

Napa Solano Audubon Society Birding Notes #6

Hello NSAS friends and members –

December is here and Christmas Bird Counts are coming! Christmas Bird Counts are coming! We can always use more volunteers to help with the counts (see the NSAS website for details on how to volunteer). Have a safe and enjoyable Holiday Season this year!

Note #1 – Field trips are starting again! YEAH!!! You should have received an announcement from Wendy Cole about our upcoming Field Trip on Saturday, December 12 at Lynch Canyon. (If you didn't receive the announcement check out our Calendar at <http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/Event/Calendar> for details.) Robin Leong will lead this trip which will be a Pre-CBC adventure to scope out the birds for the upcoming Benicia CBC on December 14. In addition to birding, Robin will use the trip to train CBC participants about the procedures of a CBC including how to estimate bird populations and how to record species for a CBC. Note that CoVid-19 rules will apply for this trip with only bubble carools, masks, and social distancing as mandated by our County health officers. All participants must sign a CoVid-19 waiver before joining the group. For this event, Robin Leong is making arrangements to cover the cost of parking for all field trip participants.

Note #2 – The Winter issue of our “Song Sparrow Newsletter” is in production and should be ready for printing and distribution by early December. A copy of the Newsletter will be posted on our website at <http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/Main/HomePage>. This Newsletter will include up to date information about the upcoming CBC's and field trips, an article on tools you can use to keep up with rare bird sightings, an update on Tricolored Blackbirds, and more. Please note that the Newsletter is delivered to all active NSAS Chapter members at the time it is published. Printing and mailing the newsletter has become expensive. If you are an active member and you are willing to receive the Newsletter by email only, please contact Tom Slyker at SolanoBirder@gmail.com to let us know. If you want to receive the Newsletters as they are published and you are not an active NSAS Chapter member, you can register to become a member at <http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/Main/Join>.

Note #3 – What’s being seen locally –

There are two locations to highlight in this note. One is my favorite place to bird, American Canyon Wetlands, and the other is the backroads of Solano County.

- American Canyon Wetlands (ACW) -

On November 20 Cathy Bleier reported seeing both a Yellow/Red Shafted Northern Flicker intergrade (see photo) at ACW and Rough-legged Hawk (see photo by Peter Meyer) on the way there! See her eBird checklist at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S76572290> for info about the Flicker and checklist <https://ebird.org/checklist/S76496599> for the hawk.



In addition to the rarer species Cathy spotted, right now we are seeing a wide variety of ducks (as well as all the shorebirds) that are filling the tidal ponds. Also, now is the time to see the Black-crowned Night Herons that are lining the reed patches in the ponds where you can see the Common Gallinules. The herons are currently increasing in numbers now, and then in early January they will disappear until they return again in the fall of 2021. There are also the raptors that are spending time at ACW. You can usually see Harriers, Kites, Kestrels, Peregrines, and Cooper’s, Red-tailed, and Red-shouldered Hawks, and recently we had a fly

over of a Bald Eagle. Attached are pictures of the Red-tailed Hawks from Carol Boykin and a from a friend we see every Monday morning walking his dog.



- Eastern Solano County Backroads Adventure –

If you want to get away and go for a drive you may want to check out the back-country roads in eastern Solano County. Both Hugh Harvey of Walnut Creek and Denise and David Hamilton of Napa have recently reported on birding in this area. Hugh was traveling with Rosita and they were in search of Mountain Plovers. Their birding started on Branscome Road, which is east of Suisun City on Hwy 12 and just south of Travis AFB. They drove north on Branscome to Creed Road and then east on Creed all the way to Goose Haven, then south to Flannery, and east on Flannery Road until they reached Hwy 113. They turned north on Hwy 113 and then east on Robinson Road. When they reached the abandoned ranch on Robinson Rd. where the road bends to the left, they drove past the high voltage wires for a short distance and started scoping the field to the north. The Osage orange trees are still on the right side of the road at this location.

As they scanned with scopes, they found a flock of about 150 Long-billed Curlews. Something spooked the Curlews, and they all flew beyond the fence line at the north edge of the field. Then they saw the birds they were looking for and counted just over 20 Mountain Plovers. (Note that David and Denise were out on Robinson Road a little earlier that day at 9:30 AM and they counted over 200 Mountain Plovers!) After finishing with the Plovers, and before Hugh and Rosita turned the last corner on Robinson to head south toward Flannery, a Golden Eagle lifted and then landed in a different location of the same field. It may have been disturbed by a Red-tailed Hawk which harassed an adult Ferruginous Hawk.

To finish the drive, they turned east on Flannery after not finding the resident Burrowing Owl, then followed Canright Road south to McCormack Road. At McCormack they turned west and returned to Hwy 113, then Hwy 12 and on home. During the day's drive they saw 2 Loggerhead Shrikes, a handful of Red-tailed Hawks, 14 American Kestrels and hundreds of Western Meadowlarks.

It was a productive day of birding and a nice way to get outside and enjoy the open spaces in eastern Solano County. You might want to give it a try if you're looking for something to do outdoors in this CoVid-19 season.

- And just because it's a bird I have twice been near to but have never seen and would very much like to see, here is a picture of a Green-tailed



Towhee. The picture was taken by David Assmann while visiting Abbotts Lagoon at Point Reyes.

Note #4 – My last two notes are about YouTube videos you might want to watch. The first video to recommend kept me laughing the whole time I was learning, which my family can attest to. The program was sponsored by the [Peninsula Open Space Trust \(POST\)](#) and I learned about it in the GGAS-chat forum. The title of the talk is [“Bay Area Raptor Rundown; a chance to learn to identify raptors on the coast and in the Santa Cruz mountains during the migration season.”](#) The presentation starts slowly, and you could skip the first 10 minutes without really missing anything. Then you hit the meat of the presentation with Jeff Caplan as the speaker.

Jeff is the founding director of “Common Language for Nature Connection,” and he is a very entertaining speaker. His approach to teaching about raptors isn’t the dry, look for these feathers here and that beak shape there, but rather a collection of stories and funny anecdotes to reinforce the special characteristics of different species you might see. You get to see sky divers racing a Peregrine Falcon to the ground to see how fast they fly and a Goshawk flying through an obstacle course to show how an accipiter is able to chase its prey in close spaces. I highly recommend this video and am planning to watch it again at [https://
openspacetrust.org/event/bay-area-raptor-rundown/?
utm_source=pardot&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter](https://openspacetrust.org/event/bay-area-raptor-rundown/?utm_source=pardot&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter)

Note #5 – Another YouTube video that came to me through a GGAS-chat posting is a film about the “Return of the Pine Valley Peregrines.” What attracted my attention is that it is very local as Pine Valley is part of Mount Diablo State Park. The video is like a 50-year anniversary to the beginning of the recovery of Peregrines in California after use of DDT as a pesticide was banned. The video indicates that, at that time, we were down to maybe one breeding pair of Peregrines in the entire state. It provides a short history of Pine Canyon and then went into the early efforts to reintroduce the species in the area. The actual method they used was to remove young chicks from Prairie Falcon nests and replace them with Peregrine chicks that had been hatched at SF Zoo. After many years of effort, the researchers dedicated to the project finally established a

Peregrine breeding nest at the site. The second half of the 40-minute video celebrates the ongoing citizen science efforts that are continuing today to protect these birds from the encroachment of the ever-increasing numbers of visitors that are invading the Peregrines nesting habitat. You can see the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFqtvJhx-5U&feature=youtu.be>.

- 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 6 of our biweekly series. 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.