CHIRP-N-CHATTER

The Newsletter of the Shasta Birding Society

A Wintu Country Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Shasta Birding Society Presents:

A Presentation on Climate Policy

with **Bridget Mulkerin,**

Senior Manager of Climate Policy at Audubon California

May 13 ~ 7pm-8pm (Zoom Only)



Wednesday: May 13, 7:00pm – 8:00pm
Please join us for a Zoom presentation by Bridget Mulkerin,

Senior Manager of Climate Policy at Audubon CA. There, she works on responsible renewable energy development and nature based solutions. In her presentation she will share about why Audubon supports efforts on developing responsible offshore wind energy in California as well as ways to bring joy into climate work.

Join Zoom Meeting

Meeting ID: 837 9354 3752
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More Upcoming May Events Will Be Announced Via Email,

Be Sure To Check Your Inbox!

For More Information On Activities Please Visit Our CALENDAR

THE CONSERVATION CORNER

In the Aftermath of Fountain Wind: A Few Thoughts on Supporting Alternative Energy

by Bruce Webb, Conservation Chair

Those aware of last December's California Energy Commission denial of the Fountain Wind turbine project may groan to hear me mention it again, as it had such overwhelming opposition in Shasta County. Although your Shasta Birding Society urged extensive project improvements to better protect birds, we did not categorically oppose the project IF those improvements were adopted. Personally, I felt the Energy Commission did a fair job of improving the project vs. the version previously denied by Shasta County, however, the project was proposed for a sensitive, heavily forested area that made it difficult to assure birds, particularly certain raptors and Sandhill Crane were not at risk. The National Audubon Society strongly supports alternative energy development including wind, so our "neither stridently for or against" posture may have appeared at odds with National's policy. With all that in mind, I recently attended a workshop by National Audubon staff advocating for alternative energy (AE) projects to curb global warming and slow down the well documented bird population declines. (The recorded workshop and a "topics covered" outline are not yet available at National but will be soon.)
The premise of this workshop was that AE has been hindered by local governments due to aesthetic concerns and misinformation. Strategies were reviewed to help local Audubon chapters advocate for AE projects that are appropriately sited and

carefully planned. (Although Shasta County's zoning amendment now prevents new wind power projects, other counties within our SBS area of influence may yet.) However, what I found concerning was the brevity of guidance on protecting birds from impacts of AE projects, particularly wind power. ({This summary}* recommended by National Audubon is more complete.) Wind power advocacy and developers have asserted that tall buildings kill birds more frequently than wind turbines ever will. Does that make wind turbine bird fatalities OK? Shouldn't we push back on claims of that sort? We were also reminded that technologies driven by radar or cameras can "brake" turbines in 30 seconds to prevent fatalities. These have several pilot studies but are not "ready for prime time" due to continuing reliability questions and high cost. I provided comments to the workshop presenters afterward and I'm awaiting their response. What is certainly true is that we must advocate for alternatives to fossil fueled energy while concurrently protecting birds and at-risk wildlife. The current federal administration will not help us do that, but the workshop demonstrated that the need is urgent and the will to make it happen at National Audubon is gaining momentum.

*https://www.audubon.org/news/state-of-science-land-based-wind-energy-and-birds

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TRIP REPORTS

Lema Ranch - March 7



On a clear, crisp morning, with scattered high clouds, nine fun-loving birders found fifty feathered species to enjoy with their friends. We

began the walk at the southern end of Lema Ranch near Mule Pond. Of course the Acorn Woodpeckers were the first to be seen and heard as they are typically found stashing acorns in the local power poles at the entrance. Several Yellow-rumped Warblers, Oak

Titmouse, and California Scrub-Jays joined in as well as a pair of Northern

Mockingbirds which grew to a total of nine by the end of the day. Heading over to Mule Pond we found the Killdeer, Anna's Hummingbirds, Pied-billed Grebes, and a Black Phoebe. Heading down the hill toward Lema Pond we heard a Virginia Rail! Then another! By the end of the day we heard four Virginia Rails and one of the participants actually saw a fleeting glimpse of the bird. Lema Pond gave us three Cinnamon Teal, several American Widgeon, Ring-necked Ducks, Bufflehead, Mallards, and one Ruddy Duck! There were of course plenty of Canada Geese in the area, but many more Greater White-fronted Geese. Eurasian Collared-Doves, Mourning Doves and a few Rock Pigeons showed up in the area as well. Turning the corner toward Hidden Pond we saw our first Common Gallinule and before leaving the pond we located a White-breasted Nuthatch entering a hole in an Oak Tree carrying insects in its beak. That is also where we heard the scream of the Red-shouldered Hawk as it flew over our heads. Other raptors of the day included two Red-tailed Hawks, fourteen Turkey Vultures, and a Bald Eagle! Making the turn to Secluded Pond we found several more Gallinule observing five by the end of the day. We saw Tree Swallows and Western Bluebirds, many showing courtship and breeding displays. Taking the trail around Secluded Pond, heading back toward Leah's Pond we found a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, several Bushtits with nesting material in their beaks photographed by our photographer dejur, Julie Doerr; and Oak Titmouse with nesting material as well! We spotted a dozen House Finch, a dozen Lesser Goldfinch and ten American Goldfinch! Two Spotted Towhees, Two California Towhees, and several Sparrows rounded out the day with ten White-crowned, eight Golden Crowned, two Song Sparrows.

eBird Trip Report Link: https://ebird.org/tripreport/485769

Turtle Bay Bird Sanctuary - March 14



We had a great group for our 2nd Saturday walk at Turtle Bay. Leader Dan Scollon brought some students from Shasta College, a couple brought their mother for the outing, two repeat attendees came, as well as birder Brad Seiser who was excited about the new California Bird Atlas. Total 11 participants had fun spotting singing oak titmouse, and flock of ruby crowned kinglets. In the midst of scanning the trees a hawk surprised us zooming right across the path between Dan and I and into the trees. Looked like a small sharp-shinned hawk. Flash--here then gone. What a thrill.

Coleman Fish Hatchery and Battle Creek Wetlands - March 21



We had a fantastic morning of birdwatching under perfect spring conditions. Six of us met at the Hatchery parking lot to begin our walk through the campus, enjoying warm temperatures, clear skies, and no wind.

Highlights from our first section at Coleman Hatchery and the back ponds included Turkey Vultures waiting for the morning warmth, Green-winged and Cinnamon Teals, Ring-necked Ducks, and sounds of Virginia Rail and Sora. We also spotted a nesting Bald Eagle and the return of Tree and Northern Rough-winged Swallows. We finished this section with forty-five species identified.

As we transitioned to Battle Creek, we observed Turkey Vultures kettling and increased woodpecker activity. We also saw a second mature Bald Eagle returning to the nest, an immature first-year eagle, and our first Violet-green Swallows of the season. This second section added thirty-three species to our count.

It was a successful outing, concluding the day with a total of 54 species identified.

Here is a link to review our Trip Report: https://ebird.org/tripreport/506009

Paynes Creek Wetlands, BLM - March 28



We had a productive morning with six birders joining the survey under clear skies and a light breeze.

Starting at the Bass Pond Parking Area, we surveyed the trail on the west side of the main road and Bass Pond. Highlights included sightings of Common Gallinule, Virginia Rail, and numerous Red-winged Blackbirds (California Bicolored), along with flyovers by a Great Blue Heron and a Cooper’s Hawk. We recorded twenty-six species during this initial segment.

We then relocated to the eastern ponds, walking the elevated trail overlooking three ponds. This vantage point provided excellent views of Greater Yellowlegs and a Greater White-fronted Goose. Continuing to the back of the larger pond, we identified a large group of Great Egrets, many Wood Ducks, a Northern Harrier, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk. This second walk brought our count to forty-five species for that section.

In total, we recorded a respectable 53 species for the morning.

Here is a link to review our Trip Report: https://ebird.org/tripreport/493580

Llano Seco Unit NWR - April 4



Three of us spent a beautiful morning surveying the unique wetlands in the Sacramento Valley as part of the Pacific Flyway.

From the observation deck, we quickly identified numerous groups of waterfowl and shorebirds. Most duck species were paired with mates and feeding in preparation for their upcoming journey. We were also pleased to find American Avocets alongside several Black-necked Stilts. In the back corner of the south pond area, we located three Black-bellied Plovers (two males and one female).

We caught a glimpse of one Snow with many Greater White-fronted Goose resting on small islands to the north pond area.

While hiking toward the west pond sections, we spotted Greater Yellowlegs, Long-billed Dowitchers, and a high count of Western Sandpipers feeding along the mud banks. Our trip was a success, yielding some FOS (First of Season) sightings and, for one of our guests, several FOL (First of Life) species.

Our Morning Count: 52 Total Species

Link to view our eBird List: https://ebird.org/checklist/S316969120

Earth Day Festival at Caldwell Park - April 18



The weather cooperated for a perfectly sunny day.

Many folks stopped by with questions about birds in their neighborhoods. The children had a

Fun Facts sheet about the Cliff Swallows who nest at Sundial Bridge and on the back an outline of onein flight which we



colored in while looking at color photos of the birds.

Thanks to all the members who helped out that day Rebeca, Jaci, Larry, Steven, Jerry and Stephanie. There was a lot of camaraderie and good will. See you next year!

California Bird Atlas Field Trip - Whiskeytown NRA - April 19



This is the first of a five-year period of data collection for the CA Bird Atlas (CBA), and we are off to a great start! The Shasta Birding Society just hosted our first CBA field trip. The Sunday event was at Whiskeytown NRA, where eight people were interested in learning more about becoming a CA Bird Atlas-er. We had an informal Q&A session in the field and collected breeding bird observations with eBird. This was a great opportunity to get familiar with the process and practice using the breeding codes that are crucial to the project. We were fortunate during the trip to find evidence of reproductive birds in the Whiskeytown area. These included, several actively nesting Osprey, Common Ravens, as well as Canada Geese with recently fledged goslings. Other migratory birds such as Black-throated Gray Warblers and Western Tanagers were just arriving and already exhibiting early breeding behavior such as singing. We plan to host more and regular opportunities to learn about the CBA, and hold targeted Atlas-ing events to cover under-surveyed areas of Northern CA. If you are interested in learning more or becoming an Atlas-er, email Shasta Birding Society or reach out on our Facebook page.

For general information about the CBA Project visit https://ebird.org/atlascalifornia/home or https://www.californiabirdatlas.org/



City Nature Challenge ~ Anderson River Park - April 25



Seven enthusiastic birders and bird photographers enjoyed a casual walk at the Anderson River Park iNaturalist Challenge and eBird Walk on a partially cloudy day with temperatures starting out in the mid-fifties, rising to the seventies in the afternoon.

We observed several species carrying nesting material and actually observed a Belted Kingfisher entering a nesting cavity on the eastern bank of the Sacramento River!

We observed fifty-three species over the four hour excursion beginning at the four ponds near Kiddyland where we found Canada Geese with several goslings, Yellow-billed Magpies, a couple of Hooded Orioles, and several Western Tanagers, all the while being serenaded by Black-headed Grosbeaks! Along the path heading to the paved road we spotted a single male Brown-headed Cowbird seemingly guarding a large oak, then on to the paved pathway to the old radio controlled airport hoping to find a California Thrasher, but no luck. Following the road to the turnaround at the end, we continued on the dirt paths to the Sacramento River where we found Northern Rough-winged Swallows as well as many Tree Swallows near probable nesting cavities. We also heard a Yellow-breasted Chat that called several times but we were unable to see the bird. A short way past that is where Steve Schon saw the Belted Kingfisher fly into the nest cavity on the opposite side of the river. It flew in and out several times, most likely preparing a nest.

Getting back to the paved road, then heading back to the KC Grove and the Kiddypark, we didn't find many birds as the river seemed to be without waterfowl other than a pair of Mallard Drakes swimming along the opposite shore. We were however able to watch the Osprey dive for a fish in large pond by the amphitheater! He didn't catch the fish but it was fun to watch!

Trip Report Link: https://ebird.org/tripreport/506264

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