



# The Kite Call

## Ohlone Audubon Society, Inc.

*A chapter of the National Audubon Society  
Serving Southern & Eastern Alameda County CA*  
*Our Mission: To celebrate and protect birds and their habitats in  
Southern and Eastern Alameda County*  
[www.ohloneaudubon.org](http://www.ohloneaudubon.org)

### Calendar

- Oct 2 GENERAL MEETING**  
Fremont
- Oct 6 FIELD TRIP**  
Coyote Hills
- Oct 13 FIELD TRIP**  
Tilden Park
- Oct 24 FIELD TRIP**  
Big Break
- Nov 6 GENERAL MEETING**  
Castro Valley
- Nov 8 FIELD TRIP**  
Old SJ Riv/Mt House
- Nov 11 FIELD TRIP**  
Pacific Commons
- Nov. 13 FIELD TRIP**  
Ward Creek
- Dec 14 CBC East County**
- Dec 16 CBC Hayward-Fremont**

### Membership Meetings



Steller's Sea Eagle

Come to experience some of what you could see in the Land of the Rising Sun-Japan, its culture, people and birding spectacles! Japan is a mountainous archipelago offshore from China, the Koreans and Russia. It is a unique country not only for its gorgeous scenery but also its distinctive food and culture. Winter,

### Birding Winter Wonderland in Japan Presenter: Alvaro Jaramillo

**Date:** October 2, 2018  
**Time:** 7:30 PM  
**Location:** Niles Discovery Church  
36600 Niles Blvd, Fremont, 94536

although snowy and sometimes cold, is a fantastic time to visit to contemplate Japan's natural beauty; especially for birders. Picture thousands upon thousands of Hooded and White-naped Cranes, rivaling the cranes migrations in Bosque del Apache or the Platte River in the United States. *(Continued page 2)*

### Birds and Flowers Ink Brush Painting: Demo and DIY!

**Presenter: Pauline Tsui**

**Date:** November 6, 2018  
**Time:** 7:30 PM  
**Location:** Castro Valley Adult School ,4430 Alma Avenue,  
Castro Valley Cafeteria (Rm10)

Come join us for a special program meeting to celebrate birds and nature with artist-instructor Pauline Tsui! Express your hidden artistic creativity with hands-on brush painting after a short slideshow. Learn how to paint birds and flowers. No prior art experience is necessary. All art materials will be provided.

**Pauline Tsui** is an artist, a writer, and a docent of the Asian Art Museum. She studied traditional Chinese painting with renowned masters in Hong Kong; and attended Mills College of Oakland, National School of Fine Arts in Paris, and the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. Her East-meets-West approach and methodical teaching



style appeal to a broad audience in the Bay Area.

**Directions (page 2)**

**October Program (cont'd)**

Moreover, the rare and beautiful Red-crowned Cranes, often dancing in the mist coming off the ice, can be seen farther north in Japan! The Steller's Sea Eagle, the largest fish eagle in the world, comes to the northern island of Hokkaido in numbers in winter! With its huge beak, striking coloration, and that odd diamond shaped tail, it is without a doubt one of the top five raptors on earth. Other spectacles are the wintering flocks of waterfowl, with densities of Whooper Swans in Hokkaido, and Bewick's Swans in the south.

**Alvaro Jaramillo** is a biologist, author, and a birding guide. Alvaro was born in Chile but began birding in Toronto, Canada, where he lived as a youth. He was trained in ecology and evolution with a particular interest in bird behavior.

**(FOR THE FULL PROGRAM DETAILS, PLEASE SEE LAST ISSUE)**

**Meeting Directions: From the South or West via 880,** Take Mowry Avenue exit. Follow Mowry across Fremont (toward the hills) to Mission Boulevard, turn left. You will pass Niles Blvd and the Sullivan Underpass. Turn left at Nursery Ave. Turn left on Niles Blvd. You will see the church just on the left after the turn; **From the North via 880:** take Alvarado Niles Boulevard exit (east), turn left to go over the overpass, then in approximately 4 miles (thru Union City and into Fremont ) you will see the church on your left (just after Nursery Ave.). **From Pleasanton or Livermore, or other points to the east of the hills:** take 680 to the first Mission Boulevard exit, and turn right onto Mission. Stay on Mission until you get to Nursery Avenue, and turn left. Turn left on Niles Blvd. You will see the church just on the left after the turn. **From the North via Mission Boulevard:** Turn right on Nursery, and left on Niles Boulevard. You will see the church just on the left after the turn.

**Directions to November meeting:**

Castro Valley Adult School: multipurpose room/gym  
<http://www.cvadult.org/contact/map-and-directions>

**From San Francisco / Oakland:** Take the I-880S toward Hayward. Merge onto I-238 S toward I-580 / Castro Valley/ Stockton. I-238 S becomes I-580 E. Take the Redwood Road exit. Turn LEFT onto Redwood Road, RIGHT on Seven Hills Rd. to the parking lot on the right. **From Tri -Valley Area:** Take the I-580 West toward Oakland. Exit Castro Valley. Turn LEFT onto E Castro Valley Blvd. Turn RIGHT onto Redwood Road, RIGHT on Seven Hills Rd. to the parking lot on the right. **From South Bay:** Take the I-880 N toward Oakland. Merge onto I-238 S toward I-580/Castro Valley/Stockton. Take the CA-238/ Castro Valley Blvd. exit toward Hayward. I-238 S becomes I-580 E. Take the Redwood Road exit. Turn left onto Redwood Road, RIGHT on Seven Hills RD. to the parking lot on the right.  
The multipurpose room is downstairs to the right.

**Follow us on Facebook!**

See updates and photos from our activities that you can share with your friends! Find us by doing a Facebook search for Ohlone Audubon Society

# Field Trips



**Coyote Hills Regional Park**  
**October 6, Saturday, 8:00 AM - 11:30 AM**  
**Leaders: Jerry Ting and Vicki Robinson**  
**[fieldtripsATOhloneAudubon.org](http://fieldtripsATOhloneAudubon.org)**

Fall is one of the best times to bird Coyote Hills. Winter's sparrows and raptors are back, and migrating shorebirds and songbirds will still be passing through. Depending on water levels, plenty of winter ducks should be on hand. 60 species are possible when conditions are good! Come help us find them. Rain cancels.

**Directions:** To reach the park from I-880 take SR-84 towards the Dumbarton Bridge. Exit at Paseo Padre Parkway, turn right on Paseo Padre and go about one mile. Turn left on Patterson Ranch Road to enter the park. Meet at the Visitor Center. \$5 parking fee payable at kiosk, free to East Bay Parks annual pass holders.

**Tilden Reg. Park**  
**October 13, Saturday, 8:30 AM - Noon**  
**Leaders: Rich Nicholson & Bob Dunn**  
**[fieldtripsATOhloneAudubon.org](http://fieldtripsATOhloneAudubon.org)**

The park offers a great variety of birding opportunities including lakes, grasslands and pine forests. We will bird the Inspiration Point area looking for warblers, nuthatches, woodpeckers and many more. It's easy to spend a whole day in this park, but we should finish in 3 to 4 hours. Be prepared for a moderate hike.

Meet at the free parking lot at Inspiration Point (restrooms available). From Highway 24 at Orinda Crossroads, take the Orinda-Moraga exit. Go east on Camino Pablo 2 miles and left onto Wildcat Canyon Rd. Drive 2.5 miles up the hill to Inspiration Point. You can also Google your favorite way in, but check for road closures. For a map of the park showing Inspiration Point (look at the top middle of the map) go to <http://www.ebparks.org/parks/tilden>



**WATCH FOR POP-UP FIELD TRIP**

**In NOVEMBER**

**ON OUR WEBSITE –**  
**[WWW.OHLONEAUDUBON.ORG](http://WWW.OHLONEAUDUBON.ORG)**

## Field Trips (continued)

**Big Break/Black Diamond Mines**  
**October 24<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday 9am-12:30pm**  
**Leaders: Rich Nicholson and Bob Dunn**  
**fieldtripsATOhloneAudubon.org**

Big Break offers a good assortment of birds on both land and water from sparrows and warblers to ducks, grebes, and gallinules. This is an interesting new place for us to bird and well worth the hour and a half drive. We will then move on to Black Diamond Mines, which is the former site of the Hazel Atlas Mining company. Here, we'll look for Canyon Wren, quail, swifts, woodpeckers, raptors and more. Once again, these parks are well worth the effort.

**Directions:** To get to **Big Break** take Hwy 4-E to exit 30 for CA 160. Continue on CA 160 and take exit CA-4 to Stockton/Oakley. Then turn right on Main St. and then left on Big Break Rd into the park. From the south, take N. Vasco Rd to exit CA-4, then right on Main St and left on Big Break Rd. into the park. Arrive at 69 Big Break RD. Approx. 1h 30min. It is a good idea to check Google maps for your best route and to avoid traffic problems. To get to **Black Diamond Mines**, return to CA-4 west to Somersville Rd. Continue west up the hill to the visitor center. Parking is free.

**Old San Joaquin River/Mountain House Slough/Clifton Court Forebay**  
**November 8, Thursday, 9:00 AM**  
**Leader: Rich Cimino**  
**yellowbilledtours@gmail.com, 925-353-0266**

Come along with birding guide Rich Cimino to explore the ponds, river, channels, bay, grassland and agricultural fields of San Joaquin, Contra Costa, and eastern Alameda counties all in one day! Pick up ducks, grebes, swans, shorebirds, raptors and passerines for your county lists. Pre-registration is not required, and all are welcome. Heavy rain cancels. Bring a scope, lunch, drinks and a smile! Contact the leader with any questions.

**Directions:** Meet at 9:00 AM at the Shell service station on Mountain House Parkway at Schulte Road in Tracy, about 30 minutes east of Castro Valley. Take I-580 east, and at the 205 split, stay on I-580 south towards Los Angeles. Shortly, take exit 67 - Mountain House Parkway/Patterson Pass Road - and turn left at the end of the ramp to go back over the freeway on Mountain House Parkway to Schulte Road. The Shell station (Subway, snacks, restrooms) will be on your left ahead.

**Pacific Commons Linear Park**  
**November 11, Sunday, 8:30 AM - Noon**  
**Leaders: Rich Nicholson**  
**fieldtripsATOhloneAudubon.org**

Fremont's Pacific Commons Linear Park is a productive winter birding site. The ponds are excellent for many waterfowl species. Waders such as American Bittern inhabit the pond edges and wetlands. The fields are productive for wintering sparrows and possibly Tricolored Blackbirds or even a stray Yellow-Headed Blackbird. We have a good chance at seeing interesting raptors such as Ferruginous Hawk. Snow, Ross's and Cackling Geese often visit this time of year. Bring a scope if you have one. Heavy rain cancels.

**Directions:** To reach the park, exit I-880 in Fremont at Auto Mall Parkway. Go west on Auto Mall Parkway for a mile to a small pull-off area on the left at an entrance sign, and park along the road. No facilities at Pacific Commons, but you pass a Starbucks on the north side of Auto Mall Parkway on your way to the park.

**Ward Creek Canyon, Hayward**  
**November 13, Tuesday, 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM**  
**Leaders: Vicki Robinson & Lynn Feindel**  
**fieldtripsATOhloneAudubon.org**

The trail along Ward Creek in Hayward runs through a heavily wooded greenbelt and offers the possibility of locating some hard-to-find species: Pacific Wren, Varied Thrush, and Golden-crowned Kinglet. We will also look for Hairy Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Red-breasted Sapsucker, and wintering warblers. We will meet at East Avenue Park, bird the park, and descend the greenbelt trail, birding the route down to Campus Drive. We will then ferry drivers back to their cars. Heavy rain cancels. Restrooms are available at East Ave. Park.

**Directions:** Locate the intersection of Second St. and E St. (large Catholic Church). Take E St. east and, at a 'Y' junction, bear right on East Ave. and continue to East Avenue Park at the end (1.8 m from 2nd St.)



**COMING!**  
**SAVE THE DATE**

**OHLONE CBC**  
**SUNDAY DECEMBER 16, 2018**  
 (watch for details next issue)

# BIRDING OBSERVATIONS

September 2018

By Stephanie Floyd

Fall migration offers some of the best birding in the Bay Area! Rare **Baird's Sandpipers**, **Wandering Tattlers**, **Pacific Golden-Plovers**, and a **Buff-Breasted Sandpiper** joined the more common incoming shorebirds, such as **Red-Necked Phalaropes** and **Spotted Sandpipers**, along the bay shore from Fremont to Richmond. An immature **Black-Throated Sparrow** and a



Green-tailed Towhee (V. Robinson)

**Pectoral Sandpiper** showed up at Coyote Hills. **Yellow, Townsend's, Wilson's, Hermit** and **Black-Throated Gray Warblers** arrived. Creekside Park in El Cerrito turned out to be a birding hot spot with **Willow and Pacific-Slope Flycatchers** and a rare **American**

**Redstart**. A rare **Green-Tailed Towhee** drew birders to the Berkeley hills.

This is also a great time to look for newly fledged raptors - hawks, eagles, and owls - soaring with their parents, learning to hunt.

Winter's ducks, such as **Northern Shovelers**, are on arrival, and in mid-September Vicki Robinson found **Bonaparte's Gulls** at Coyote Hills. At the same time, summer's breeders such as grosbeaks, tanagers, and orioles are on their way out.



Bonaparte's Gulls (V. Robinson)

Have you seen your first **White-or-Golden-Crowned Sparrow**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, or **Cedar Waxwing** of the season yet? Get on out there and enjoy the show!

# President's Corner

## My favorite smart phone app for birding

Do you still carry a field guide in book form when you go birding? I have several that I really like that are full of good information. I am currently going through the new **National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America**, learning and relearning quite a bit. But today I find it usually sits alongside my Peterson and Sibley on my desk, sort of like a reference collection, rarely going into the field with me. It wasn't this



way when I started birding as I would never think of heading into the field without my Peterson or my Golden guide and usually both. Today, with the advent of the smart phone and development of birding guides to go along, I'd rather just carry my field guide on my phone.

There are a host of apps to choose from. Everyone who produces a hard copy guide has their smart phone guide. I am partial to **iBird Pro**. Along with the smartphone field guides, there is a growing list of apps that fill specific needs. **Merlin**, put out by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology helps you id birds. **Song Sleuth**, put out by the Sibley, helps you id bird songs in the field, and many use the **eBird** app.

One of my favorites is **Birds Near Me** developed by Gerry Shaw. It is linked to **eBird**. The most useful is "Near Me" button which lists all birds seen within whatever distance and time interval you choose from your home. It will also link from the specific bird on the list to the "hotspot" it was seen. Another button is "Hotspots" which shows local birding sites around the world. Heading to Tucson? You can see all the local birding spots and what has recently been seen there. As I am going to Botswana in November, I am currently checking out what has been seen at Chobe National Park. Another button is "Notables". That shows rare birds that have been recently seen nearby. Apparently there has been Mute Swans and Nanday Parakeets at Don Edwards and Black Rails and Bobolinks at Alviso Marina this past week. Finally there is a search function that will show you the worldwide distribution of any bird you are interested in. Want to know where to find a Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater? Head to Ziwani Retreat Lodge outside Nairobi where several were seen this week. For each bird there are links to the Google Search entry, recordings of songs and to **Flicker** for photos. That's a lot of information for an app that is currently free. There are many other apps out there that will help you in your birding. Try them out and see if you start leaving that field guide at home.

-Bill Hoppes

## SAVE THE DATE!

EAST COUNTY COUNT  
CBC

FRIDAY DECEMBER  
14, 2018



# Conservation



## SB 1316 falters, but fight to Save Tesla Park continues

SB 1316 (Glazer), the Alameda-Tesla Expansion Area bill, would have allowed the State Parks Department to sell the 3,100 acre Alameda-Tesla Expansion Area (known locally as "Tesla Park") to local agencies in order to permanently preserve the land with proceeds from any such sale returned to the OHMVR Division. The bill passed the Senate and made it through two Assembly Committees, but was not released from "suspense" by the final committee, the Assembly Appropriations Committee, in late August. Therefore, SB 1316 is considered dead for this session. In the final stages California State Parks OHMVR Division communicated their opposition to the bill. We do not yet know exactly what happened in the internal workings of the Assembly Appropriations Committee, but it appears the opposition by State Parks and presumably the Administration, stalled the bill and prevented it from being released to be voted on by the full Assembly.

Although SB 1316 did not make it through the Legislature this session, Ohlone AS, along with the Friends of Tesla remain committed to permanently protecting Tesla. We will continue to advocate for a change in state policy and work to open new opportunities in the new year. Hopefully, the election will bring a new administration that is more supportive of preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural and cultural resources, particularly when specifically identified by local agencies. Help will be needed to try again.

**Status of the Litigation** - In the meantime, the litigation challenging the OHMVR plan to expand Carnegie SVRA and open Tesla to damaging OHV recreation continues, so we move forward on all fronts. Preparation of the over 50,000 page Administrative Record is now complete. Briefing schedules have been set for the remainder of 2018 and 2019. Our Ultra Vires claim challenging the authority of the OHMVR Commission to certify EIRs and approve General Plans will be the first cause of action to be addressed, followed by the CEQA challenges to the EIR and General Plan if we do not prevail on the Ultra Vires claim. The hearing on the Ultra Vires claim is set for March 15, 2019 in Sacramento Superior Court.

**You may donate via PayPal or by check. For information on how to donate, please go to [www.teslapark.org](http://www.teslapark.org).**

## Conservation agreements support Springtown Preserve

The Livermore City Council approved two agreements that will help to preserve and enhance habitat within the Springtown Preserve (Alkali Sink) in North Livermore. The City approved agreements with Newport Pointe LLC and Carl Zeiss Pension Trust Properties LLC, for sale of mitigation credits through a conservation easement on the land owned by the city in the Springtown Preserve.

In 2014, the city established a mitigation bank on city-owned properties in the Springtown Preserve. Newport Pointe LLC and Carl Zeiss Pension Trust Properties, LLC, approached the city to purchase mitigation credits from this bank to compensate for their development projects in Discovery Bay and Dublin. Under the agreement, Newport will contribute funds to remove invasive weeds and enhance vernal pool fairy shrimp habitat. Zeiss would purchase 40 acres of Burrowing Owl habitat and conduct 8 acres of wetland restoration.

The Springtown Preserve (Alkali Sink) is located on the northeast side of the Livermore Valley. The City owns three parcels that comprise approximately 300 acres within the southern portion of the Sink. The Springtown Preserve supports a unique and rare alkali wetland complex. Invasive weeds, damage from unauthorized motorized off-road vehicle and bicycle use, excavation activities, and dumping continue to threaten this sensitive habitat .  
(B. Hoppes)

**Conservation continued on pg. 6**



**CONTACT Marty at  
mfmorrow @ comcast.net**

## Conservation continued



On Friday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) Board of Directors toured Coyote Hills Regional

Park., The Board was given an update on a feasibility study that is just underway for a new visitor center in the

## Dumbarton Quarry Park Conversion

The latest quarry plan now includes 63 RV sites, 20 car camping sites, 26 "convenience" camping sites that will be cabins, a group camp that can hold 150 people and a group camp for 75 people. The plan also includes a camp store, and amphitheater, picnic area, playground, the park's service yard and a huge parking lot. The amphi-

general area of the existing visitor center, a viewing of a naturalist's program for a delightful 3rd grade class, a tour of the Ohlone site, an update on the Patterson Ranch public access and restoration project (yes the order of priority appears to be public access first) and a visit and update on the Dumbarton Quarry park conversion.

theater is planned to host "events." Drone footage of the RV camping area can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acO1pD2mr0w>

We will reserve judgment for now, but have concerns regarding the intense site uses and potential spillover impacts to wildlife.

## Patterson Ranch

Ohlone Audubon Society, along with the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge and the Friends of Coyote Hills, submitted a comment letter in response to the Notice of Preparation and Environmental Impact Report for EBRPD's proposal for public access and restoration of the 306 acres of Patterson Ranch lands that were donated to EBRPD.

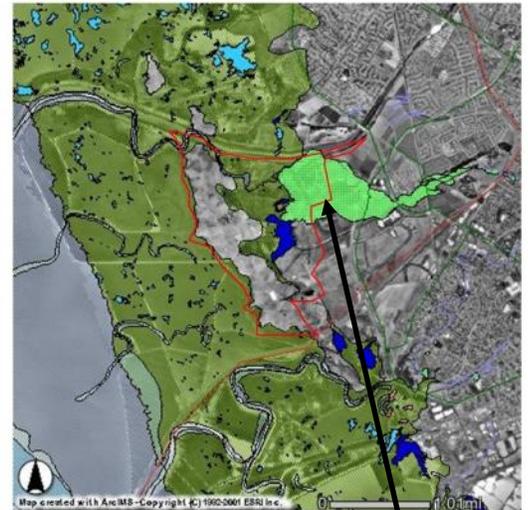
The comment letter expressed concerns regarding the alignment of proposed public access trails, a 100 space parking lot and picnic area and their proximity to areas that are to be restored (e.g. the historic willow grove), and requested that alternatives be included that may have less damaging impacts to biological resources. In particular, our organizations have emphasized the desirability of relocating the proposed parking lot and picnic area south of Patterson Ranch Road. Numerous scientific studies have demonstrated the negative impacts of human disturbance on wildlife.

To provide an idea of the regional importance of the historic willow grove, portions of which still remain

today, the Bay Goals Project (a collaboration of 100 scientists, agency staff, etc.) recommended that the historic willow grove along Patterson Slough be protected and restored. It would not be possible to restore the entirety of that grove as it once extended from Coyote Hills Regional Park to Ardenwood Historic Farm.

In 1998, the San Francisco Estuary Institute produced two maps, one depicting historic baylands habitats and one that depicted the "present day" (1998) baylands habitats that remain. The remnant willow grove (sausal) at Coyote Hills Regional Park is the only remaining willow grove in proximity to San Francisco Bay (at least in the South Bay). It is a magnet for migratory song birds, as indicated by the Coyote Hills Land Use Plan which states that "It is the park's best bird habitat," and that "... During the spring migration the willows support an amazing array of neotropical songbirds including:

## Coyote Hills Historic Baylands



**Historic Willows**

Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Willow Flycatcher (state endangered species)."

We will continue to express our concerns regarding the proposed trail alignments, parking lot and picnic area and will inform our members of opportunities to voice concerns.

-Carin High

### Campaign To Save East Bay's Almond Ranch Launched

**John Muir Land Trust seeks to raise \$4 million to protect the 281-acre property south of downtown Martinez from development**



John Muir Land Trust (JMLT, [jmlt.org](http://jmlt.org)) announces the Campaign To Save Almond Ranch, an effort to protect a stunning 281-acre property south of

downtown Martinez that has been a top priority of land conservationists for decades. JMLT has the privately-owned cattle ranch under contract and is seeking to raise \$4 million by the end of 2019. Saving Almond Ranch from development — the alternative outcome — would preserve an intact habitat corridor for wildlife, connect important major trails for the very first time, link large conserved landscapes, and open the property's beautiful rolling hills along the Franklin Ridge to hikers, dog walkers, cyclists, bird watchers, equestrians, and nature lovers of all ages. Almond is one of only two remaining acquisitions needed to complete the 50-mile Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Trail, a beautiful loop around the waters and atop the rolling hills of two counties.



The Campaign To Save Almond Ranch was launched with a first commitment of \$1 million from the East Bay Regional Park District ([ebparks.org](http://ebparks.org)) using funds made available by voters' approval of Measure WW in 2008 for high priority community park projects. **The Ohlone Audubon Board of Directors voted to contribute \$500 at the last board meeting.**

From Linus Eukel, Executive Director of the John Muir Land Trust:

*Almond Ranch will be just as important to people across the region. The true value of Almond Ranch to the East Bay's integrated system of trails, parks, and preserved public lands is immeasurable. We're optimistic about reaching the \$4 million goal, but obviously, we need every single donation, small and large!*

**For more info and/or make a donation visit [www.jmlt.org/almondbranch](http://www.jmlt.org/almondbranch)**

*Photo credit: Adam Weidenbach via John Muir Land Trust*

### A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW AND RENEWING OHLONE MEMBERS!

Ohlone sends a warm welcome and thank you to the following new and renewing chapter members:



Natalie Brophy, Diana Brumbaugh, Kate Buddenbaum, John Cant, Art Carey, Charles Findley, Stephanie Floyd, Julie Gilson, Grant Gladman, Eduardo Kneler, Georgeann Hardy, Erica Herron, Lori Moon, Duke Otoshi, Terry Preston, Judy Rudolph, Ronald Scudder, Joan & Harry Smith, Lynn Stinnett, La Vonne, Kathleen Yamamoto, James Watts, and Andrea Wuenschel

**Donations:** Diana Brumbaugh, Eduardo Kneler, Erica Herron, Julie Gilson, and Judy Rudolph

Is it time to renew? Look at your mailing label - it will tell you. For example: "Pd Thru 11/18" indicates that you are paid thru NOVEMBER 2018. A **"RENEW?"** indicates that this is your last Kite Call!

If you see a **"JOIN LOCAL?"** on your label this indicates that you have joined the National Audubon Society, but alas, **not** your local **Ohlone** chapter. **We would love to have you join us.**

**If you receive your Kite Call electronically**, look for a reminder in your email box.



To renew or join us please send a \$25 check to Pat Gordon, Membership Chair, 1922 Hillsdale Street, Hayward, CA 94541-5428. Thanks!

#### PLEASE CONSIDER ELECTRONIC KITE CALL!

We are urging members to switch over to an electronically issued *Kite Call*



The benefits are a cost savings to our chapter, in both printing costs and postage. Other benefits include getting it quicker and it is much more colorful!!!!!!

**GO GREEN!** Thank you for considering this!

Send your request to [pagepeg@aol.com](mailto:pagepeg@aol.com)

*Remember to:*



## Managing Winter Habitat for Sandhill Cranes in the Central Valley

by Bill Hoppes

California is an important wintering region for the two migratory subspecies of Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis*), the Greater Sandhill Cranes (*G. c. tabida*) and Lesser Sandhill Cranes (*G. c. canadensis*). Lesser Sandhills are smaller-bodied, long distant migrants whereas Greater are large-bodied and short distant migrants. The Greater breed in central and eastern Oregon, northeast California, northwest Nevada, and southcentral Washington. Lessers breed in southwest Alaska and possibly north of the Alaska Range and in Siberia. Approximately 30,000 sandhill cranes winter in the Central Valley. Of these approximately 24,000 are Lessers and 6000 Greater. The two subspecies can be hard to distinguish by themselves, but the larger size of the Greater makes it easy in mixed flocks.



*Lesser and Greater Sandhill Cranes in a mixed flock. Here it is easy to tell them apart by the Greater's "greater" size.*

Managing winter habitat for Sandhill Cranes is a complex undertaking. Cranes require two key habitat components on wintering areas: suitable night roosts and suitable foraging habitat. Daily habitat use by the cranes consists of one or more round trip flights from a centrally located roost site to one or more foraging fields. Because of energetic needs due to the larger size of the Greater, the distance from the roosting site to the foraging site is important. Greater, will generally only use foraging areas within two miles of the roost. Lessers will fly up to six miles from the roost to forage. In addition, Greater show very strong fidelity for roost sites. Some color-marked Greater Sandhill Cranes are known to have used the same local wintering areas for at least 18 years.

Government agencies and several nonprofits have spent millions of dollars to protect habitat that supports Sandhill Cranes. These purchases have generally focused on overnight roosting areas.

The El Dorado and Robin Bell gun clubs on Brack Tract were purchased in 1985 by California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to provide secure Greater Sandhill Crane roosts on Brack Tract. Originally designated as Woodbridge Ecological Reserve, these two sites are now the Isenberg Sandhill Crane Reserve. Cosumnes River Preserve was established in 1987 and has grown to over 50,000 acres, including the 9,200-acre Staten Island which was added in 2002. This preserve is managed under a broad partnership with The Nature Conservancy, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), CDFW, Sacramento County, California Department of Water Resources, Ducks Unlimited, and the California State Lands Commission. In 1994, the Stone Lakes NWR was established by USFWS. Finally 10 million dollars were invested in the expansion of San Joaquin River NWR to restore 777 acres of floodplain habitat.

Despite these investments, habitat for sandhill cranes is not secure. The model of crane habitat use of a central nighttime roost site surrounded by sufficient foraging sites within 2 miles for Greater and 6 miles for Lessers is inconsistent with the irregular boundaries of property ownership in the Delta. Changes in how farmers work their privately owned fields within the daily flight radius of the cranes may change crane abundance at a roost, regardless of management actions at the roost site itself.

*(Continued on next page)*

## ***Cranes (continued)***

Coordinating the entire set of factors needed for Sandhill Cranes in the Central Valley requires a complex partnership. Even though most of the overnight roost sites are protected, if the surrounding farmlands are converted or managed in ways detrimental to cranes, crane numbers will still be reduced. Management of these surrounding private farmlands in ways that are best for cranes may not be best economically for the farmers or work against traditional practices. Making this work requires a public-private partnership. The multi-agency example of Staten Island where farming practices work to benefit cranes is unlikely to be replicated in too many places. Keeping or increasing the number of cranes in the Central Valley will require a continuing effort to earn the trust and cooperation of surrounding private landowners.

Key factors in loss of suitable foraging habitat for cranes includes loss of agricultural habitats around known crane roost sites to urbanization and conversions of row-crops to

incompatible orchards and vineyards. How the farmer manages his land is also critical to the suitability of the fields for crane foraging habitat. Whether the farmer plants rice, wheat, corn, alfalfa, manages irrigated pasture or lets the land go fallow, impacts food availability for cranes. How much stubble is left in the field, tillage and mulching, flooding, irrigation and field burning practices all have significant impact on food availability for cranes.

The arrival of the Sandhills Cranes, happening right now, is one of the greatest migration spectacles in North America. Although the migration through Nebraska gets most of the press, we have our own version of it less than 100 miles away. The site I like best is at Woodbridge Ecological Preserve near Lodi. Cranes are just starting to arrive and will be there through February. If you haven't seen a crane fly-in, do it this season. On your drive into Woodbridge, think about the challenge of managing the surrounding lands as crane habitat.

### **When is the Best Time to See Cranes?** **By Tanya Hoppes**

As a docent at Woodbridge Ecological Reserve or WER, I'm constantly asked, "When is the best time to see Cranes?" Well, that depends on what you want to see. I love to go out mid-September when we clean up the North and South areas and get ready for our guests. The cranes are just coming in. They are so excited about being there. They're dancing and rapping up a storm. Their joy is sheer pleasure to watch. It's also the rare time where you will see them sitting on the ground like they're nesting. They're not, they're pooped. Alaska to Lodi is a long way!

If what you want to see are cranes, October to mid-November is a great time to come. Staten Island, Cosumnes, and Woodbridge are the only ones who have flooded their fields at this time bringing in large concentration of cranes into 3 single sites. Both the Lesser and Greater Sandhills Cranes are here together. Now, you can practice your skills at which is which. And not only that, while your binocs are on, look for the juveniles. They still have the soft golden brown down at the back of their heads and down their necks.

Most do not have the red at the top of their heads. Some have the beginnings of red. The males are about the size of their moms and the females slightly smaller. And don't forget to listen. Juveniles' voices crack. It sounds more like a whistle. You will also see large numbers of shorebirds and gulls, large numbers as in 500+. Be on the look out for Green Herons in the "ditches", White-faced Ibis in the ponds.

By mid-November, the Lessers start to move south to Merced. They're still a few that hang out or come back to visit, but for the most part, 96% of what you see from then on will be Greater. In December, the farmers begin flooding their fields. The large numbers of cranes at these three sites decrease. We've lost Daylight Savings Time, so the sun is setting 5 - 5:30. And it's cold and wet. But the Tundra Swans come in. Two or three ponds will have anywhere between 50 to 500, but white stretches for miles behind them. Watch for the American Kestrels up on the wires, White-tailed Kites kiting, Northern Harrier hunting, and Red-tailed Hawks surveying the area atop telephone poles.

January is colder, wetter, but the White-Fronted Geese and Snow

Geese are there by the thousands as well as an array of ducks: pintails, mallard, shovelers, wigeons. Don't be surprised if you see Cattle Egrets!

February is surprise month. The cranes are gathering for their flight back to their summer homes. From Merced, the Lessers are returning. You could go there Saturday and see 5,000 cranes fly-in and the next day, zero, zippo, not a crane to be found anywhere. And the cranes are not the only ones gathering to return north.

No matter when you go, the sunsets are magnificent! All shades of pinks from hot pink to light pink, purples and lavenders, reds and oranges splashed across the skies and water. Make sure to look west for Mt. Diablo in all it's splendor. Just 500 feet or more from the end of South are two Great Horned Owls. December on, look for pheasants towards the end of Woodbridge Road. So, when's the best time to go see the cranes. Anytime!



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