

Napa Solano Audubon Society Birding Notes #28

Hello NSAS friends and members –

Last Saturday evening, as the sun was setting, I sat on the north side of Hwy 37 at a pullout just past the Cullinan Ranch parking lot / trail. Sitting on a sand spit in among the pickleweed at the peak of high tide you can look east towards the Cullinan Ranch trail and watch tens of thousands of shorebirds come in to roost for the evening. The mix ranged from Godwits, Dowitchers, and Curlews to Terns, Willets, and Plovers to Gulls and Egrets and even to some comically large Pelicans. There might have been 10,000 Western Sandpipers all walking to and fro less than 20 yards from where I was sitting, chipping to each other in constant motion. And then they would burst into flight only to return to their previous location to start pacing and chipping again. It was a WONDERFUL birding experience.

Note #1 – NSAS announcements

1. Our ***NSAS Summer hiatus is coming to an end***, and we are gearing up for a new calendar of activities that will start in September. Be on the lookout for August email announcements about:

- ***Our monthly speaker series is scheduled to resume at 7 PM on Thursday, September 8th***. The presenters will be Denise and David Hamilton of Napa. In 2019 they participated in a 15-day birding and photography tour of Eco-Lodges and Botanical Reserves in Ecuador. For our meeting they will share photos and highlights from this adventure. This will likely be a Zoom presentation; however, we are still working on finding a location for an in-person September meeting. Perhaps the Lutheran church in Napa or the Benicia Library will work for us? If we are able find a suitable venue, we will try to make this a hybrid in-person / Zoom event.

NOTE: As we are having difficulty finding a venue where we can conduct a hybrid in-person / Zoom meeting, we are asking our readers if you know of a location that would be available to us from ~ 7 to 9 PM on Thursday evenings with seating for ~ 50 participants,

excellent internet connectivity, and a minimum cost for a non-profit organization. If you know of such a location, please let us know by contacting Mark Stephenson at napabirder@gmail.com or Barbara Navolanic at bnavolanic@aol.com.

- Our October and November meetings are currently being organized by Barbara Navolanic and in October she has booked Nita Winter and Rob Badger to share with us ***the story behind their book “Beauty and the Beast: California Wildflowers and Climate Change.”*** Nita and Rob are Recipients of Sierra Club's 2020 Ansel Adams Award for Conservation Photography and their talk promises to share beautiful pictures of CA wildflowers as well as some of the birds that depend on these plants for their survival and the effects of climate change on both the plants and birds. In November we are hoping to have a birding guide from Panama share their knowledge and pictures of local birds from this area.
 - Andrew Ford’s weekly Saturday Field trips. He is planning to restart these walks beginning the last week of August or the first week of September when the migrating birds will begin to return.
2. The NSAS August Board meeting will be held at 7 PM on Monday, August 29 in Napa. If you have an interest in how the NSAS board works, or if you may be interested in volunteering for a board position you are welcome to join us at this meeting. If interested, please contact Tom Slyker at solanobirder@gmail.com or Mark Stephenson at napabirder@gmail.com for meeting details.
 3. With regards to point #2 ***NSAS could really use a publicist / PR person*** to manage our Facebook page and to reach out to local government agencies, non-profit organizations, and news outlets to let people know what opportunities we provide to the local community for outdoor activities, citizen science, conservation projects, and education programs for elementary schools. If you have time to volunteer and have an interest in these types of PR activities, we’d be interested in having you join our Board as our Communications Chairperson. For more information

about this position, please contact Tom Slyker at solanobirder@gmail.com or Mark Stephenson at napabirder@gmail.com.

Note #2 – What about the Birds?

1. Every day Mia McPherson posts more pictures on her blog at <https://www.onthewingphotography.com/wings/>. The pictures are from locations she monitors in Utah mountain areas and are accompanied by a short story about the picture(s) that day. Most days I will click on the email notification to see what she is sharing that day. I especially liked this photo of an American Goldfinch. It sort of reminds me of something John Audubon would have painted.



2. If you've taken a look at the July Newsletter from Audubon.org you'll have seen the headline **"What's the Scoop on Bird Poop?"** If you follow the link,

you'll end up at the story about "*Bird Poop: The Next Frontier of Avian Conservation.*" The story provides an interesting series of examples about "Unpleasant as it may sound, fecal DNA analysis is an attractive tool for biologists studying elusive or endangered species. It's less intensive, intrusive, and costly than finding and monitoring birds for long stretches in order to pick apart their diets." As you read, you'll find that genetic analysis is helping ornithologist to study birds and their diets without having to kill the birds to determine their diet by monitoring the contents of their stomachs. It is an interesting read at [https://www.audubon.org/magazine/summer-2022/bird-poop-next-frontier-avian-conservation?ms=digital-eng-email-ea-newsletter-engagement_20220727_wingspan_&utm_source=ea&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=engagement_20220727_wingspan&utm_content=.](https://www.audubon.org/magazine/summer-2022/bird-poop-next-frontier-avian-conservation?ms=digital-eng-email-ea-newsletter-engagement_20220727_wingspan_&utm_source=ea&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=engagement_20220727_wingspan&utm_content=)



Picture of "collecting common tern chick poop"

3. Because I like pictures of just about anything to do with Nature I've added this note about the ***California Academy of Sciences 2022 Winning Images***

from their Natural World Photography Competition. With more than 7,000 photographic submissions entered by world-class photographers representing 65 countries, *they selected 8 truly unique images* as this year's competition winners! "From the beautiful to the bizarre, this photographic showcase of life on Earth shines a light on some of our planet's most amazing species and places." You can find the images at <https://www.bigpicturecompetition.org/2022-winners>.

4. Monthly the Cornell Labs Bird Academy sends out an email blast titled "**Explore the Wonder and Science of Birds.**" In June their message had two items I found to be especially interesting – see below for details. If you'd like to receive these regular updates from the Bird Academy you can sign up for them at https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/?utm_campaign=bird%20academy%20general&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=217571922&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9r9Y_0Ceg2D_WNJsOqsVtDz3c-fMXbwbyBKskePY6LyaaVwjP8sIJDLNYa4P1tUg7fPQGTiyD3wOBnp1tc7U6laDaB9A&utm_content=217385395&utm_source=hs_email.
 - a. Cornell Labs now has an interactive website focused on bird anatomy. On the screen you have a bird skeleton, and, on the sidebar, you have the ability to identify all of the different parts of the bird anatomy. You can select the feathers and then see the specific location of the supercilium or the malar region. Or you can select the respiratory system and see where each of the air sacks is located. For me the site is much more useful than the examples in the intro to Sibley or the other birding guides. Check it out at https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/features/birdanatomy/?utm_campaign=bird%20academy%20general&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=217571922&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--q7haw9Q7TUtgUiBlteBviXslkyHN52_mTCIDzcOG8iXjXlg6wOjAdk5p_h_BBARqK6i6fRuhuGYRwBtH7ljbmp5-A&utm_content=217385395&utm_source=hs_email.

Research



Greater Bird-of-Paradise © Shailesh Pinto/Macaulay Library

- b. The Cornell Lab is documenting their Birds-of-Paradise Project. “The *birds-of-paradise are among the strangest and most beautiful creatures on earth*, and they can only be found in the forests of New Guinea. How did these birds evolve to be so spectacular, and what can studying their dance techniques teach us about speciation?” To me, the pictures and the information being presented from this project were phenomenal as I had no idea of how special these birds are. Check out the Birds-of-Paradise Project to explore these questions and more at https://www.birdsofparadiseproject.org/?utm_campaign=bird%20academy%20general&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=217571922&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-96MeuJJyN44U41W6z2v88An9D1NQc_FnrTxEzE1oIUOA6O_n1YkreT_-66YyvnO97oglxIBJAgA8xt5UJ8DbOUqmJwrg&utm_content=217385395&utm_source=hs_email.

Note #3 – Education Opportunity

5. In July I participated in a camp for visually impaired campers at the Enchanted Hills Camp in Napa. My role was to share birding information with the group. In preparation I searched the internet for information about birding for vision impaired people. An item that came up in the search was a free course “*Birding by Ear for All*” that was developed by *Bird Canada*. The course is comprised of a series of 8 short YouTube videos with most of these videos being less than 10 minutes long. The presenter is an employee of Bird Canada whose role is to educate people on Nature and

birds. He's originally from Latin America and has a wonderful voice, speaking style, and accent. (Made me think of Mr. Rogers or possibly Captain Kangaroo.) The course is basic for beginners and the presenter has an excellent way of describing birds and what he is seeing and hearing which makes it good for vision impaired people as well as anyone else who is interested in learning more about how to bird by ear. I definitely learned some new information about birding by watching the program. The setting is in Toronto and the focus is on identifying common local birds. The good news is that almost all of the local birds in Toronto are also local birds in our area and across north America. You can find the program at https://www.birdscanada.org/online-courses/birding-by-ear-for-all/?_ga=2.67352466.2055663973.1660252795-1696288458.1659497933.

Hopefully you will enjoy it as much as I did!

- If you have ideas for what can be done to make the NSAS a better birding resource for our community or have Birding Notes and/or Pictures to share with the rest of the NSAS community, please send them to Tom Slyker at SolanoBirder@gmail.com.
- Be sure to check the calendar at the NSAS website (<http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/>) for meeting announcements and Field Trip updates.
- This is issue number 28 of Birding Notes. Past copies of Birding Notes are posted on the NSAS website at <http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/>
- If you would like to unsubscribe from receiving all email communications for NSAS, including these Birding Notes, please send your unsubscribe request to SolanoBirder@gmail.com.