



# ***CHIRP-N-CHATTER***

**The Newsletter of the Shasta Birding Society**

**A Wintu Country Chapter of the National Audubon Society**

## **JUNE 2025**



Join us for our traditional end of the season picnic at the Camden House in the Tower House Historic District at 6:00 pm on Wednesday, June 11th. It is located on the south side of Highway 299 West just west of the turnoff to French Gulch. Bring your own brown bag dinner and we will eat by the creek and then go birding on the Camden Water Ditch Trail. This is a one-mile dirt trail that loops around the historic Camden House, Tenant Farm House, barn and outbuildings. Hiking boots are recommended. We hope to see Lawrence's Goldfinch, Lazuli Buntings, Bullock's Orioles, Western Tanagers, and maybe an American Dipper. An entrance pass is required to use the area

and can be purchased online at [Your Pass Now](#). Senior, Access, Military and the Interagency Annual Pass can also be used. Contact trip leader Larry Jordan at [webmaster@shastabirdingsociety.org](mailto:webmaster@shastabirdingsociety.org) for more information.

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## **THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS!**

To show how much we appreciate our donors we want to recognize you in our monthly newsletter! These are our recent generous donors:

Phillip J. Detrich, Kathleen DeGear, and Tim Kashuba - Thank You!

Donations can be made either through our [PayPal link](#) or by check at Shasta Birding Society, PO Box 994533, Redding, CA 96099-4533

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## **SUMMER ACTIVITIES**

**Birding Lassen Volcanic Park - Tuesday - Thursday, June 17th - 19th**



Trip Leaders: Jennifer Patten, Joyce Bond, Hilary Locke

Limit: 15 participants

AltaCal Bird Alliance and Shasta Birding Society have enjoyed birding in Lassen Volcanic National Park for several years. We will be doing it again and welcome other chapters to join us and camp at the Lost Creek Group Campground site #5 reserved for the nights of Tuesday, June 17th, and Wednesday, June 18th.

Species that you might see or hear include Osprey, Pileated Woodpecker, White-headed Woodpecker, Black-backed Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker, Vaux's Swift, Common Nighthawk, Bufflehead, Canada Jay, Brown Creeper, Yellow Warbler, Western Tanager, and Cassin's Finch, among others. We will visit the birding hot spots at Manzanita Lake, Hat Creek, Summit Peak, and Kings Creek; the remainder of our itinerary will be flexible, tailored to the interests of participants. Please note that due to lingering snow, some trails may be inaccessible.

Lost Creek Group Campground has primitive facilities, pit toilets, and potable water is available. Tuesday and Wednesday nights are potlucks. Please bring something to share. You are responsible for your breakfast and lunches. Bring camp gear, a tent, water bottles, bug spray, sunscreen, a camp chair, sturdy hiking shoes/boots, dress in layers, and prepare for cold weather. Bring firewood if you have some. We can collect wood in the forest too. To register for this camp out and have a spot to stay over at the park, click on the Zeff link

<https://www.zeffy.com/ticketing/birding-lassen-volcanic-national-park>

**If you are only attending the bird walks and not camping, contact Jennifer Patten, [jenepatten@gmail.com](mailto:jenepatten@gmail.com), for more details and questions.**

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# **KEEPING FEATHERS ON THE BIRDS - AGAIN**

**By Dan Greaney**

**Shasta Birding Society**

In 1896 egrets and other birds were being killed wholesale to use their feathers in women's hats. To protest and end the slaughter, Harriet Hemenway and Minna B. Hall formed a group, the original Massachusetts Audubon Society. Within two years their movement had been replicated in fifteen other states and the District of Columbia. Another five years, and the state organizations united into the National Audubon Society.

It was an era when modern industry was young and booming, and citizens were moving from family farms to jobs in the cities. But like us, people valued the land and they recognized that its beauties and riches were not inexhaustible. So they acted to protect those natural riches. Women quickly abandoned feathered hats. In 1903 our nation created the first National Wildlife Refuge, then the National Park Service in 1916, and in 1918, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, or MBTA.

The MBTA put into US law what the country had already agreed to with Canada, and subsequently with Mexico, Japan, and the Soviet Union. It prohibited the harming or "taking" of birds. As clarified and amended over the last century, its provisions have promoted safety and efficiency. After the Exxon Valdez killed 250,000 birds in 1989 with a spill of enough oil to cover 400 acres an inch deep, the act supported fines and reparations of over \$100 million, and Congress passed a requirement that oil tankers be double-hulled. When in 2010 BP's Deepwater Horizon blew out two to fifteen times more oil, enough to cover 400 acres shin deep, killing eleven people and over a million birds, the MBTA ensured the company was held responsible for its negligence. The fine for damage to wildlife was \$100 million, a mere .3% of BP's income that year; but the MBTA judgment supported real responsibility for BP's harm. Mostly under manslaughter, obstruction of Congress, and Clean Water violations, BP paid nearly \$70 billion, almost a quarter of its annual income, to offset losses it caused to habitat, residents, and businesses.

While safeguarding people and birds, the MBTA remains flexible. It provides waivers to bird protections for various purposes including education, research, and safety. It protects only native species, and provides for game bird hunting seasons. It is hailed as our nation's best legislation to keep birds alive.

But no good law is safe from inconsiderate government. In 2018 the Trump Administration gutted the MBTA. It reinterpreted the law to allow incidental take, with no waivers required and no penalties levied. "Incidental" takes are killings that happen as a by-product of actions, something that sounds innocent enough. But the new interpretation eliminated all penalties for poor maintenance on an oil rig that kills a million birds, or for misapplication of pesticides that kill hundreds or thousands of birds on a single mega-farm. Every incentive to consider the well-being of birds was removed by the administrative reinterpretation. Routine practices that save millions every year--covering oil waste pits, spacing power lines to avoid electrocution, replacing tower lights with blinking ones--were rendered valueless. The ruling replaced the public wealth of nature's beauty and richness with a narrower, purely monetary value.

Fortunately, the 2018 neutralizing of the MBTA was reversed, first by the courts in 2020 and then by a Biden Administration rule of 2021. Unfortunately, Congress failed to codify that the MBTA protects birds from careless "incidental" killings and habitat destruction, and now the Trump administration is again exempting the killing from legal responsibility. Opponents of wildlife protection call such efforts "government overreach," but given the 30% decline of birds in the last fifty years, existing protections appear to be under-reach.

A century ago it took Harriet Hemenway and Minna Hall to weigh in for wildlife protection. Now it likely takes us.

The egrets won't thank us. But they might survive.

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# TRIP REPORTS

## Turtle Bay Bird Sanctuary on May 10th



A dozen fun loving birders enjoyed a leisurely stroll along the Turtle Bay Sanctuary Trail and tallied forty feathered species. Several Canada Geese lounged near the bridge as their juveniles frolicked in the grass. Mallards, Common Mergansers and a pair of Wood Ducks were spotted on the river, as well as a couple of Double-crested Cormorants and a sculking Green

Heron. Hundreds of Cliff Swallows filled the air as well as large numbers of Tree Swallows and a few Northern Rough-winged Swallows. We spotted two Bullock's Orioles, three Black-headed Grosbeaks, three Western Tanagers, and an Osprey. Warblers included MacGillivray's, Yellow and Wilson's. We also noted a pair of Northern Flickers copulating on a branch above us (see photo).

## Butte Valley Outing on May 11th

On this Sunday morning, ten courageous birders gathered at a parking lot under an



overcast sky near the southwest edge of the great Butte Valley basin. Huge shout out to our host for this event, Elizabeth 'Lizzi' Meisman, who did an outstanding job sharing the best of Butte Valley with the pride and passion for her primary field studies of Swainson's Hawk. This outing was well attended by one resident of Klamath Falls OR, one local from nearby Dorris

CA, a set of three siblings currently from Shingletown CA, and four SBS members.

There were three primary areas for this day trip. Butte Valley Wildlife Area, Butte Valley National Grasslands and Meiss Lake, and a large farming community northeast of Macdoel. Once we were ready to move out on our adventure, we relocated to the

southwest edge of the valley. We stopped once at a gate of a farm to observe many raptors, ducks, and swallows. We then continued on a new road heading north. For the majority of the time we traveled on roads where the valley met the surrounding mountain until we hit an area of wetlands. This part of our tour would end at Butte Valley Wildlife Area which happened to be very wet for mid-May which provided us opportunities to observe a wide range of 38 species. Starting with waterbirds we saw Canada Goose, Cinnamon and Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Redhead, Killdeer, Willet, Bonaparte's and Ring-billed Gull, Forster's Tern, Pied-billed and Eared Grebe. On our view of raptors, we witnessed Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, Swainson's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, and Great Horned Owl. Switching over to observation of Passerines, we recorded Common Raven, Horned Lark, Tree, Barn, and Cliff Swallows, Northern House and Marsh Wren, Western and Mountain Bluebird, American Robin, Yellow-headed and Brewer's Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, and Brown-headed Cowbird.

Our journey continued through Butte Valley National Grasslands and Meiss Lake. The winds really started to increase and for very short periods little sprinkles of rain began to fall, but not enough to dampen the ground. Nonetheless we were in pursuit to continue finding 24 species with more of the same raptors including Swainson's Hawk while adding an American Kestrel. Other notables were Western Kingbird, California Scrub-Jay, Black-billed Magpie, European Starling, Sage Thrasher, and Red-winged Blackbird. Our final tour through the farming community northeast of Macdoel yielded 15 species. This location, Lizzi shared to us, has the largest concentration of nesting Swainson's Hawk in the US which is a great opportunity in her current field of research.

The total count was 49 species. Our top three species with super-sized numbers were Cinnamon Teal with a count of 12 which is always fun to see, Forster's Tern with a same count of 12 all huddled as one large impressive sight to see, and of course the fan favorite Swainson's Hawk with the very high count of 24. What an amazing day and we owe it all to our host of the day, Lizzie.

Please take a look at our eBird Trip Report to see more details on our day in Butte Valley, in Siskiyou County: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/369393>

This next link is shared by Lizzie on an article she highly recommends by Scott Weidensaul, summarizing the history of the project she is currently involved with: [Allaboutbirds\\_Article\\_Swainsons-Hawk](#)



### **Shasta Birding Society's Big Day at the Falls: Swifts and Swallows Tour – May 18th**

Five feisty birders rendezvoused in Burney at Safeway's parking lot ready to seize this day. Our \*target species, Swifts and Swallows in Eastern Shasta County. We have a shout out to two birders Marla and Jane, new to joining us

on this epic trip.

While we were gathered and getting acquainted, several Red Crossbill were observed across the main road moving about in the crowns of pine and cedar trees. American Crow and Brewer's Blackbird were also out and about in the parking lot

We headed out soon after to Burney Falls to begin this adventure. On our arrival to the falls main parking area, our eyes were focused upward for one of our prized observations. When after 10 minutes passed by, I was starting to wonder where our little black beauties were hiding. With the roar of the falls, it's often difficult hear much chirping or chatter. So, after a while we found the \*Black Swift flying fast and high in the sky and then other species started to appear. From the parking lot down through the 'Falls Loop' we saw 16 species like Anna's Hummingbird, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Hairy Woodpecker, Cassin's Vireo, Steller's Jay, Common Raven, Mountain Chickadee, American Robin, Dark-eyed Junco, Spotted Towhee, Western Tanager, and Black-headed Grosbeak.



We relocated to Lake Britton continuing our pursuit and observed 14 species with notables like Common Merganser, Western and Clark's Grebe, Western Wood-Pewee, \*Tree Swallow, \*Northern Rough-winged Swallow, \*Barn Swallow, Song Sparrow, and Yellow Warbler.

Partaking in a Big Day is demanding and with 3-4 more stops still on the schedule, we were on our way to Baum lake. We had hoped last year's Purple Martin would have returned and we knew there were none recorded this season to date at these lakes. When we reviewed the snag where they would typically occupy, we found Acorn Woodpecker and Brown-headed Cowbird residing there instead. Moving on, we did encounter 40 species including Canada Goose, Cinnamon Teal, Mallard, Mourning Dove, \*Vaux's Swift, Spotted Sandpiper, Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, American Pelican, Belted Kingfisher, Downy and Nuttall's Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, \*Violet-green Swallow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern House Wren, Cedar Waxwing, Lesser Goldfinch, Bullock's Oriole, Red-winged Blackbird, and Black-throated Gray Warbler.

We took the tour to Fall River Mills next and our first stop was Bank Swallow Nest Site. At this quick stop we listed 6 species and our featured observation was of course the \*Bank Swallow along with California Scrub Jay as well.

Traveling north we headed to the west side of Fall River Lake where we made confirmed sightings of 19 species highlighted with Ring-billed Gull, Caspian and Forster's Tern, Black Phoebe, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and \*Cliff Swallow.

We made one final stop Fall River Mills Vista Point to count 5 species adding Mountain Quail, and Bewick's Wren. Our Trip leaders also added one last checklist on SR-299 @ Oak Run Road and slid into home with American Dipper, and Yellow-breasted Chat. We have our eBird Trip link: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/373475> to share details of our day's checklist at all locations. Our total count was 66 species on 9 checklists, and Shifts and Swallows target recap was:

Black Swift (8)

Vaux's Swift (2)

Bank Swallow (32)

Tree Swallow (42)

Violet-green Swallow (20)

Northern Rough-winged Swallow (6)

Barn Swallow (8)

Cliff Swallow (28)

Make plans to join us next fall season starting in September 2025!

### **Turtle Bay Live Bird Show - May 21st**



Sharon Clay gave everyone at the May presentation beautiful close up views of several of her favorite Turtle Bay birds. Her incredible knowledge of birds and their behaviors is truly a gift of love. The evening began with Curie, a very smart Common Raven showing her skill in solving puzzles. Kuruka, a beautiful Red-crested Turaco was the first to fly across the room, showing incredible colors and perfect flight control. We had close encounters with Ned a Black Vulture and Suerte the Crested Caracara. Pinecone, the Steller's Jay was very animated

and of course chatting the entire time. Banshee, the Barn Owl, flew perfectly across the room about as close as you would want those raptor talons to get. And to the surprise of everyone, we were introduced to Orion, a beautiful Swainson's Hawk!

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American Dipper Feeding Nestlings at Lassen Volcanic Park

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