we had to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. We stayed safe by birding alone or in our household pods, masked and socially distanced. We had to forego the countdown pizza party, meeting via Zoom instead. On top of the pandemic, we have had to deal with continuing drought conditions and several years of destructive wildfires that have degraded the habitats within the circle.

This year's total species count is a bit below average (as might have been predicted, given the circumstances noted above), 128 species (listed below) and 19,403 individuals. Fifty-one field observers counted, with two owling parties (Ruth Rudesill, of course, and the Tufflis) up and out by 5 a.m. Most of us slept in until nearly sunrise, birding from 7 a.m. until we concluded there were no more birds to count. Our 13 teams had varied luck, depending on the mix of habitats within their respective territories. Bill and Helen hiked Annadel (area 9A) and managed just 191 individuals of 29 species, a record low count for their traditional territory (but good exercise). By contrast, Don Kirker's team along Santa Rosa Creek to the Laguna (area 2) tallied 2,732 individuals of 95 species, with a bounty of waterbirds on Delta Pond.

It was a fine day, with a chilly start at 31 degrees, but warming to the low 60s by afternoon. The sun also burned off the ground fog that made early viewing a challenge for several teams. No wind. Nearly ideal conditions for an accurate count.

Highlights: Area 1 had 3 American White Pelicans fly over. Area 2 had a continuing wintering Pacific-slope Flycatcher along Santa Rosa Creek Trail and a good variety of ducks and shorebirds on Delta Pond, plus Gordon Beebe's resident Pygmy Nuthatch. Area 3 highlights included two lingering Western Tanagers along with a long list of owls located by Ruth Rudesill, most notably a rare Long-eared Owl. Area 4 owlers found a Northern Pygmy-Owl and later flushed seven Wood Ducks while tallying six White-throated Sparrows. Area 5 had a Golden Eagle up among the charred trees on Los Alamos Road and a "yellow-shafted" Northern Flicker. Area 6 highlights included a Ross's Goose and 2 Cattle Egrets. Area 7 found Least Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Greater Yellowlegs, and one of just two Marsh Wrens for the count. Area 8 tallied a Bald Eagle, an Osprey, a Sora, a Common Gallinule, 2 Greater Scaup, and 22 Great-tailed Grackles. Area 9A was exceptionally quiet. Area 9B had a Western Screech-Owl and good numbers of individuals, as they fielded 11 observers in 4 parties. Area 10 found 2

Prairie Falcons, a Herring Gull, and our only House Wren. Area 11 had 2 Merlins and 10 Lark Sparrows; Area 12 turned up a small flock of Vesper Sparrows and counted 4 Green Herons and a Peregrine Falcon. The complete list as of now with numbers is as follows:

Ross's Goose (1), Cackling Goose (11), Canada Goose (712), Mute Swan (4), Wood Duck (8), Cinnamon Teal (1), Northern Shoveler (125), Gadwall (1), American Wigeon (240), Mallard (365), Northern Pintail (3), Green-winged Teal (75), Ring-necked Duck (56), Greater Scaup (2), Bufflehead (119), Common Goldeneye (21), Hooded Merganser (9), Ruddy Duck (91), California Quail (218), Wild Turkey (174), Pied-billed Grebe (58), Eared Grebe (4), Rock Pigeon (409), Band-tailed Pigeon (89), Eurasian Collared-Dove (152), Mourning Dove (80), Anna's Hummingbird (183), Sora (1), Common Gallinule (1), American Coot (474), Killdeer (313), Least Sandpiper (9), Wilson's Snipe (9), Spotted Sandpiper (1), Greater Yellowlegs (2), Ring-billed Gull (91), California Gull (6), Herring Gull (1), Double-crested Cormorant (81), American White Pelican (5), Great Blue Heron (11), Great Egret (21), Snowy Egret (11), Cattle Egret (2), Green Heron (9), Black-crowned Night-Heron (21), Turkey Vulture (247), Osprey (1), White-tailed Kite (12), Golden Eagle (1), Northern Harrier (3), Sharp-shinned Hawk (5), Cooper's Hawk (11), Bald Eagle (1 adult), Common Black-Hawk (cw), Red-shouldered Hawk (74), Red-tailed Hawk (80), Ferruginous Hawk (cw); Barn Owl (1), Western Screech-Owl (6), Great Horned Owl (10), Northern Pygmy-Owl (2), Long-eared Owl (1), Northern Saw-whet Owl (1), Belted Kingfisher (8), Red-breasted Sapsucker (16), sapsucker sp. (1), Acorn Woodpecker (423), Downy Woodpecker (31), Nuttall's Woodpecker (77), Hairy Woodpecker (15), Pileated Woodpecker (7), Northern Flicker (141, including one yellow-shafted), American Kestrel (35), Merlin (8), Peregrine Falcon (3), Prairie Falcon (2), falcon sp. (1), Pacific-slope Flycatcher (1), Black Phoebe (129), Say's Phoebe (37), Hutton's Vireo (15), Steller's Jay (71), California Scrub-Jay (275), American Crow (835), Common Raven (137), Tree Swallow (8), Chestnut-backed Chickadee (129), Oak Titmouse (334), Bushtit (580), Wrenit (5, low), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (187), White-breasted Nuthatch (117), Pygmy Nuthatch (1), Brown Creeper (26), House Wren (1), Marsh Wren (2), Bewick's Wren (54), European Starling (1134), Northern Mockingbird (56), Western Bluebird (332), Varied Thrush (6), Hermit Thrush (94), American Robin (1214), Cedar Waxwing (331), House Sparrow (156), American Pipit (38), House Finch (654), Purple Finch (89), Pine Siskin (278), Lesser Goldfinch (396), American Goldfinch (36), Lark Sparrow (11), Fox Sparrow (83), Dark-eyed Junco (787), White-crowned Sparrow (1441), Golden-crowned Sparrow (791), White-throated Sparrow (19, high), Vesper Sparrow (6); Savannah Sparrow (106), Song Sparrow (142), Lincoln's Sparrow (14), California Towhee (294), Spotted Towhee (110), Western Meadowlark (254), Red-winged Blackbird (502), Brown-headed Cowbird (37), Brewer's Blackbird (1000), Great-tailed Grackle (22), Yellow-rumped Warbler (516), Townsend's Warbler (10), Western Tanager (2). Thanks to all for participating!



Habitat Gardening for Birds and Wildlife

by Christine Cohen

Habitat Gardening will mean a lot to hungry birds and wildlife, indeed it can be life or death for them. Depending upon land size, location and your opportunity to make improvements, there is a huge range of possibilities and opportunities. As birders, most or all of you have observed the birds right around you. As you know, they are telling you what they need and want.

Augmenting your yard, garden or patio with water is a great start, particularly if the water is kept fresh and clean. Water placed at varying levels and in different containers suit different species of birds and wildlife. A shallow cement birdbath invites a flock of small birds such as bushtits to happily cavort and frolic. Most birds like convenient bowls/dishes of water hung from trees. A big cement bird bath will invite larger birds to drink and splash about. Mammals love varying sized containers of water, especially during hot, dry summers. One night, I discovered a baby raccoon in my backyard soaking in a large tub of water like any of us might do in a bathtub.

Another crucial part of a garden habitat is cover. Shrubs and trees provide shade and protection. With the summers heating up, shade is all the more crucial to life. I have had good success with hummingbirds by providing feeders hung from a patio trellis. Plum trees grow over the trellis, providing shade and food. These plum trees bring in Hooded Orioles and other birds, who may also drink from the hummingbird feeders (bee guards are removed). The plums, shade and sugar water keep the Orioles around for many months. Oak Titmouses, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Townsend's Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets and now another mysterious bird, that flits in and is gone in an instant, enjoy and



Bewick's Wren

Courtesy of Dennis Luz

harsh summer. As the sun moves through the sky, partial sunlight works well for many plants. Keeping established plants that have survived may be a good choice. Certainly, lizards and many birds would agree!

Ground, lightly covered by leaves and grasses, can provide a nice variety of forage for many birds. Sparrows, thrushes, juncos, towhees, robins, and many other birds forage on the ground. Allowing for natural leaf mold and leaf cover provides for moisture retention as well as nutrients to many critters, including salamanders and even frogs. The all-pervasive, pebbles, bark and rocks pretty much put an end to foraging. Another current practice in the name of "water conservation" involves the practice of removing entire yard areas of grasses, putting in sheet mulching, and then replanting a variety of drought tolerant, native plants. This practice can be short-sighted and result in destroying existing habitat area for birds, lizards, salamanders, and other wildlife, accustomed to a complex ecosystem with layers of natural combinations of leaves, grasses and organic material. As you get to know the creatures that reside in your garden space, you will be able to gently enhance and restore your garden. Through careful irrigation and thoughtful changes, your garden area and personal space can become harmoniously integrated into the greater environment, allowing for life to flourish.

Habitat Gardening is a timely subject, to be continued in later Newsletters. I will leave the reader with a couple of suggestions. Veronica Bowers provides a wonderful overview of Habitat Gardening, accessed at www.nativesongbirdcare.org. The National Audubon Society also provides a database for plants. The title is Audubon Native Plant Database. Once at the website, you can put in your zip code and get customized plant suggestions for your area, specifically suited to certain types of birds. You can also buy the plant and contribute to National Audubon.



Spotted Towhee

Courtesy of Dennis Luz

share in the feeders. Shade is also becoming more important in successful survival of new plants. Planting young plants in the hot sun, even when they are heat resistant, is an invitation for loss. Shade trees and shrubbery help to shield young plants from a



Alert - Pine Siskins - Salmonellosis Outbreak - An Irruption Year

by Susan Kirks

A Salmonella infection particularly impacting Pine Siskins is occurring. Native Songbird Care & Conservation, North Bay Birds online group, WildCare in San Rafael, and Department of Fish and Wildlife have published helpful information.

Veronica Bowers of Native Songbird Care & Conservation in Sebastopol via the December 2020 News from Our Nest newsletter: "Pine Siskins are having an 'irruption year' – a time when the birds irrupt southward during the winter because there isn't enough food to support the population in their northern range of Canada's boreal forest. This year the supply of birch, alder and conifer seeds across the boreal forest was not very robust and caused the siskins to push south in search of food. That's why we're seeing so many of these ravenous little beauties this winter."

National Audubon Society stated in a recent article that this is one of the biggest Pine Siskin irruption years in recorded history. The article goes on to explain this year's irruption is so strong the Pine Siskins have been recorded migrating at night. As a typically diurnal migrant, this is highly unusual for the species! To review the NSCC complete article, visit <https://mailchi.mp/25550ebc26be/news-from-our-nest-december-2020>.

WildCare shares songbirds with salmonellosis may appear fluffed, lethargic, and may sit with eyes closed. Sick birds may be the last to fly off if the flock startles. Large groups of birds at feeders and baths provide an opportunity for spreading salmonellosis. Taking down feeders encourages the birds to forage in a wider area and to be socially distant, making it less likely the disease will spread.

Seed-eating songbirds, common visitors to our backyard feeders, include Pine Siskins, Goldfinches and Purple Finches, also especially susceptible to salmonellosis.

Cleaning feeders and birdbaths during the outbreak is recommended. If you have not observed sick or deceased birds in your yard or nearby, preventive maintenance is a best practice. Guidelines from WildCare on cleaning and timing:

Wear dishwashing gloves when cleaning with bleach to prevent contact of the bleach with your skin. Wear a face mask to have a barrier and prevent accidentally ingesting bleach fumes.

Recommended bleach cleaning solution: 9 parts water: 1 part bleach. Scrub the feeder well, allow it to soak for 10-20 minutes. Rinse well and allow to dry.

For feeders, keep a large tray under the feeder to collect hulls and seeds that fall, then empty discards



Pine Siskin

Courtesy of Gordon Beebe

every evening. This helps prevent mold and disease for ground feeding birds.

If you've discovered sick or deceased birds, use spreading of seed on ground and wait to rehang feeders or birdbaths for 3 weeks after a last sick or dead bird is seen in your vicinity.

Empty and clean birdbaths daily, regardless of disease outbreaks. Do not use wooden feeders.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife's website information on the Salmonella outbreak: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Laboratories/Wildlife-Investigations/Avian-Investigations#536232078-salmonellosis>

Contact Madrone Audubon with additional questions or concerns: susankirks@sbcglobal.net, 707-241-5548.

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)

The Sapsucker Snack Bar

by Gordon Beebe



Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Courtesy of Gordon Beebe

Whenever I am out birding in Sapsucker habitat (orchards, oak/mixed forest), I pay attention to the tree trunks. I look for neat rows of small holes, a tip-off that a Sapsucker has been around. Sometimes, the holes are dark and grown over with bark; other times, they have an orangey color of the freshly disturbed cambium layer under the bark. I have learned that in these cases, if I wait 15-20 minutes or so, the Sapsucker frequently comes back around to tank up on any sap and possibly a small insect or two. I imagine a circuit of trees through the woods that the Sapsucker goes to, one after another, on its daily rounds. What the Sapsucker may not be aware of, is that in addition to me, other creatures have been watching it make its rounds, and wait until it has left the newly oozing wells of sweet sap, to sneak a little treat of their own. So far, I have seen both Anna's Hummingbirds and Ruby-crowned Kinglets stopping at the Sapsucker Snack Bar for a little pick-me-up. Has anyone else seen other species taking advantage of the sweet sap?

This Was No Rubber Ducky!

by Christine Cohen

About fifty years ago, when I was living in Pacifica, my neighbor knocked on our door. He had a Surf Scoter in a box. Knowing that I liked birds, he handed the Surf Scoter over to me. My neighbor was a chef at a restaurant and had been feeding the Surf Scoter raw scallops. With the promise of more scallops from him, I accepted this unusual duck, later identified in my trusty Roger Tory Peterson book. What to do?? My then husband, Mike, and I decided to put this little guy in the bathtub, filled with water. The Surf Scoter dabbled about and hungrily snapped up the scallops. After several calls, a veterinarian suggested a place for rescued birds in Berkeley. This was also during the time that two oil tankers had collided in San Francisco Bay in which 800,000 gallons of oil was spilled.

When Mike and I arrived with our new little charge, we found a tiny cottage filled with about 100 birds in cages, perched on curtain rods, on shelves and in cardboard boxes around a small stove with the oven on low to warm them. We were welcomed by Jay (Holcomb) and I now believe Alice Berkner. I remember Jay happily taking this little bird and exclaiming that I had actually done the right thing by putting him in water so that the feathers would remain oiled. Mike and I looked around with awe at the blind birds, injured birds, sick birds and oiled birds. The small backyard, enclosed by wire mesh, contained dozens of other birds of many species, all in different stages of recovery. Jay and Alice cared for all 24/7. There was no thought to do otherwise. From that point on, I continued to bring birds to Jay. The birds I found on the beach were so weak and starved that they were easy to pick up. Many were oiled. At the time, mineral oil was used to remove the heavy tanker oil. Later, Dawn Dish Soap was found to work better at cleaning feathers. To this day, a duckling is on the label of Dawn Dish Soap. Jay and Alice were able to save about 50% of the birds that I brought in. I remember



White Pelicans

Courtesy of Tom Reynolds

one dramatic day, as I was jogging on the Pacifica beach. I saw a seagull frantically struggling in the water. Rushing toward it, I saw that a fisherman from the near-by pier had snagged it on the wing. I jumped into the surf and grabbed the line, tugging as hard as I could while still holding on to the gull. The line snapped and with my jacket I somehow wrapped the gull in it. Rushing to a near-by friend, we held the gull down and removed the barb from the hook and then removed the hook altogether. With the gull safely in a box, I took him to Berkeley and into good hands. Jay later told me that it took 6 months for the gull to recover and be released.

One New Year's Eve, Jay took Mike and me in his one engine airplane and flew us around San Francisco. It was so unforgettable. Sometime later, Jay and Alice disappeared from Berkeley. Fast forward to around 2012, while working in the Petaluma Library, I was talking to a co-worker who shares my love of birds. I told her about my experiences and she said that sounds like Jay Holcomb of International Bird Rescue and Research! After some conversation and a little research, I concluded that Jay as Director of IBRR was indeed the same person. I was never able to contact him. Nevertheless, Jay's and Alice's kindness, dedication and generosity will always remain in my heart and in my memory. I was very saddened to hear of his death June 10, 2014. 2021 marks the 50th Anniversary of International Bird Rescue (www.birdrescue.org).



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MADRONE LEAVES



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- President:** Susan Kirks - susankirks@sbcglobal.net 241-5548
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- Membership:** Questions to Susan Kirks (Position open) - susankirks@sbcglobal.net
- 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
- Website Editor:** Gordon Beebe - gordbb@gmail.com 583-3115
- Saturday Bird Walks:** Gordon Beebe - gordbb@gmail.com..... 583-3115
- Bird-A-Thon Coordinator:** Carolyn Greene – cgnpark@yahoo.com 805-443-7289
- Audubon Adventures:** Carolyn Greene – cgnpark@yahoo.com..... 805-443-7289
- Ex Officio Board Member:** Larry Broderick - northcoastraptor@gmail.com

- Leaves Editor:** Christine Cohen - forearhandsea@gmail.com 707-762-9642
- Leaves Asst. Editor:** Larry Broderick - northcoastraptor@gmail.com
- Leaves Production:** Kris Hutchins - kris@hutchins1.net 477-8156
- Hospitality:** Position open
- Observations:** Dan Nelson - birdsurf64@sbcglobal.net..... 479-2918
- Stewardship Task Force:** Diane & Bryant Hichwa – dhichwa@earthlink.net..... 785-1922
- Habitat Gardening:** Christine Cohen - forearhandsea@gmail.com 707-762-9642
- Sonoma County Water Coalition Rep:** Paula Zerzan - pzerzan@comcast.net..... 935-1523
- BBA:** Gordon Beebe, gdbeebe@earthlink.net; Tiffany Erickson, tiffymm66@gmail.com
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