Sacramento Audubon Society

General Meeting
Thursday, November 18
Shepard Garden and Art Center
7pm General Meeting

Birds from Hokkaido, Japan
Presentation by Ron LeValley

In February of 2009, the Pacific Seabird Group held their annual meeting in Hakodate, Hokkaido, Japan. Hokkaido is the northern island of Japan and is much less developed than the southern island. A number of exciting birds occur there in the winter, including the iconic Red-crowned Crane, the Steller’s and White-tailed Sea Eagles, Whooper Swans and Blakiston’s Fishing Owl. Before the conference, members from the Pacific Seabird Group accompanied some of the premier biologists studying these species on a week-long field trip. After the conference, another group traveled across to the northern portion of Honshu to see the Japanese Monkeys. Ron LeValley will share some of the ecological and environmental stories of these and other species illustrated with his fine photographs.

Ron has been photographing nature for over 40 years. He is a founding member of the Mendocino Coast Photographer Guild and Gallery in Fort Bragg. As a professional photographer, Ron has compiled an impressive collection (over 70,000 images) of wildlife photographs that he uses for presentations and publications.

Ron is also the founder and Senior Biologist of Mad River Biologists, a biological consulting firm in Eureka, California. Best known for the identification and distribution of birds along the Pacific Coast, he also has an extensive understanding of natural history subjects. He serves as Treasurer of the Pacific Seabird Group and is an Associate Editor of Western

The OBSERVER
Sacramento Audubon Society

SACRAMENTO AUDUBON-SPONSORED
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT DATES FOR 2009-2010

Saturday, December 5, Daybreak, Great American River Bird Count
Co-Compilers: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777, Lea Landry, 638-1141, llandry@softcom.net
Join Jack and other volunteers to assist with this annual count of birds and other creatures along the American River Parkway sponsored by the American River Natural History Association (ARNHA). Results of this count are important to future planning for the Parkway, and the goal is to have 11 teams of two or more persons each. The count differs from other Christmas Counts in that teams count species rather than total numbers of each species. Contact Jack for details, team assignments, and meeting and compilation locations.

Saturday, December 19, Woodfords Christmas Count
Coordinator: Tim Fitzer, 870-5207, e-mail: spskua2@comcast.net
Compiler: Andi Salmi, 691-7216, e-mail: andisalmi@yahoo.com

Sunday, December 27, Sacramento Christmas Count
Compiler: Mark Cudney, 987-2422, e-mail: mcudney@aol.com

Sunday, January 3, Folsom Christmas Count
Compiler: Chris Conard, 203-1610, e-mail: conardc@gmail.com

Other Christmas Bird Counts:

Monday, December 14, Benecia-Napa Christmas Count
Contact: Tim Fitzer (Grizzly Island), 870-5207, spskua2@comcast.net or Compiler: Robin Leong, (707) 643-1287, robin_leong@netzero.net

Saturday, December 19, Auburn Christmas Count
Compiler: Deren Ross, (530) 308-5114, derenross@sbcglobal.net

Sunday, December 20, Putah Creek Christmas Count
Compiler: Steve Hampton, hamptons@sbcglobal.net

Sunday, December 20, Stockton Christmas Count
Compiler: Jim Roworth, (209) 956-2648, roworth@sbcglobal.net

Wednesday, December 30, Lincoln Christmas Count
Compiler: Ed Pandolfino, ERPfromCA@aol.com

Friday, January 1, Sonoma Valley Christmas Count
For locations and dates of additional Christmas Bird Counts, visit http://natureali.org/cbcs.htm.
Field Trip Findings

Spenceville Wildlife Area (10/11) — Leader Richard Barbieri reported: “With a group of 10 people, we set off for Spenceville Wildlife Area. Along the way and north of Lincoln we saw a female Common Yellowthroat, Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped, and Black-throated Gray warblers, Say’s Phoebe, Phainopepla, Savannah and Lark’s sparrows, and a pair of Bald Eagles at Camp Far West Lake. Within the wildlife area we saw all the common woodpeckers and many Lewis’s Woodpeckers, bluebirds, Western Tanager, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Marsh Wren and heard a Virginia Rail call from the grass a few feet away.”

Discovery Park (10/10) — Leader Dan Williams, subbing for Maureen Geiger, reported: “We had 53 species in four hours of effort. Highlights included excellent views of the recently returned Hermit Thrushes, Cedar Waxwings, White- and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Flickers, Yellow-rumps, and at least a dozen Western Bluebirds. A few Fox Sparrows called from the berry thickets but were uncooperative. There were still a few migrants to be found, including a late Vaux’s Swift, a nice adult male Western Tanager, a Barn Swallow, as well as a few Yellow and Orange-crowned, and one Black-throated Gray Warbler. Not much activity at the confluence this morning, but there was a trio of female Common Mergansers among the Canada Geese. No sign of the Ross’s Goose today. On my way home I spotted an immature Swainson’s Hawk over El Centro Road.”

Sunrise Area, American River Parkway (10/4) — Leader Mark Martucci reported: “Eleven birders had 56 species of birds on a very cold early October morning. Highlights included at least 10 Phainopelas, an Osprey, Cooper’s Hawk, Green Heron, Western Tanager and a Black-throated Gray Warbler. Not much activity at the confluence this morning, but there was a trio of female Common Mergansers among the Canada Geese. No sign of the Ross’s Goose today. On my way home I spotted an immature Swainson’s Hawk over El Centro Road.”

Bushy Lake (10/3) — Leader Dan Brown reported: “A good size group of participants enjoyed a very nice morning’s walk, tallying 54 species. The highlights were 8 species of raptors, 4 species of warblers, Say’s Phoebe, Western Wood-Pewee, Pacific slope Flycatcher (spotted by Mark Martucci) and a nice male Western Tanager.”

Point Reyes for Vagrants (9/26) — Leaders Mark Cudney and Tim Steurer reported: Clear blue skies and no fog usually means one thing at Pt. Reyes—the birds have continued their migration south. The group did manage to see a few interesting species on a gorgeous day. A female Prairie Warbler was present at the fish docks—great looks. A lone female Blue Grosbeak challenged our birding identification skills at the light-house trees. A non-calling Pewee turned out just to be a Western when a tape of its call was played. Pectoral Sandpipers continued their abundance this fall with several at the Mendoza ranch.

Monterey Bay Pelagic and Land Birding Trip (9/26-27) — Coordinator Ken Hashagen reported: “Another great 2-day trip to Monterey. Saturday, in cooperation with Monterey Seabirds, was a great pelagic trip in Monterey Bay and its environs. Humpback Whales, Risso’s Dolphins, Harbor Seals, California Sea Lions, and Pacific White-sided Dolphins all present and accounted for. Lots of birds: 6 shearwaters, including a glimpse of a Short-tailed Shearwater, Rhinoceros and Cassin’s Auklet, Horned Puffin, jaegers, Black-footed Albatross, Black and Ashy Storm Petrels, and pelicans and cormorants. Weather was clear, with little fog. Water a little lumpy but no one contracted that dread disease, sea sickness!

“Sunday was slower than on previous trips. Eighteen people drove to Andrew Molera State Park and took a 2-mile walk. Very few warblers, although we did see Yellow, Townsend’s, Orange-crowned, and Yellow-rumped. Also had Hutton’s and Warbling Vireo. Merlin, Peregrine, and American Kestrel were spotted. We then drove to the mouth of the Carmel River but the crowds of people on a Sunday pretty well put the birds down – couldn’t find the Snowy Plovers seen the day before on a scouting trip, and numbers of dowitchers and terns less than the day before. Finished the day at Jetty Road in Moss Landing. Saw Long and Short-billed Dowitchers, Ruddy Turnstones, Long-billed Curlew, and Willets. Approximately 40 Sea Otters were rafted up within camera range. All in all a good trip, with around 110 species seen over the 2 days. Dan Brown led the shore portion of the trip and took lots of pictures. Check them out on his web site: www.naturestoc.smugmug.com. Click on "SAS sponsored field trip to Monterey, including a pelagic trip with Monterey Seabirds’ under Featured Galleries.

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Field Trips

Field Trip Information
For questions regarding the trip or checking the status of the trip in case of unfavorable weather conditions, please call the trip leader first. If he or she cannot be reached, call the scheduler Cathie LaZier, 457-6882, empid@earthlink.net for trips through November 10th. After November 10th and through December call the scheduler Maureen Geiger, 444-0804, mkgeiger@sbcglobal.net.

Due to insurance requirements, Sacramento Audubon leaders are not allowed to organize ridesharing/carpools. Participants are, however, encouraged to voluntarily share rides. Any carpool arrangements are private agreements between the driver and the passengers. Drivers must carry adequate insurance coverage. Please be courteous and share gas expenses with the driver. FRS radios can be helpful on all trips. Starting times are the actual time the trip leaves the meeting place. Try to arrive early, especially if you want driving directions or plan to carpool. Groups must make prior arrangements with the trip leader.

Saturday, October 31, 7am
Bodega Bay
Leader: Scott Hoppe, 835-8471
shoppe01@earthlink.net
Join Scott for a full day of birding around Bodega Bay, taking in a variety of habitats. Plan to see waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls and raptors. Bring lunch, water and warm clothes. Meet at the Park and Ride off 1-80 in West Sacramento. From Sacramento take the West Capitol Ave. exit. Turn left, and the Park and Ride will be on your immediate left. This is a good trip for newer birders and experienced birders alike.

Sunday, November 1, 9am
(Daylight saving time ends)
Bobelaine Sanctuary
Leader: Carla Barbaro, 717-8808
Bobelaine is a 430 acre National Audubon Sanctuary on the Feather River, managed by Sacramento Audubon. This riparian forest of cottonwoods, sycamores and willows is home to a wide variety of birds and wildlife. Join Carla to walk the trails and search the thickets for the resident and wintering birds. She hopes to find towhees, kinglets, goldfinches, sparrows, and at the River Overlook there’s the possibility of Osprey and otters. A variety of herons, egrets, grebes, and again, sometimes otters, are seen at Lake Crandall as well. To reach the sanctuary take Hwy. 99 north toward Yuba City and about 2 miles north of the Feather River Bridge turn right on Laurel Avenue. Follow Laurel to the dead end at the Bobelaine parking lot. Bring water for the trail, and snacks if you wish. This is a great trip for beginners, as well as more experienced birders.

Saturday, November 7, 8am
Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge
Leader: Andi Salmi, 691-7216
andisalmi@yahoo.com
Andi will be looking for the early flocks of ducks and geese that winter in the valley or are feeding on their way further south. There is a 3.7 mile driving route, and a great viewing platform as well. This trip will last into early afternoon, so bring lunch, drinks and warm clothes. Meet at the Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento. From Sacramento take the West Capitol Ave. exit. Turn left, and the Park and Ride will be on your immediate left. This is a good trip for newer birders and experienced birders alike. FRS radios are helpful on this trip.

Sunday November 8, 7:30am
Mather Lake
Leader: Wayne Blunk, 876-0457
Wayne.Blunk@gmail.com
Mather Lake is one of Wayne’s favorite birding locations. Meet Wayne to look for a nice variety of resident and wintering birds. Possibilities include White-tailed Kites, Wild Turkey, Green Heron, Pied-billed Grebe and Common Yellowthroat. Meet Wayne in the parking lot of Mather Regional Park at the corner of Douglas Road and Eagle’s Nest Road for this morning trip. This is a fee area. This is a wonderful trip for beginning birders.

Tuesday, November 10, 8am
Isenberg Crane Preserve/Cosumnes River Preserve Boardwalk
Leader: Dan Tankersley, 606-6518
dtankersley@winfirst.com
Join Dan to look for wintering geese and ducks, including Gadwall, Northern Shovelers, teal and wigeon. In shallow water there may be shorebirds, such as dowitchers, sandpipers, yellowlegs, Dunlin, and maybe some surprises. Our wintering Sandhill Cranes will be back, and the usual herons and egrets will be around. The boardwalk is also a good place to look for the noisy but hard-to-see Marsh Wren, and the cryptic Wilson’s Snipe. Meet Dan at the Nugget Market at 8am. Going south on I-5, take the Florin Road West exit; go west to the first signal light, (Greenhaven Drive), and make a U-turn. The parking area for the market will be on the right. This trip will end by noon. Bring FRS radios and spotting scopes if you have them. This is a great trip for both beginners and more experienced birders. Thick fog cancels this trip.

Friday, November 13, 8am–11am
Fair Oaks Bridge
Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777
Jack knows this area well and knows where to find the interesting birds and plants on this morning nature walk. Meet at the north end of the old Fair Oaks Bridge. From the intersection of Fair Oaks and Sunrise, go east on Fair Oaks. When Fair Oaks turns left, continue straight ahead on Bridge Street. This is an excellent trip for beginners.

Saturday, November 14, 6:15am
River Walk Bird Count
Cosumnes River Preserve
Recorded Information, 684-2816
Meet at the Visitor Center on Franklin Blvd, south of Twin Cities Road, for this
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monthly birding census trip. It is a great
birding area, always full of surprises, and
joining the group is a good way to find out
what’s happening and to hone your birding
skills. This walk covers about four miles at
a leisurely pace and takes approximately five
hours, so bring lunch and liquids. Be sure
to check the recorded information a day or
two before for exact meeting time and possi-
bile updates.

Saturday, November 14, 7:30am
Serrano Parkway, El Dorado Hills
Leader: Maureen Geiger, 444-0804
mkggeiger@sbcglobal.net

Join Maureen for a leisurely walk through
this riparian habitat and look for residents
such as woodpeckers, nuthatches, towhees,
wrens, bluebirds and marsh birds, as well
as wintering sparrows, thrushes and other
visitors. River otters are a possibility. Meet
at 7:30am at the Bella Bru restaurant in the
Raley’s shopping center on El Dorado
Hills Boulevard just off Highway 50; the
group will leave for the trail at 7:45am
sharp. Alternate meeting is on Silva Valley
Parkway by 8am.

Sunday, November 15, 8am
Folsom Lake State Park
near Beek’s Bight
Leader: Sandra Beseler, 782-3055
ssbeseler@yahoo.com

This morning walk near Folsom Lake will
be appropriate for families and begin-
ners alike. Join Sandra in finding winter-
ing, migrating and resident birds such as
Phainopepla, Western Bluebird, and Wild
Turkeys in this oak woodlands area. Meet
at Twin Rocks and Boulder Staging Area.
From Hwy 50 east, take Folsom Blvd exit
and head east. This turns into Auburn-
Folsom Road. Go about 10 miles (past
Douglas Blvd) and make a right onto Twin
Rocks Road. Continue to the end of the
road where it meets Boulder Road and park
at the staging area. From Hwy 80 east, exit
on Douglas Blvd and head east. Make a left
at Auburn-Folsom Road, go about 2 miles
and make a right on Twin Rocks Road.
Bring liquids and be prepared to walk until
late morning.

Sunday, November 15, 8–11am
Effie Yeaw Nature Center
Habitat Improvement
Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777

Join Jack and other nature lovers to assist
with habitat restoration at this lovely nature
area. Possible tasks include weed removal,
pond clean-up, erecting fencing around oak
trees for protection, and checking bird nest
boxes. Call Jack for details.

Tuesday, November 17, 7:45am
Colusa National Wildlife Refuge
Leader: Dan Tankersley, 606-6518
dtankers@winfirst.com

The Colusa NWR is another of the great
Central Valley locations to view large water-
fowl concentrations. There will be many
duck species and plenty of Snow, Ross’s and
Greater White-fronted Geese. This refuge
often provides an opportunity to view the
greater race of the Greater White-fronted
Goose. Eurasian Wigeon is often seen here
as well. We can expect many raptors with
the possibility of Bald Eagle and Peregrine
Falcon. We will spend a good amount of
time on the main viewing platform, and
then take an easy walk on a level trail
through a riparian forest next to
the main viewing pond. We will then
take the short auto tour and finish
our outing with a return visit to
the platform. Be prepared for
cold and damp weather. Weather
permitting, there
should be ample
photo ops. If
you have these
items, bring
your scope and
FRS radio. Meet
Dan at the Bel Air
shopping center on Arena
Blvd. From Sacramento, take I-5 north to
Arena Blvd, go west (left) over the freeway.
Take the first left, Duckhorn Rd, and then
turn right into the parking area. We will
meet on the north side of the parking lot
between Wells Fargo and Golden 1. Bring
snacks and liquids as the trip will end in
the late morning to early afternoon. We will
leave the meeting area at 8am SHARP. Rain
and/or high wind cancels.

Tuesday, November 17, 8–11am
Effie Yeaw Nature Center
Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777

Meet Jack in the Nature Center parking lot
in Ancil Hoffman Park for a 3 hour walk
on the trails which wind through the oak
woodland and down to the American River.
This is an excellent birding area, and Jack
will also share his knowledge of the native
and non-native plants and trees of this
parkway area. A great trip for beginners and
more experienced birders alike.

Thursday-Monday, November 19-23
Central Valley Birding Symposium
Contact: Frances Oliver
(209) 369-2010
hummer52@sbcglobal.net

See article on page 6 and don’t miss this
informative and exciting annual event.

Saturday, November 21, 2pm till dark
Sandhill Cranes and Other Wintering
Birds of the Sacramento Valley
A Save Our Sandhill
Cranes-sponsored trip
Coordinator: Mike Savino, 446-1392

Sandhill Cranes are the focus of this trip
but ducks, swans and geese, as well as
shorebirds, feed in the flooded fields and
marshy areas of the delta, and hawks
patrol overhead. Meet at the
Cosumnes River Preserve Visitor
Center parking lot at 2pm for a
short introduction to crane behav-
ior and biology by Paul Tebbel,
then stroll the boardwalk in the
Lost Slough Wetlands, enjoying
views of the cranes, winter-
ing waterfowl and shorebirds.
 Afterwards, we’ll drive along
Desmond Road and possibly
to Staten Island, to see flocks
of cranes fly in to roost for the
night. Dress for changeable weath-
er; bring binoculars, scopes and
FRS radios if you have them. From
Sacramento, take I-5 south to Twin
Cities Road; go left (east) to the stop
sign at Franklin Blvd; turn right (south) on
Franklin and, driving through the Preserve,
watch for the Visitor Center parking lot on
your left. Further directions and maps are
available at www.cosumnes.org. This is
a great trip for beginners.

Saturday, November 21, 5:45am
Tall Forest Bird Count
Cosumnes River Preserve
Recorded Information: 684-2816

Meet at the Farm Center Gate at the inter-
section of Desmond and Bruceville Roads,
ON TIME, to join this monthly bird
count. Usually led by John Trochet, this
area is normally closed to the public, so this
is your opportunity to bird there. John has
an appreciation of nature on many levels, and a trip with him is always informative. You must check the recorded information a day or two ahead to get the exact meeting time and any other updated details. Arrive a little early, as this trip always leaves promptly.

**Sunday, November 22, 7:30am**  
**Solano Lake/Monticello Dam**  
**Leader: Maureen Geiger, 444-0804 mkggeiger@sbcglobal.net**

The varied habitats of Putah Creek, Solano Lake, and the Monticello Dam Overlook can produce many different species of birds. On this trip, we will look for winter passersines, including Phainopepla, Western Bluebird and Say’s Phoebe in the hills; Barrow’s Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser and Osprey at Putah Creek pull-outs; possible Canyon and Rock Wrens, White-throated Swiflets and Peregrine Falcon at the Dam Overlook; and American Dipper at the bridge. Lake Solano often produces large numbers of wintering ducks plus other shorebirds. We will stop at Solano Lake County Park (where there is a day-use fee) to look for Pileated and other woodpeckers. Bring lunch and water and if possible, scopes and FRS radios. This trip will last to mid-afternoon. Meet Maureen at the Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento. Take the West Capitol Ave exit; turn left at the light and then left again into the Park and Ride lot. Car pooling is strongly advised, due to limited access at stops and the distance traveled. An alternative meeting site is Steady Eddie’s on the east side of the downtown Winters parking lot at 5 E. Main Street. We will leave Winters by 8:30. Contact Maureen for more information.

**Saturday, November 28, 8am**  
**American River between Howe and Watt**  
**Leader: Dan Kopp, 213-2791 rey-ality@hotmail.com**

Join Dan at his favorite spot along the Parkway in search of our wintering birds, and get to know an area he knows well. Although Dan birds this spot almost daily, he has rarely seen other birders and is eager to share his knowledge of this oasis behind his home. Last year this area produced a Palm Warbler and a California Thrasher; the former is not likely to be seen at this time of year, but he will work the area well to locate any goodies in hopes of finding them for the group, such as a White-throated Sparrow which he has found the last three years. There are well worn trails and some that require a little more work, so depending on everyone’s ability, he will decide how strenuous the walk will be in the morning. The trip will last until lunch time. From Hwy 50, take the Howe Avenue exit and head north; from Howe, take the first exit before the bridge. To do this, you will need to be in the right-most lane. Cross La Riviera Drive and enter the Howe Avenue Access to the American River. There is a fee to park in the lot, or parking is available on La Riviera Drive.

**Sunday, November 29, 8am**  
**Road 113, Robinson Road and Birds Landing Area**  
**Leader: Tim Fitzger 870-5207 spskua2@comcast.net**

This is a great area for wintering Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, Prairie Falcons, Merlins, curlews, possible Mountain Plovers, shrikes, and other interesting birds. Bring liquids, lunch, warm clothes, spotting scopes, and FRS radios if possible. Meet at the West Capitol Ave exit Park and Ride. This trip will last into the afternoon.

**Tuesday, December 1, 8–11am**  
**Nimbus Fish Hatchery**  
**Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777**

This is a good opportunity to explore the Nimbus/American River area. Walk with Jack and look for diving ducks, kingfishers, wintering gulls and other wildlife along the River. He will also be sharing his knowledge of interesting archeological points relating to early Chinese gold mining. Meet in the parking lot of the Nimbus Fish Hatchery off Hazel Avenue.

**Saturday, December 5**  
**Great American River Bird Count**  
**Co-compilers: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777 Lea Landry, 638-1141, llandry@softcom.net**

See write up on page 1.

**Sunday, December 6, 9am–Noon**  
**Nimbus Fish Hatchery/American River**  
**Leader: Ed Harper, 971-3311 calldriss@surewest.net**

Join Ed for an informative walk along the American River. Ed is a great birdier who will be looking for any interesting or unusual birds, with emphasis on tricky identification of the many gulls that winter on the River near Nimbus Dam. This trip will last until late morning. A scope is useful in addition to binoculars. Meet at the Nimbus Fish Hatchery parking lot near Hwy 50 and Hazel Avenue (about 15 miles east of Sacramento).

**Saturday, December 12, 8am–Noon**  
**Wetlands and Waterfowl Tour II**  
**Leader: Roger Jones, 875-9174 jonesro@sacsewer.com**

Tour one of the seasonal or permanent wetland areas within the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District Bufferlands in Elk Grove. The Wetlands and Waterfowl Tour offers a chance to see many bird and mammal species including waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, beavers and coyotes. Tour participants will enjoy a short walk guided by a Bufferlands staff wildlife biologist who will explain current wildlife management and habitat restoration techniques.

Space is limited. The meeting location is weather-dependent, so please contact Roger Jones during the week preceding the event for exact meeting location and directions.

**Saturday, December 12, 7am**  
**River Walk Bird Count**  
**Cosumnes River Preserve**  
**Recorded Information, 684-2816**

Meet at the Visitor Center on Franklin Blvd, south of Twin Cities Road, for this monthly birding census trip. It is a great birding area, always full of surprises, and joining the group is a good way to find out what’s happening and to hone your birding skills. This walk covers about four miles at a leisurely pace and takes approximately five hours, so bring lunch and liquids. Be sure to check the recorded information a day or two before for exact meeting time and possible updates.

**Sunday, December 13, 8am**  
**Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge**  
**Leader: Andi Salmi, 691-7216 andisalmi@yahoo.com**

Andi will be looking for the great flocks of ducks and geese that winter in the valley or stop to feed on their way further.

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SAN JOAQUIN RIVER RESTORATION

A conservation victory has begun to unfold in California’s Great Central Valley; this year, the San Joaquin River will receive more water than it has since the 1940s when Friant Dam was constructed. In 2012, Chinook salmon will be re-introduced and with any luck will begin their recovery from the brink of extinction.

If you grew up in the San Joaquin Valley before the 1940s, you probably remember an impressive river flowing to the Delta from the mountains beyond Fresno. A river that was as volatile as it was vital. A river that in wet years overflowed its banks and wreaked havoc and at the same time abundance, and in dry years created scarcity and conflict.

If you lived near the river, you may remember the sound of thousands of salmon splashing upstream on their journey to spawn. You may even have spear-fished Chinook salmon in the San Joaquin.

Some things have changed in the Valley since then and others have not. The San Joaquin no longer flows from the Sierra to the Delta, and Chinook salmon no longer travel up this river to spawn. We have controlled the movement of water in astounding ways, but have not learned how to create water where there is none.

In a third year of drought and with increasing restrictions on water use, many Californians will find it difficult to see water flowing down the San Joaquin for the first time in over 70 years. For others this process is recognition of the inherent value of a natural river system and the culmination of decades of hard work.

For the Birds...

The vast majority of wetland and riparian habitat that once existed in the San Joaquin Valley has been lost for decades. Birds have been forced onto smaller and increasingly marginal pieces of land, and only those that have adapted to the agriculture-dominated landscape have continued to thrive.

Over 225 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians depend on riparian habitats, and riparian ecosystems harbor the most diverse bird communities in the arid and semiarid regions of the western United States. Riparian areas can harbor individuals during the bird breeding season at densities up to ten times greater than surrounding terrestrial habitats and the San Joaquin River habitat complex hosts a variety of special-status species including Bald Eagle, Greater Sandhill Crane, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Swainson’s Hawk, Willow Flycatcher, and Bank Swallow.

As test releases begin in 2009 and federal and state agencies prepare the river for the reintroduction of Chinook in 2012, Audubon California is working to maximize the benefits of the revived river corridor for birds. For more information and to sign on in support of the river restoration, see our website: www.ca.audubon.org.

Jordan Wellwood
Central Valley/Sierra Nevada Conservation Coordinator
Audubon California

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south. There is a 3.7 mile driving route and a great viewing platform as well. This trip will last into early afternoon, so bring lunch, drinks and warm clothes. This is a good trip for newer birders and experienced birders alike. FRS radios are helpful on this trip. Meet at the Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento. From Sacramento, take the West Capitol Ave exit. Turn left, and the Park and Ride will be on your immediate left. Please note that at the refuge there is a fee for each vehicle: either $3 for a day pass, or a $12 Refuge Annual Pass.

Sunday, December 13, 6:40am
Tall Forest Bird Count
Cosumnes River Preserve
Recorded Information: 684-2816

Meet at the Farm Center Gate at the intersection of Desmond and Bruceville Roads, ON TIME, to join this monthly bird count. Usually led by John Trochet, this area is normally closed to the public, so this is your opportunity to bird there. John has an appreciation of nature on many levels, and a trip with him is always informative. You must check the recorded information a day or two ahead to get the exact meeting time and any other updated details. Arrive a little early, as this trip always leaves promptly.

Findings continued from page 2

Reichmuth Park (9/12) — Leader Tim Manolis reported: “Weather was a bit odd, cloudy and muggy, even a few sprinkles. About 16 folks attended, so a good size group. A perched, dark-phase Swainson’s Hawk and a few flover Vaux’s Swifts were about the most unusual things seen. There was a sprinkling of flycatchers (Western Wood-Pewee, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Pacific-slope Flycatcher) good numbers of Western Tanager, Wilson’s Warblers and Yellow Warblers, one Black-throated Gray Warbler. An early Oregon Junco was seen. Wood Ducks, American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, and Starlings were in good numbers.”

Evening Beaver Walk (9/3) — Leader Jack Hiehl said his group saw 2-plus beaver, 2 deer, 6 Fence Lizards, and 1 turtle. Birds included Cooper’s Hawk, White-tailed Kite, Belted Kingfisher, Black Phoebe, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Great Egret, California Quail, and Mute Swan.

Pete Hayes
Longtime Sacramento Auduboner Jack Wilburn gives new meaning to the term birding. He has taught scores of Sacramento State and UCD Extension birding classes. He penned a weekly wild birds column in the Sacramento Bee for many years. He has won prizes for his bird photography. And nowadays he is racking up awards such as “1st Overall Ace Pigeon” owner in competitive pigeon racing.

Ten years ago, having retired as an Aerojet rocket scientist, Jack returned in a big way to the hobby he began as a 9-year-old in Los Angeles and followed off and on through the years. He and his wife, Phyllis, a Sac Audubon field trip leader, had acquired a 30-acre property in the El Dorado County foothills near Rescue. “We avoided the problem of keeping pigeons in a residential neighborhood where they might land on a neighbor’s roof,” Jack says.

He built a loft in which to house racing birds, among some 200 breeds descended from Rock Doves. He joined the Hangtown Flyers Racing Pigeon Club and began entering racing competition. Last year he scored his top money win at the “Gold Country Challenge One Loft event” featuring four races in which two of his birds finished 1st and 5th in point totals as Overall Ace Pigeons, returning him $6,500.

Race day features intense activity by the competitors. Birds are loaded on a truck and trailer and driven anywhere from 100 to 600 miles away in Nevada or Idaho. There they are released to fly home at perhaps 50 mph to their owners’ lofts and timed with an electronic clocking system activated by the serial number on the bird’s plastic leg band.

“We don’t know how they find their way home,” Jack says. “Sight is important and they may use the sun as a compass.” Ultra sound plays a part, just like whales can hear the sound of another whale for hundreds of miles. They can fly at night, just as the Army forced pigeons to carry messages in World War II well after dark.

Not all of them return home. Hazards include Cooper’s Hawks and Peregrine Falcons, unexpected storms, and hunters during dove season. Once Jack discovered a hen that had come down near his loft with both legs broken, missing feathers and bruised breast after having apparently colliding with a power line. Jack applied splits to the legs and placed her in an isolation cage and eventually moving her back into the breeding loft. Some pigeon enthusiasts name their birds but Jack prefers to identify racing pigeons by their leg band numbers. “If I gave a bird a name and lost it I’d probably feel worse,” he says.

But when he eventually retires a racing pigeon to the breeding loft he gives it a name. One of those birds was “Sierra Sam,” which had captured “Champion Bird” honors in 2001. Jack flew him again the next year, then retired him to let him sire some of his best pigeons. He currently has 210 pigeons. Jack’s passion for pigeon racing is something to behold. “I never get over the thrill of seeing a distant bird that’s a speck in the sky and wondering if it’s mine. and watching it fly in to the loft,” he says. “If my health got so bad that I couldn’t race pigeons again, I don’t think I would want to go on living.”

He says racing pigeons can be an ideal family hobby, with mom, dad and the kids all getting to handle the birds. He says he would be happy to give anyone tips on getting started with the hobby. His number is (530) 642-9942.

Pete Hayes
From a recent interview with Jack

**COUNTY PARKS NEED YOU!**

The Parks Annual Pass is your ticket to our scenic regional parks. For as little as $50 per year, you and your household can enjoy the Open Space and recreation, relaxation, and outdoor events at parks facilities located throughout Sacramento County. All money goes directly to County Parks and supports our beautiful 15,000 acre Regional Park system.

Pass holders receive free daily entry into Regional Parks and Annual Passes are valid for one year from date of purchase. Go on-line: www.sacparks.net and click on Annual Pass on the right hand side of the web page. They make great gifts and benefit everyone!
LODI'S SANDHILL CRANE FESTIVAL

Don’t forget, coming right up is Lodi’s Sandhill Crane Festival which celebrates the return of Sandhill cranes to the valley. In collaboration with the City of Lodi, the Festival continues this November 6-8, welcoming an ever-growing circle of friends to share the wonder of the Sandhill crane.

For more information, the phone contact is 800-581-6150 or email info@cranefestival.com. Online information can be found at www.cranefestival.com including the program and tour schedules.

GALT, 3RD ANNUAL, WINTER BIRD FESTIVAL

The City of Galt is hosting its 3rd Annual Winter Bird Festival, Saturday, January 30, 2010, at the McCaffrey Middle School facility located in Galt. The purpose of this event is to advance public awareness and conservation of the region’s wildlife. Sandhill Cranes, Canada Geese, Tundra Swans, pintails, and hundreds of other birds call Galt and its surrounding cities home. The Winter Bird Festival will offer the community a chance to spend time discovering, learning, and educating themselves on the importance of these feathered creatures as well as the wetlands, agriculture, and open space which are all crucial to their survival. For more information see their website at www.ci.galt.ca.us, or call their 24 hour recorded information line at (209) 366-7220.

KLAMATH FALLS, WINTER WINGS FESTIVAL

The 31st annual Winter Wings Festival will offer three full days of activities February 12-14, 2010. Guest speakers include Bill Clark, a photographer, author, and lecturer with over 45 years experience working with birds of prey, including 5 years as Director of the National Wildlife Federation’s Raptor Information Center. Rick Sammon, a Canon camera photographer will present a special slide show “Exploring Wildlife and Nature Photography.” The keynote speaker will be Scott Weidensaul, His topic: “Living on the Wind: The World of Migratory Birds.” At any moment of every day, migratory birds fill the skies of the western hemisphere and Scott will discuss the how and the why. Of course there are the usual festival activities with highlights particular to the special Klamath Falls area.

Check out the website at www.WinterWingsFest.org for the latest in Festival planning information. On-line registration will not begin until early or mid December unless otherwise notified. Brochures are scheduled to be distributed in early December and will also be available on-line.

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL SAN DIEGO BIRDING FESTIVAL

San Diego is birder than ever, the county having just recorded its 500th bird species, a Snow Bunting. In addition, the San Diego Bird Festival—now in its 14th year—set a new record during the 2009 festival for the number of species counted. Several field trips observed more than 100 species per trip.

The 2010 festival is set for Thursday through Sunday, March 4-7, 2010. An exciting new field trip for 2010 is a behind-the-scenes look at the world-famous San Diego Zoo’s Wild Animal Park. Birders will be bused to the park for admission before opening hours. In addition to birding the “volunteer” inhabitants of the 1,800-acre park, participants will go behind the scenes to learn about conservation and avian propagation of species such as the endangered California Condor.

For the latest information and to register, visit www.sandiegoaudubon.org and click on the Bird Festival tab, or email birdfest@cox.net. For more information and for a brochure to be mailed, call (619) 682-7200.

HELP PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

TRACK BACKYARD BIRDS

Bird watchers needed to help scientists discover changes in bird populations.

Ithaca, NY—What happens in the backyard should not stay in the backyard—at least when it comes to bird feeders. By sharing information about which birds visit their feeders between November and April, backyard bird watchers can help scientists track changes in bird numbers and movements from year to year, through Project FeederWatch (http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw), a citizen science program from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (http://www.birds.cornell.edu/) and Bird Studies Canada (http://www.bsc-eoc.org). Project FeederWatch begins on November 14 and runs through early April. Taking part is easy. Anyone can count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders and enter their information on the FeederWatch website.

“To get the most complete picture of bird movements, we always need new sets of eyes to tell us what species are showing up at backyard feeders,” says David Bonter, leader of Project FeederWatch. “Participants always tell us how much fun it is and how good it feels to contribute to our understanding of birds by submitting their sightings.”

Project FeederWatch is for people of all ages and skill levels. To learn more and to sign up, visit www.feederwatch.org or call the Cornell Lab toll-free at (866) 982-2473. In return for the $15 fee ($12 for Cornell Lab members) participants receive the FeederWatcher’s Handbook, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds, a calendar, complete instructions, and Winter Bird Highlights, an annual summary of FeederWatch findings.

Sacramento Audubon
Chapter Board Meetings

Board Meetings of the Sacramento Audubon Society are held the last Tuesday of the month. The next meeting will be held on November 24, at 7pm at the SMUD Building, 6301 S Street, Sacramento.
SAS NEW MEMBERS
Welcome to these new members:
Sallie Bettencourt
Terrie Gray
Beverly Moon
Colene Rauh
Peter Thomas
Patricia A Wagner

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!
Thanks to the following for their generous donations:
Karen Benson, Alice Carney, Betty Gutt, Ken Hashagen, Monte Ikemire, Marlene Ishihara, Nancy Joyce, Ken Mateik and Patricia Wagner to the Conservation and Education Fund.
Betty Gutt, Ken Mateik and Jon Wato to the General Fund.
Rylee Dill had her ninth birthday recently, and had a “Bird Sanctuary” birthday party, with treasure hunts, bird calls, painting bird houses, and watching “Hoot”. Instead of presents, she asked her friends to give donations to Sac Audubon, and collected $152, which she donated to the Purple Martin Project. Happy Birthday, Rylee!

BINOCULARS LOST BUT FOUND.
One pair of binoculars was left at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center after the October General Meeting. Please contact Lea Landry at llandry@softcom.net or (916) 638-1141 to identify and claim them. Perhaps the owner missed too many identifications on Ed Pandolfino’s sparrow quiz, so left the bins, thinking they weren’t “seeing” the birds correctly.

Mission Statement Sacramento Audubon Society
The mission of the Sacramento Audubon Society is to:
- Promote the protection and scientific study of wild birds;
- Promote the enjoyment and appreciation of wild birds through community outreach;
- Provide, encourage and support environmental educational opportunities; and
- Provide proactive leadership in the conservation of open space in the Sacramento region.

JOIN THE SACRAMENTO AUDUBON SOCIETY
Your membership supports the SAS mission of conservation, environmental education and protection of the region’s natural ecosystems and diverse wildlife populations. Please include your email address if you would like to be added to our Action Alert List for letter/email writing on conservation issues.

Sacramento Audubon Society Membership Application
Lea Landry, Membership Chair
11054 Autumnwind Lane, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-4224
llandry@softcom.net (916) 638-1141

Date _____________ The Observer Newsletter $25 per address $ __________
Donation for Conservation/Education $ _____________________
Total Enclosed $ _____________________________
Make checks payable to Sacramento Audubon Society
Name __________________________________ Telephone ____________
Address _______________________________________________________
City ___________________________ State _____ ZIP + 4 _____________
Email _________________________________________
Send address changes to our Membership Chair to help keep down our costs.

Observations continued from page 10
Thrasher near William Pond along the ARP on 9/20 was a nice find for the Parkway. Beginning with January 2009, we are now featuring photos of some of the highlight birds on the Sacramento Audubon Web site: www.sacramentoaudubon.org/activities/recent Sightings.html.
Many of these reports first appeared on the Central Valley Bird Club Listserv. Visit www.cvbirds.org and click “Listserv” for details. With over 100 reports, it is impossible to list everyone; however, I want to thank the following for reports on the above species and for providing additional information:
Dan Brown, Todd Easterla, Richard Hall, Steve Hampton, Marcel Holyoak, Oscar Johnson, Dan Kopp, Jeri Langham, Jeff Mangum, Michael Perrone, Mary Schiedt, Zach Smith, John Sterling, Kevin Thomas, John Trochet, Katharine Wagner, and Dan Williams.
Thanks to everyone for their reports—with out them, this column would not be possible.

Chris Conard.
When most birders think of fall migration, they think of September. While August has a lot to offer, it doesn’t feel like fall. October is a great month for birding, but the songbird migrants are slowing a bit, and many of the winter birds are already in place. So September it is. And this was a good one. Topping the list are several excellent songbird migrants from Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP). A Brewer’s Sparrow was a nice find on 9/4 and a Green-tailed Towhee was found on 9/9, but a Northern Waterthrush on 9/14 was even more exciting, and a male Black-throated Blue Warbler in the Orr Forest portion of CRP on 9/15 was exceptional. Rounding out the Sacramento County warblers was a juvenile/female Hooded Warbler at Glen Hall Park along the American River Parkway (ARP) on 9/19-20.

Yolo County Grasslands Park south of Davis produced a nice list of songbirds as well, with a Least Flycatcher on 9/14, and an Olive-sided Flycatcher, a Gray Flycatcher (extremely rare in fall), and a Dusky Flycatcher on 9/12, along with a Chipping Sparrow. A thick-billed Fox Sparrow on 9/23 is from a racial group very rarely recorded in the Valley. A first fall Tennessee Warbler was found in north Davis on 9/28-29 and a Blackpoll Warbler was found at the UC Davis Riparian Reserve on 9/26.

Shorebirds continued in good numbers at Yolo Wildlife Area (YWA), with reports of the possible Red-necked Stint (see last month’s column) continuing through 9/10. A very rare adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was photographed on 9/4. Nearly all of these rare Asian shorebirds found in the state are juveniles. It was last reported on 9/9. Up to a dozen Pectoral Sandpipers were also present, as were Snowy Plovers on 9/5 and 9/24. A Red Phalarope reported from YWA on 9/9 is a very rare bird inland. A Pacific Golden-Plover was found at the Woodland WTP on 9/4 and a juvenile Sanderling was at the Davis Wetlands on 9/11.

A Greater Flamingo was found at the Davis WTP on 9/29; the bird was likely an escapee, but still unexpected and interesting. A Lesser Nighthawk was rare locally, and getting late in the season, at Slide Hill Park in Davis on 9/6, and more expected was a Common Poorwill on Michigan Bar Road in eastern Sacramento County on 9/27. On 9/12 at CRP, an early Short-eared Owl was a nice surprise, along with a Marbled Godwit and a Bank Swallow. The godwit and swallow are both fairly regular in Yolo County in migration, but quite rare in Sacramento County—the latter becoming increasingly so. A California Gull was present.

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