



LEAVES

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Number 6

Madrone's Breeding Bird Atlas II Survey Methods and Early Results

by Gordon Beebe

Beginning with this issue of Leaves, we will present some of the results from our latest Breeding Bird Atlas (Atlas) survey. Many Madrone members are familiar with the Atlas, and quite a few of them have participated in the surveys, but some members may not know what an Atlas is, so a brief history and description is in order. Atlas surveys have been conducted in Britain and parts of the United States since the late 1970's. The purpose of an Atlas is to acquire baseline data on the species of birds that breed in a certain area; in our case, Sonoma County. As with other Atlases, the entire county was divided into five kilometer (about three miles) square "blocks" in the 1980's in preparation for our first Atlas, for which the breeding bird survey work was completed between 1986 and 1991.

That's right, this is the second Atlas to be completed in Sonoma County. It took four more years for the data from the first Atlas to be compiled and printed in book form. Here is an excerpt, from page two, "And what is next? One of the main values of an atlas is the possibility of comparing this baseline data with data from future studies. At its September 1992 meeting, the North American Ornithological Atlas Committee (NORAC) recommended repeating atlas studies every 25 years." And so we have, and right on time!

We are hoping to publish the data from the second Atlas sooner than four years from now, but there is a lot of work to be done. Not only are we working on publishing the results, we will also be comparing the results with the first Atlas. This is no easy task, as there are many differences between the two surveys. A lot has happened in the last 25 years. Sonoma County's population in 1991 was 397,937. In 2015, it had grown to 500,292. This increased population pressure

and subsequent development have affected native species that reside in the county by reducing the habitat available to many of them for feeding and nesting. Other factors, such as the recent drought, climate change, new introduced species, and others, all have an effect on the birds that we know and love.

We can look at some figures from both Atlases to get an idea of some of the changes, but first, a note of caution: at the moment, comparing the two survey results is a bit like comparing apples and oranges (or Kinglets and Vireos,

if you prefer). Both are similar, but there are differences that need to be factored in. In the first survey, there were 105 volunteers who dedicated 3,962 hours out in the field in the Atlas blocks, observing all of the birds they saw during the breeding season. In the second survey, there were 106 volunteers (some of them participated in both surveys), who devoted 9,283 hours in the field, well over twice as many hours! Somehow, that will need to be adjusted for, as more time in the field usually (not always) leads to more observations, so it can look like

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GENERAL MEETING

Monday, September 18, 2017, 7:00 PM

First United Methodist Church • 1551 Montgomery Drive, Santa Rosa

"A Look into the Daily Lives of Herons and Egrets and Conservation of Bay Area Wetlands"

Hérons and egrets are recognized around the world as symbols of wetland health. Such symbolism is well-substantiated by the sensitivity of these birds to wetland quality and by their roles as powerful wetland predators. As a result, the habits and needs of herons and egrets provide key perspectives for protecting the wetland landscapes in our region. This program offers an inside look into the lives of these elegant birds, with insights from ongoing studies at Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR) on the conservation of wetlands, the effects of climate change, and the protection of heronries. John P. Kelley, Director of Conservation Science at ACR, will also have early updates on ACR's new Heron and Egret Telemetry Project, which uses BPS transmitters and observations of known individuals to track the daily lives of Great Egrets. In addition, John will discuss recent work on shorebird responses to tidal marsh restoration and the dependence of wintering waterbirds on the seasonal spawning activities of Pacific herring.



Great Egret stretch display
Courtesy of Keith Carver

John Kelly has been studying heron and egrets throughout the San Francisco Bay area for nearly 30 years. As ACR's Director of Conservation Science, John manages ACR's Cypress Grove Research Center on Tomales Bay, works on local and regional conservation issues, and serves as a scientific advisor for a variety of conservation agencies and organizations. His scientific work is focused on the habitat relationships, population ecology, behaviors, and energetics of coastal and estuarine birds.



BREEDING BIRD ATLAS II

Continued from page I

we actually found more birds breeding, when what really happened was we had more time to find the ones that were already there.



Bushtit
Courtesy of Gordon Beebe

A good example of this is the number of species confirmed as breeding birds. By the way, we had very specific criteria for determining whether a bird was actually breeding or not. It may seem obvious,

but just seeing a pair of birds of the same species together, or even seeing them mate, does not itself confirm breeding. They might be in the final stages of spring migration, leaving the county before finally settling down to nest. We need to find an active nest, or see parents carrying food, or feeding the young, etc., for it to be confirmed as a breeding bird. With those criteria in mind, in 1995, the results were 148 species confirmed in Sonoma County. By 2016, we confirmed 161 species. Does this mean that birds are doing better in the county, since more species have been found, or is it simply that because we devoted so many more hours looking, we were bound to find some new species? At any rate, here is a list of the new species confirmed between 2011-2016: Barred Owl, Bald Eagle, Black Rail, Band-tailed Pigeon, Blue-winged Teal, Cattle Egret, Canyon Wren, Common Gallinule, Common Murre, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Great-tailed Grackle, Marbled Murrelet, Mandarin Duck, Mute Swan, Ridgway's Rail, Rock Wren, Sooty Grouse, Sora, and Swainson's Hawk.

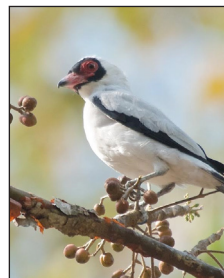
One thing the Atlas does not tell us is much of anything about numbers of birds. We do know, for example, that Bushtits were confirmed in 137 blocks (out of about 195 blocks total), but it doesn't tell us how many Bushtits were in each block. So we can only infer from the data that roughly 137 pairs of Bushtits and their offspring (if breeding was successful) were in the county. Certainly, there are more Bushtits in Sonoma County than that! To learn more about population density, we need to look at other data collected during the same time period, such as the Christmas Bird Counts, and the huge data mine called eBird.

In the next installment, we will review two species to see if we can learn more about their population trends: Mourning Dove, and Eurasian Collared-Dove. One thing we do know for sure is that the Eurasian Collared-Doves were not in Sonoma County back in the 1980's. They were still working their way across the country from their introduction on the East Coast in the 1970's. Also, it is quite clear to anyone having participated in the second Atlas survey, that one did not have to look hard to find evidence of breeding Eurasian Collared-Doves, so in this case, at least, the greater number of hours spent atlasing was not the reason why this new species popped up. Are they pushing Mourning Doves out of their habitat, and reducing their numbers, as many people fear? We'll see if we can answer that question, and others, next time.

And now that we have finished collecting the Breeding Bird Survey data, we thought it would be a good time to share some of the stories of what it was like, and what we learned in the process. Many of the volunteers who spent hours in the field seeking to confirm breeding birds in their blocks agree: it was a transformative learning experience for them. Our first article is by David Leland, who not only spent many hours atlasing several blocks over the last few years, but is currently working on maps that will show where each species was found. If you participated in our Breeding Bird Atlas update and are inspired by his article, please consider sharing your experiences of any length, in a future edition of the Leaves. We look forward to hearing from you!

How the Breeding Bird Atlas Has Enhanced My Birding

by David Leland



Male Masked Titra
Courtesy of Ken Wilson

The Sonoma County Breeding Bird Atlas field work has drawn to a close, but the insights I gained on breeding bird behavior will stick with me and enrich my birding experience both here and wherever birding may take me.

When I started working on the Breeding Bird Atlas in 2013, I was mostly a bird identifier. The Atlas project, which requires observation and documentation of

Appreciated Donations

In Memory of...

Betty Burridge
by Bill & Paget Lenarz

Bob Dyer
by Bill & Paget Lenarz

Donald McCarthy
by Pamela Conley

Laurence Taylor
by Pamela Conley
by Gloria Richardson

particular breeding behaviors, opened a new and rich world. Early on, I learned to keep track of locations of singing birds. By returning to these locations, I might hear singing again, an indicator of 'probable' breeding. And more than that, it gave me spots to watch to confirm breeding. Was that Pacific-slope Flycatcher carrying nesting material? Where was its nest? What was that goldfinch up to? What were those Steller's Jays doing with mud and detritus in their bills? I learned to be



Lesser Kiskadee Courtesy of Ken Wilson

quiet and patient and let the birds show me what they were doing. Later in the cycle, with parents foraging and ferrying food back to nestlings, there were many cues. I might hear nestlings begging, and use that to home in on a nest. A vireo nabs a caterpillar and thrashes it around. Does it eat it, or beeline away with its catch in its bill? Later, fledglings and family groups offered a world of interesting sights and, even more, new sounds. At Las Lomas on Skaggs Springs Road, for example, I heard this plaintive, pathetic whistling, new to me, and tracked it to a fledged Black-headed Grosbeak still being fed by its parents. At Twin Bridges on the Gualala River's Wheatfield Fork, I tracked down a recently fledged Red-breasted Sapsucker begging

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BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

Continued from page 2

incessantly and insistently from a low shrub in a redwood grove. Much richness came my way from the atlas experience.

Now the Atlas project is on to the next phases – reviewing notes (mostly finished now I hope!), wrapping up the documentation, and thinking about how to present all the work that everyone has done on the Atlas project. But there is also a carryover to other birding experienc-



Young male Thick-billed Euphonia
Courtesy of Ken Wilson

es. In July 2016, a group of Sonomans joined a Ken Wilson Talon Tours trip to Panama, where we stayed at both the Canopy Lodge and Canopy Tower. Being early in the Panamanian rainy season, many resident species were in their breeding cycle. The Atlas experience proved transferrable to other species in other habitats, and added depth, insight, and interest.

The Canopy Lodge maintains fruit feeders with-in view of the main dining and lounge area. We immediately noticed juvenile Thick-billed Euphonias content to let mom and dad feed them banana pulp. Nearby, a pair of adult euphonias flitted in and out of a hanging planter where Ken said they had seen nests on previous trips. Later, we were surprised to find a Variable Seedeater female sneaking into her nest just a few feet from the fruit feeding stands, having successfully eluded the many eyes of the group for days. On Semaphore Road, the main access to the Canopy Tower, we found a pair of Black-crowned Antshrikes constructing the framework of a nest. At Gamboa, within site of the Panama Canal, we chased a briefly-seen Masked Tityra to find a pair nearby with an active nest in the end of a dead branch. A Plain-colored Tanager flashed by with nest material. At Summit Ponds, Lesser Kiskadee adults were feeding several fledglings. And on and on.

The Breeding Bird Atlas experience made these moments more evident and meaningful. I am grateful to have had the chance to participate, both for what I learned and for the results we have generated.

Phenology Project Completes First Year at Paula Lane Nature Preserve

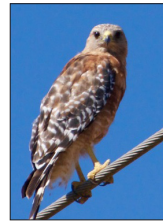
by Susan Kirks

In May 2016, Madrone Audubon began sponsoring the Phenology Project at Paula Lane Nature Preserve in West Petaluma. The 11.22 acre property was permanently conserved with Open Space District Matching Grant funds in 2012. The property is centrally located in a heavily traversed wildlife corridor in the West Petaluma Hills and provides grassland and a variety of clustered native and non-native trees for habitat.

Suzanne Reta, Carol Richardson, Raye Lynn Thomas, Judy Wagner, Deidre Harrison and Susan Kirks have formed the initial core dedicated group of observers for our Project, each dedicating an hour a month on a scheduled day-of-month to observe, collect data and then enter observations in “Nature’s Notebook,” the National Phenology Project’s database.

The National Phenology Network (USA NPN – see <https://www.usanpn.org/>) defines phenology as “seasonal changes in plants and animals from year to year, for example flowering, emergence of insects, migration of birds.” Changes in phenological events such as flowering and bird migrations are among the most sensitive biological responses to climate change. Worldwide, many spring events are occurring earlier and fall events are happening later than in the past. Not all species and regions are changing at the same rate and ecological mismatches occur, e.g. pollinators not present at flowering, food resources not available for songbird nestlings. The USA National Phenology Network (USANPN) brings together citizen scientists, government agencies, non-profit groups, educators and students of all ages to monitor the impacts of climate change on plants and animals in the United States. Over 4,000 observers across the country contribute to USA NPN’s online database, *Nature’s Notebook*, year round. USA NPN provides standardized protocols and online education and training tools to their observer network. Our Madrone Audubon sponsored project is part of Audubon California’s statewide effort for Audubon Chapters to design and implement relevant projects in several areas of California. We remain grateful to Dr. Sandy DeSimone of Audubon Starr Ranch Sanctuary who coordinates Audubon California’s Chapter Projects.

To date, our observers have added over 1,200 entries into Nature’s Notebook. We consider by year 3 of our Project, we may discern patterns from our observations, but this also remains to be seen. Meanwhile, we faithfully visit the property and follow our protocols, recording observations and entering our data. When conditions at the property are quiet, an air of healing energy and living nature can be thoroughly enjoyed.



Red-shouldered Hawk
Courtesy of
Deidre Harrison

Our selected species for observation include:

Avian

Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*)
Anna’s Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*)
Calliope Hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*)
Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

California Towhee (*Melospiza crissalis*)
Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*)
Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*)
Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*)
Cedar Waxwing (*Bombocilla cedrorum*)

Mammal

Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*)
American Badger (*Taxidea taxus*)

Wildflower/Forb

Hummingbird sage (*Salvia spathacea*)
Miner’s lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*)

Deciduous Tree/Shrub

Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*)
California wild rose (*Rosa Californica*)

American Badger was added to the national database in February 2017, and our observers will now include the badger in our observations. The Paula Lane Nature Preserve property represents an over 100-year-old active habitat for American Badger.

On May 12th, volunteers gathered at the Preserve for an opportunity to meet each other – having been independently observing and data collecting for a year, to begin our second year in the Project, sharing experiences and getting to know each other.

Saturday mornings have been added to our Monday-Friday available schedule observations and data gathering. We would welcome 2-3 additional



Sunset View Area

Courtesy of Susan Kirks

volunteers for the Project. If you enjoy quietly observing and collecting data independently and can make a commitment one day a month, on your scheduled observation day, then input your data in Nature’s Notebook, please consider joining our Project. Help us gather data that could be meaningful in climate change impact research. Please contact Susan Kirks, 707-241-5548, susankirks@sbcglobal.net, for more information.

A second location available for observations, also, is the Petaluma River Bridge for the migratory Cliff Swallow nesting season, generally early April through late August. Please contact Susan Kirks for more information or interest in this location as well.

A very big thanks to our dedicated citizen science volunteers in the Phenology Project. Onward.



West 9th Street Heron and Egret Nesting Season Begins

by Susan Kirks

Black-crowned Night-Herons began nesting earlier this year again at the historic Santa Rosa West 9th Street location, median street trees and a few surrounding tall Redwood trees. The nesting site, about a block from Lincoln Elementary School, provides the educational setting for the Madrone Audubon Sponsored Annual Bird Festival at the school, held on May 19th this year. The first release of 3 Black-crowned Night-Heron juveniles, rescued by the dedicated volunteers of Bird Rescue of Sonoma County, then transported to International Bird Rescue in Cordelia, rehabilitated and returned for release, occurred on Saturday, May 6th. The nesting season generally occurs from late March through the end of August.

Madrone Audubon's nesting support project, now called "the big nest under the trees," comprised of 50 bales of spread out rice straw flakes, enclosed by a traffic delineator/orange plastic security fence, helps cushion falls of nestlings from trees and provides some general security for the area. We also install two signs in the median describing the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and legal consequences of disturbing active nests. This is hoped to be informative and also preventative.

Many, many photographers have discovered the West 9th Street nesting site and are often seen in the area. This year, when we were installing our nesting support project, a community resident walking by with her children asked, "Are you from Audubon?" We appreciated this question and said, "Yes, it's us!" Our project now in its 5th year is becoming a standard part of the nesting season. Before we began our project, no fencing existed and there was no cushioning of falling birds who fell directly onto asphalt or in the median. Although nestlings falling from or being pushed out of nests is a part of Nature's process, in the urban setting of the West 9th Street nesting site, the chaos and scene created by falling birds and lack of containment of the area, contributed to a growing community tension. We are pleased to be able to support the efforts of the bird rescuers and also contribute a small component of management to the overall nesting process, without disturbing that process, from March through the end of August each year.

Paulin Creek Preserve, Santa Rosa - Update for our Members

Madrone Audubon supports preservation of this important natural area and recently sent the following letter to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors.



Madrone Audubon Society

INCORPORATED

April 30, 2017

Shirlee Zane, Chair
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
575 Administration Drive, Room 100 A
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Re: Support for Paulin Creek Preserve, Open Space, Inclusion of Parcel J

Dear Chair Zane and Supervisors:

The Madrone Audubon Society requests that Sonoma County remove Parcel J from the current sale and development proposal under discussion, and collaborate with the Sonoma County Agricultural and Open Space District to formally acquire Parcel J as an integral part of the Paulin Creek Preserve.

As many in Santa Rosa and Sonoma County understand, and as several documents portray, Parcel J has been considered a component of the Paulin Creek Preserve for many years. Parcel J connects the Sonoma County Water Agency-owned land and the conserved Paulin Creek property that was designated as permanent open space in the early 2000s.

Just a few of the many avian species often seen and heard at the Paulin Creek Preserve include Great Horned Owl, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Spotted Towhee, Orange-crowned Warbler, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Acorn Woodpecker, Oak Titmouse, Bushtit, Black-headed Grosbeak, Hooded Oriole, Bewick's Wren, Song Sparrow, Mourning Dove, Anna's Hummingbird, Black Phoebe, American Robin, California Scrub Jay, and Western Tanager. Deer and other mammals rely on the Paulin Creek Preserve for habitat, movement and foraging. Quiet dark evenings support the very important life-sustaining activities of nocturnal wildlife.

The existing Paulin Creek, Parcel J and Sonoma County Water Agency properties comprise a long-standing ecosystem in a delicate balance. In an urban setting, this wildness of expansive grassland meadow with oak woodland is rare. Understandably, many have described the Paulin Creek Preserve area as a jewel of Santa Rosa and Sonoma County.

Almost 15 years ago, Madrone Audubon Society was supportive of the original Paulin Creek Matching Grant acquisition of the City of Santa Rosa, in concert with the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District. The significance of conservation values at that time was recognized. Since it was conserved, many Santa Rosa and Sonoma County residents have discovered the Paulin Creek Preserve and regularly seek respite and rejuvenation that the natural experience there offers.

In our experience of being in Sonoma County as an Audubon Chapter for 50 years, the Paulin Creek Preserve creation through open space acquisition and conservation was a wise decision and meaningful investment of open space sales tax funds.

An alternative plan for sale of Parcel J with subsequent trail development or other types of active plans imposed upon this natural habitat and sanctuary could be devastating to the sensitive ecosystem and the existing sanctuary.

On behalf of our over 3000 members in Sonoma County, we urge your Board to enact a proactive process to remove Parcel J from sale and development discussions and to ensure Parcel J is conserved as part of the Paulin Creek Preserve. To do any less could result in severe negative impacts to the existing wildland representing critical habitat for wildlife and a haven for citizens. In short, the Paulin Creek Preserve, now known to so many in our County, could be destroyed.

Very truly yours,

Susan Kirks

Susan Kirks, President
Madrone Audubon Society



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

Summer 2017 Calendar

NOTE: *There are no general meetings in June, July, and August.*

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.

Saturday, June 10, 7:30 AM to 3:00 PM

WILLOW CREEK and DUNCAN'S MILLS. Meet at the junction of Highway 1 and 116, at the triangular parking area at the stop sign near the north end of the Russian River Bridge on Highway 1 (Coast Highway). We will carpool to Willow Creek Road, then walk sections of the road, covering riparian and chaparral/grassland habitats. Bring lunch for Duncan's Mills, with a final stop at Cassini Ranch for Wood Ducks. Leader: Gordon Beebe, 583-3115.

Saturday, June 17, 7:30 AM to Noon

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

Wednesday, June 21, 8:30 AM – 2:30 PM

BODEGA BAY. Bird Walk at Bodega Bay Harbor and environs. To meet the group, take Doran Park Road from Highway 1 at the southern end of Bodega Bay harbor, then enter Doran County Park (a Sonoma County park permit or \$7 entrance fee is required). Continue 0.5 miles past the park entrance to the parking lot of the Cypress Day Use Area on the left side of the road. After birding Doran Park, the group will search the harbor and adjacent seas and woodlands for birds. Weather permitting, the group will eat a picnic lunch on the west side of the harbor. Leader: Tom McCuller, t.sisyphus@comcast.net, 707-546-1812.

Saturday, July 15, 7:30 AM to 1:00 PM

WILLOW CREEK and GOAT ROCK STATE PARK. Meet at the junction of Highway 1 and 116, at the triangular dirt parking area by

the stop sign at the north end of the Russian River Bridge on Highway 1 (Coast Highway). We will carpool to Willow Creek Road, then walk sections of the road, covering riparian and chaparral/grassland habitats. Next, we will Goat Rock State Park. Bring lunch. Leader: Gordon Beebe, 583-3115.

Wednesday, July 19, 8:30 AM – 2:30 PM

BODEGA BAY. Bird Walk at Bodega Bay Harbor and environs. To meet the group, take Doran Park Road from Highway 1 at the southern end of Bodega Bay harbor, then enter Doran County Park (a Sonoma County park permit or \$7 entrance fee is required). Continue 0.5 miles past the park entrance to the parking lot of the Cypress Day Use Area on the left side of the road. After birding Doran Park, the group will search the harbor and adjacent seas and woodlands for birds. Weather permitting, the group will eat a picnic lunch on the west side of the harbor. Leader: Tom McCuller, t.sisyphus@comcast.net, 707-546-1812.

Saturday, August 12, 7:30 AM to 1:00 PM

WILLOW CREEK and GOAT ROCK STATE PARK. Meet at the junction of Highway 1 and 116, at the triangular dirt parking area by the stop sign at the north end of the Russian River Bridge on Highway 1 (Coast Highway). We will carpool to Willow Creek Road, then walk sections of the road, covering riparian and chaparral/grassland habitats. Next, we will Goat Rock State Park. Bring lunch. Leader: Gordon Beebe, 583-3115.

Wednesday, August 16, 8:30 AM – 2:30 PM

BODEGA BAY. Bird Walk at Bodega Bay Harbor and environs. To meet the group, take Doran Park Road from Highway 1 at the southern end of Bodega Bay harbor, then enter Doran County Park (a Sonoma County park permit or \$7 entrance fee is required). Continue 0.5 miles past the park entrance to the parking lot of the Cypress Day Use Area on the left side of the road. After birding Doran Park, the group will search the harbor and adjacent seas and woodlands for birds. Weather permitting, the group will eat a picnic lunch on the west side of the harbor. Leader: Tom McCuller, t.sisyphus@comcast.net, 707-546-1812.

September 2017 Calendar

Saturday, September 2, 8:30 AM to Noon

ELLIS CREEK WATER RECYCLING FACILITY. We are timing this trip to visit the ponds during their drawdown cycle, so at least one should be almost empty of water, with much bird activity out in the open. Meet at the Ellis Creek Water Treatment Facility in the parking lot, near the bathroom. From Highway 101 in Petaluma, go East on 116 (Lakeville Highway), turn right (south) on South McDowell, turn right on Cypress Drive. Go to the end of the road and through the gates. Parking is to the left. Leader: Gordon Beebe, 583-3115.

Thursday, September 7, 7:00 PM

BOARD MEETING. Sonoma County Environmental Center, 55A Ridgway Avenue, Santa Rosa. For agenda information, contact Susan Kirks at susankirks@sbcglobal.net. (Budget Committee Meeting June 26, Environmental Center; Board of Directors Annual Planning Meeting, August 2017, date TBD, ACR Bouverie Preserve).

Monday, September 18, 7:00 PM

GENERAL MEETING. First United Methodist Church, 1551 Montgomery Drive, Santa Rosa. "A Look into the Daily Lives of Herons and Egrets and Conservation of Bay Area Wetlands"



Attention eBirders!

Madrone is working on a checklist of the birds at Taylor Mountain Regional Park, in conjunction with Sonoma County Regional Parks. Post your sightings to eBird and help us build our database.

Volunteers Needed – Beach Watch

by Diane Hichwa

Beach Watch is a long-term shoreline monitoring project which was founded in 1993 by Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. Beach Watch came to the Sonoma/Mendocino Coast in 2014 as the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary expanded. Once or twice a month, several beaches from Salmon Creek to Manchester are monitored, as well as Marine Protected Areas. Counts are done of birds, marine mammals, beach wrack, boats, and people, as well as dead animals. Survey data have been used after oil spills to establish restoration requirements as well as damages to be paid. Data are compiled from Monterey to Point Arena.

The Beach Watch program will do its second training in Gualala this fall. Training is extensive and interesting. Volunteers must attend an Orientation as well as three weekend training sessions. The schedule for this year is as follows:

Informational Orientation Sessions:

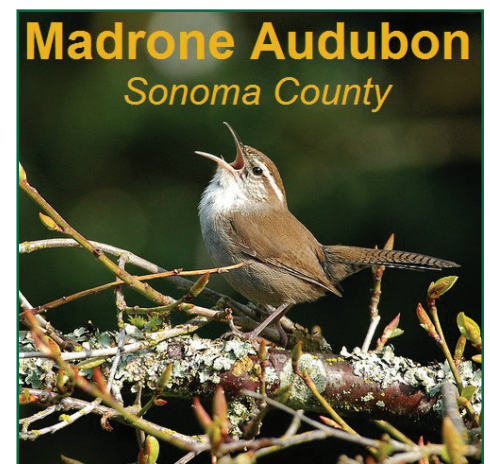
July 8, 11 AM to 1:00 PM – Gualala Community Center

July 12, 6:00 to 8:00 PM – Bodega Bay Fire District

Training Sessions:

August 25 – 27
September 15 – 17
October 6 – 8

For additional information about the program, go to <http://beachwatch.farallones.org/> or call Dru Devlin, coordinator, at (415) 530-5373.



Find us on Facebook for conservation alerts, birdwalk reminders, special announcements and more.

OUT & ABOUT

The **Sonoma Country Regional Parks** system is celebrating its 50th Anniversary in 2017! Their “Winging It Wednesdays” series (see below) is of special interest to birders. For a full calendar of events and outings at various Regional Parks, go to <http://parks.sonomacounty.ca.gov/Activities/Calendar.aspx>

Winging It Wednesdays are easy-paced and wheelchair accessible birding walks in Sonoma County’s parklands. Birding expert Dave LaCasse leads these free, family hikes on the last Wednesday of each month as he helps you identify and learn more about our local birds. Parking is \$7 or free with a Regional Parks membership. For more information, call Regional Parks at (707) 565-2041. Join other area birders (including many young bird enthusiasts) at the following walks:

Wednesday, June 28, 8:30 to 10:30 AM
Maxwell Farms Regional Park,
100 Verano Avenue, Sonoma

Wednesday, July 26, 8:30 to 10:30 AM
Taylor Mountain Regional Park,
3820 Petaluma Hill Road, Santa Rosa

Wednesday, August 30, 8:30 to 10:30 AM
Wohler Bridge River Access, located on the Russian River at 9765 Wohler Road, Forestville

Sears Point Interpretive Talks and Bird Walks
Every Saturday at the Sears Point Tidal Marsh, 9:00 AM – noon

Walk the newest section of the Bay Trail and experience the tidal marsh lands. Docents will be on hand to answer questions and orient visitors to the site. Hosted by Sonoma Land Trust. No registration needed! Parking area on Reclamation Road just south of the Lakeville Hwy/Hwy 37 intersection.

Golden Gate Audubon Society is hosting summer birding trips to Mono Lake (June 22 – 25) and Lassen Volcanic National Park (June 23 – 25) as well as Pelagic birding excursions in the Bay Area. See <https://goldengateaudubon.org/field-trips/fieldtrips/> for information and registration.

Are you a National Audubon member?

Please consider joining our local chapter, Madrone Audubon.
(see membership form, back page)



A SINCERE THANK YOU TO OUR 2016 DONORS

\$500 and above

Diane & Bryant Hichwa.

\$200 to \$499

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\$100 to \$199

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BIRD-A-THON – a fun fundraising event!

by Carolyn Greene

Another Bird-a-Thon (BAT) is (almost) in the books for 2017, with 6 teams enjoying a day of birding for a great cause. BAT is THE major fundraiser for Madrone, and supports our Lincoln School activities, Christmas Bird Count, Junior Audubon, Audubon Adventures and various conservation efforts.

This year's teams include the Feather Dusters (Diane Hichwa and friends), Burrowing Owlers (Susan Kirks, Linda Hammer, Nathaniel Roberts), Zonotripias (Bill Doyle, Helen Kochenderfer, Don Kirker), Grey-headed Seersuckers (Ken Wilson, Becky Olsen, Ian Morrison), March Madness (Gene Hunn) and Chickadiddies (Carolyn Greene, Asenath LaRue, Melinda Harris, Jim Rosso). The "Chicks" took over Don McCarthy and Betty Groce's previous list, with Betty's blessing and encouragement! Teams recruited sponsors who pledged per species observed or made a one-time donation to the effort.

Several "Big Days" were delayed by rain and thus complete information will be included in the next Leaves. Some team highlights included great looks at an Osprey eating a fish at Diekmann's store, looking down on a swooping Peregrine at Bodega Head, seeing more than 50 Pacific Loons in breeding plumage, an American Bittern in flight over Salmon Creek, and Bullock's and Hooded Orioles at Spring Lake. Gene Hunn did a "green" day, traveling by bicycle and still had an impressive species count.

We are still accepting one-time pledges through June 15, so if you would like to support a team or the general effort, please email Carolyn Greene at cgnpark@icloud.com or call her at 805 443-7289. All contributions are tax-deductible.

Finally, we offer a big thanks to all who pledged - you will receive thanks from your team and accounts of the efforts by the end of June - and especially the teams themselves. Good job!



FILM REVIEW

The Golden Eagle and Falconry on Horseback, an Adventure!

by J.J. Jent

Earlier this year, the Summerfield and Rialto theatres had on their playbills a wonderful narrative film, "The Eagle Huntress," a Sony Pictures Classic Release that was shown at the Sundance film festival on February 1, 2016. The director, Otto Bell and his team, were the winners of International awards for documentary films.

In the land of perpetual blue skies is a young girl, Aisholpan, who dreams of following in her grandfather's and father's footsteps to become an eagle hunter. This is a learned skill of horseback falconry with an Asiatic Golden Eagle....a challenging, adventurous task. The setting is the wilderness of Mongolia near Uglii, the capital of far west Mongolia.



American Golden Eagle
Courtesy of National Audubon Society

Aisholpan talked to her father about her desires to continue the family tradition. Area elders said she wouldn't be able to do it, but no law prevented it, so father and daughter began their adventure. Hunters must be old enough and strong enough to hold the weight of a gold eagle while on horseback. It takes approximately five years of training for a hunter, horse, and eagle.

The hunter must acquire his/her own eaglet. Aisholpan and her father work as a team to acquire her bird. She must scale down the Altai mountain side with only a rope tethering to her father above. The scene is a breathtaking moment off the side of a cliff. Once she is at the nest site, she must choose her eaglet while her father lowers a carpet bag to her. She places the eaglet in the bag, her father raises the bird to the cliff top, then Aisholpan must climb the cliffs by hand holds....no fancy equipment or pitons are used in the process.

All care is taken for the kind treatment of the bird. These birds are treasured by the country

and hunters. Both human and bird rely on each other for furs from foxes, marmots, wolves, and meat. This is a serious endeavor not taken lightly by any of the hunters. The bird becomes a family member. The survival of both species are tied together in a close bond. The bird is even allowed in the yurt. It is hand fed with goat/sheep meat from the family herd. During the training period, Aisholpan must continue her schooling away from home, boarding at a school during the week. She is a young school girl, and her life is taken up with chores and school, as well as eagle training.

After years of training, Aisholpan and her bird are ready for timed, skill-based trials. The trials are the Olympics of eagle hunting. Aisholpan was the winner in all events!...the youngest to win and first of her gender. But this competition isn't the only measure of skill as a hunter. To truly be considered an eagle hunter, a winter hunt resulting in captured game must occur. With temperatures reaching 40 degrees below zero, this hunt is a test of endurance as well as skill for the human, horse, and bird. The hunting took place in the Chaulting region, a mountainous ridge near the Russian/Kazak border. Aisholpan's

young eagle's first efforts were not successful, but with patience and endurance, a fox was finally brought down. This proof of the team's effort was presented to the elders to win her official designation as an eagle hunter.

The Golden Eagle is the national bird of Albania, Germany, Austria, Mexico, and Kazakhstan. The Asiatic Eagle is differently marked than the birds of Northern California. They are a golden reflection above in the sun, but mottled white in wings and body. The bird in this film had white feathered shins, which is unusual for the region. In California, the biggest threat to the Golden Eagle is the wind turbine, with approximately 2,000 killed so far in the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area.

This beautiful film can be accessed through Google, Sony Pictures Classic Release, or through Netflix or other streaming sources. JJ gives this film a 5-star (top) rating.

MEMBER'S COLUMN

Geese Scape

by Richard Stradford

A wonderful visual treat, in mid-April this year, under a grey-clouded sky in the late afternoon, came to me while walking through the Laguna Wetlands



Canada Geese
Courtesy of Gordon Beebe

Preserve behind the Sebastopol Community Center. In the western sky, I noticed a group of 150-200 Canada Geese flying northerly at low altitude and a distance of ¼ mile or so away. Although not in "V" or other angular form, from my vantage point the swarm of birds appeared to change shape as they gained elevation. From oval-shaped with different densities of black and grey, reminiscent of a human portrait, to an elongated form with bulging ends like a barbell, and then regrouping black into a tighter pattern. At a point about 30 seconds into my observation, the instinctive choreography of the geese led the birds into thick linear swath that stretched slowly into this extended an thinner mass of geese, eventually becoming a single strand of birds flying nearly wing tip to wing tip. Off in the distance, the line of geese continued to move in remarkable unison, as they faded away to their favorite pond for the night.

**Observations**

March - April 2017 • Dan Nelson • 479-2918 • birdsurf64@sbcglobal.net

Red-necked Grebe (1)	4/6	Las Gallinas treatment ponds (remaining)	RR
Red-necked Grebe (4)	4/20	Seen from Bodega Head, along coast	SC
Least Bittern (1)	3/21	Las Gallinas ponds	KF
Least Bittern (1)	4/30	Bel Marin Keyes, at Pacheco Pond	AM
Least Bittern (1)	4/15	N. of Ellis Creek, near Shollenberger	PC, et al
American Bittern (1)	Apr.	Shollenberger Park, heard "pumping"	M.Ob
Cattle Egret (4)	Apr.	W. Ninth St, Santa Rosa	DN
C. "Eurasian" Teal (1)	3/16	Shollenberger Park	DW
Eurasian Wigeon (5)	3/4	Inverness Store area, Tomales Bay	TP
American Wigeon (300+)	3/4	Inverness Store area, Tomales Bay	TP
Black Scoter (male)	4/20	offshore, seen from Bodega Head	SC
White-winged Scoter (41)	3/3	off South Beach, Pt. Reyes. (very good #)	D Singer
Long-tailed Duck (1)	4/4-19	seen from Bodega Head	RB, DR
Bald Eagle (leucistic)	4/3	near Willowside Rd., Santa Rosa	DK
Bald Eagle (leucistic)	4/19	Shollenberger Park, Petaluma	ME
Bald Eagle (adult)	4/21	W. of Coddingtontown, Santa Rosa	MH
Sooty Grouse	4/11	Rockpile Rd., just beyond end of pavement	GH
Sandhill Crane	3/31	North Beach, Pt. Reyes (flying N. toward Abbott's)	ML
Sandhill Crane	4/22	Abandoned Ranch, Pt. Reyes (flying N. toward Abbott's)	AM, EC
Pacific Golden Plover	4/25	Abbott's Lagoon, Pt. Reyes	ML
Solitary Sandpiper	4/15	Ellis Creek ephemeral pond	AW, et al
Whimbrel (100+)	4/26	Shollenberger Park, N. bound fly-out	RR, RS
Glaucous Gull (1st yr.)	3/22	Shollenberger Park	KW, BO, IM
N. Pygmy-Owl	4/29	Stewart's Point, near bakery	RB
Barred Owl	3/9	Forestville area	CS
White-throated Swift	4/29	Stewart's Point Rd.	RB
Calliope Hummingbird (male)	4/2	Cordelia, Solano Co.	AC
Calliope Hummingbird (male)	4/20	W. Santa Rosa	GB
Costa's Hummingbird (male)	4/2	Bahia area, Novato, Marin Co.	ML
Costa's Hummingbird (male)	4/20	Blue Ridge, Mix Canyon Rd. Solano Co.	RR
Williamson's Sapsucker (fem.)	3/7-9	Quarry Hill Botanical Garden, Glen Ellen	S Corey, RB, et al
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (fem.)	3/12	Franklin Rd. Cemetery, Santa Rosa	DD, MB, et al
Western Kingbird	4/19	Shollenberger Park	ME
Warbling Vireo	3/8	Santa Rosa Creek trail	DF
Purple Martin	4/9	Alpine Lake, Marin Co.	DM
Cliff Swallow (1)	3/4	Shollenberger Park, 1st arrival	GH
Cliff Swallow(75)	3/19	Shollenberger Park	DE
Yellow Warbler	4/14	Santa Rosa Creek trail	DK
Nashville Warbler (3)	4/30	Pine Flat Rd.	DF
Black-and-white Warbler	3/17	Five Brooks, Marin Co.	KS, MD
Black-and-white Warbler	4/14	Five Brooks, Marin Co.	ST
Hermit Warbler	4/16	Santa Rosa Creek trail	DF
Palm Warbler (alt. plumage)	4/14	Santa Rosa Creek trail	DK
Western Tanager	4/12	Sonoma Developmental Ctr./Jack London S.P.	DL
Harris' Sparrow (remaining)	4/6	Las Gallinas ponds, Marin Co.	RR
Black-headed Grosbeak (fem.)	3/27	Cazadero residence	DB
Black-headed Grosbeak (male)	3/29	Cazadero residence	DB
Black-headed Grosbeak	4/2	Santa Rosa Creek trail	DF
Lazuli Bunting	4/14	Chileno Valley Rd., Sonoma Co.	DN
Great-tailed Grackle (singing)	3 /4	Shollenberger Park	GH
Hooded Oriole	3/7	Sebastopol, near Andy's Market	DF
Hooded Oriole	3/19	Paula Ln., Petaluma	DN
Black-chinned Sparrow	4/27-	Pine Mountain Fire Road, Marin Co.	BA, M.Ob
Red Crossbill	4/9	Alpine Lake, Marin Co.	DM

CONTRIBUTORS: Bob Atwood, Mario Ballitbit, Dennis Beall, Gordon Beebe, Rita Bevans, Scott Carey, Anthony Cermak, Everett Clark, Peter Colasanti, Scott Corey, Mark Dettling, Debbie Drechsler, Daniel Edelstein, Megan Elrod, Kathy Francone, Dea Freid, Gene Hunn, Don Kirker, Matt Lau, David Leland, Margarita Luff, Alex Merritt, Ian Morrison, Dominik Mosur, Many Observers, Dan Nelson, Becky Olsen, Todd Plummer, Don Reinberg, Ruth Rudesill, Kim Savides, Chris Shuck, Dan Singer, Robert Spreckels, Steve Tucker, Alan Wight, Dan Williams, and Ken Wilson.



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MADRONE LEAVES



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

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|--|---|
| President: Susan Kirks - susankirks@sbcglobal.net 241-5548 | Audubon Adventures: Carolyn Greene – cgnpark@yahoo.com 805-443-7289 |
| Vice President: Position open | Leaves Editor: Asenath LaRue - asenathlarue@gmail.com 528-3648 |
| Recording Secretary: Richard Stradford - regresa03@yahoo.co.uk 889-0800 | Leaves Production: Kris Hutchins - kris@hutchins1.net 477-8156 |
| Corresponding Secretary: Susan Dean - susanepdean@gmail.com 360-481-2646 | Hospitality: Linda Hammer - gardenladylee@aol.com 823-4389 |
| Treasurer: Christy Holmes - christyeholmes@gmail.com 805-895-6482 | Observations: Dan Nelson - birdsurf64@sbcglobal.net 479-2918 |
| Membership: Questions to Susan Kirks (Position open) - susankirks@sbcglobal.net | ACR Rep: Bryant Hichwa 785-1922 |
| Conservation: Diane Hichwa - dhichwa@earthlink.net 785-1922 | Ex Officio Board Member: Cheryl Harris - cheryleh70@gmail.com 294-6423 |
| Education Kits: Barbara Novak - b.novak34@gmail.com 795-3996 | Sonoma County Water Coalition Rep: Paula Zerzan - pzerzan@comcast.net 935-1523 |
| Programs: Position open | BBA: Gordon Beebe, gdbeebe@earthlink.net; Tiffany Erickson, tiffymm66@gmail.com |
| Circulation: Joannie Dranginis - joanhd@att.net 523-4373 | IMBD: Veronica Bowers - vlbowers@gmail.com 829-2955 |
| Junior Audubon: Position open | Christmas Bird Count: Peter Leveque and Stacy Li - stacyli@sonic.net 566-7937 |
| Outreach: Position open | Bird Rescue Center: 523-BIRD |
| Publicity: Nancy Hair - doghairnancy@yahoo.com 823-1073 | Native Songbird Care & Conservation: 484-6502 |
| Website Editor: Gordon Beebe - gdbeebe@earthlink.net 583-3115 | Northern California Rare Bird Alert 415-681-7422 |
| Wednesday Bird Walks: Tom McCuller - t.sisyphus@comcast.net 546-1812 | Audubon-California: Brigit McCormack - bmcormack@audubon.org 415-644-4603 |
| Saturday Bird Walks: Gordon Beebe - gdbeebe@earthlink.net 583-3115 | National Audubon Society: 225 Varick Street, NY, NY 10014 212-979-3000 |
| Bird-A-Thon Coordinator: Carolyn Greene – cgnpark@yahoo.com 805-443-7289 | |

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