



# 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

- Sept 29 **FIELD TRIP**  
Pt. Reyes
- Oct 1 **GENERAL MEETING**  
Fremont
- Oct 5 **FIELD TRIP**  
Coyote Hills
- Oct 12 **FIELD TRIP**  
Tilden Reg Park
- Oct 19 **FIELD TRIP**  
Big Break/  
Black Diamond
- Nov 10 **FIELD TRIP**  
Pacific Commons
- Nov 12 **GENERAL MEETING**  
Castro Valley  
**NOTE DATE CHANGE**
- Nov 20 **FIELD TRIP**  
Ward Creek
- Dec 15 **CBC –Hayward/  
Fremont**

**Remember to bring  
your own cup to  
meetings!**



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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

### Membership Meetings

#### Sahul— A Paradise for Birds Presenter: Bob Lewis

**Date:** October 1, 2019  
**Time:** 7:30 PM  
**Location:** Niles Discovery Church,  
36600 Niles Blvd, Fremont, 94536



Australia, New Guinea and Tasmania are all part of the Australian geological plate, or Sahul. Bob will discuss a bit of geo-

logical history, a bit of taxonomy, and look at examples of many of Papua, New Guinea’s (PNG) 70 bird families.

Our virtual journey begins with a brief visit to O’Reilly’s, a wonderful jungle lodge near Brisbane, Australia. Next, we will travel to Port Moresby, the capital PNG. Our route in PNG will take us from the lowlands in the south of the island to the highlands on the western border, and then on to Mount Hagen, a 12,000’ extinct volcano. PNG has 708 species of birds and 5 endemic families, and is home to most species of spectacular Birds of Paradise and fascinating Bowerbirds.

*(cont’d pg 2)*

#### Biking for Birds:

**365 days, 18,000 miles, 618 species, 1 amazing adventure**

**Presenter: Dorian Anderson**

**Date: November 12, 2019**  
**Time: 7:30PM**  
**Location: Castro Valley Adult School**  
4430 Alma Ave., Castro Valley 94546  
**PLEASE NOTE DATE CHANGE!**

On January 1st, 2014, Dorian Anderson boarded his bicycle for an eco-friendly twist on the classic birdwatching “Big Year”, a project during which a birdwatcher tries to maximize the number of bird species observed during a calendar year. Where his predecessors utilized cars, planes, boats, and even helicopters, Anderson used only a bicycle, and in the 12 months following his departure he pedaled 18,000 miles through 28 states in search of birds. He saw the country like no birder before him, overcame immeasurable physical and mental challenges, and found an incredible 618 species by year’s end.

Dorian will speak about the genesis of the trip and why he decided to resign his long-standing scientific career to pursue the project. He’ll provide a recount of his travels, *(cont’d pg 3)*

**October Program (continued)**

**Bob's** second career is very avian. He has served on the GGAS board where he led the Adult Education Committee. He is an award-winning photographer and world traveler, and frequent public speaker on avian topics at libraries and Audubon Societies. Bob co-teaches Master Birding, Avian Evolution and Bay Area Birds, and his bird life list stands at 4992. He is hoping to reach 5000 on GGAS' Namibia tour in August.

**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 (east): From the freeway exit, turn left to go over the overpass, then in approximately four miles (through Union City and into the Fremont city limits), 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 Hwy 680 to the first Mission Blvd. 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.



# Field Trips

**"BEST BIRD MAGNET" -  
POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE  
Sunday September 29th 8:00am – 4:00pm  
Leader: Bob Toleno  
fieldtrips@ohloneaudubon.org**

## NOTE ITINERARY /TIME CHANGE

Fall migrants, including rarities, can often be found at the birding hotspots in Outer Point Reyes National Seashore. This all day caravan-style birding trip will visit some of the prime birding locations on the outer shore, such as the Fish Docks and the lighthouse. We will start birding at the Bear Valley Visitor Center, where we will meet and drive to the other birding spots. Wear layers—the point can be very chilly! Bring lunch, liquids, sunscreen, scopes and a full gas tank. Walking will be over uneven surfaces and stairs at the lighthouse. Heavy rain cancels, but fog does not! Fog may result in a fallout at this time of year! Please try and carpool or plan on leaving some cars at Bear Valley as parking is limited on the outer point.

**Directions:** Proceed to the San Rafael Bridge in Richmond, from either Hwy 880 N or Hwy 580 W, take the Sir Francis Drake Blvd turnoff in San Rafael and go west to Hwy 1, turn right in Olema, then left on Bear Valley Road, and left into the Visitor Center. Meet near the restrooms in the parking lot.

GPS 38.041146 N -122.80023 W to Bear Valley Visitor Center

**Coyote Hills Regional Park  
Saturday, October 5, 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM  
Leaders: Jerry Ting and Vicki Robinson  
fieldtrips@ohloneaudubon.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. Meet at the Visitor Center. \$5 parking fee payable at kiosk, free to East Bay Parks annual pass holders.

**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 Rd to the park.

**Tilden Regional Park  
October 12, Saturday, 8:30 AM - Noon  
Leaders: Rich Nicholson & Bob Dunn  
fieldtrips@ohloneaudubon.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).

**Directions:** From Highway 24 at Orinda Crossroads, take the Orinda-Moraga exit. Go east on Camino Pablo 2 miles to 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>.

## Field Trips (continued)

**Big Break/Black Diamond Mines**  
**October 19th, Saturday, 9am-12:30pm**  
**Leaders: Rich Nicholson & Bob Dunn**  
**fieldtrips@ohloneaudubon.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. 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.

**Pacific Commons Linear Park**  
**November 10, Sunday, 8:30 AM - Noon**  
**Leaders: Rich Nicholson & Vicki Robinson**  
**fieldtrips@ohloneaudubon.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.

**More Field Trips page 4!**

## November Program

(continued from page 1)

and his personality and enthusiasm will be on full display as he spins tales of birds, bicycles, extreme weather, landscapes, and everything else he encountered on America's roads. His story should not be missed!

**Dorian Anderson** started birding in his family backyard in Philadelphia at age seven, and his interest grew to encompass the Delaware Valley and Jersey Shore during his preteen years. He attended several of Victor Emanuel's youth birding camps as a teenager and was a very active birder until the responsibilities of boarding school pushed the interest to into the background.

He attended Stanford University where he studied Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and he worked in the department of Molecular Biology at Harvard University after graduation. In 2004, he moved to New York to begin his doctorate in

Developmental Genetics and Molecular Cell Biology at NYU. He completed that degree in 2010 and moved back to Boston for a post-doctoral fellowship in Molecular Neuroscience at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School. However, by the end of 2012 he decided academic science was no longer his calling and wanted to reconnect with his childhood birding passion. He resigned his position in the middle of 2013 and began preparing for his Big Year adventure. Momentum from that project opened up many doors including public speaking, travel writing, and tour guiding. He recently spent two months working with the Audubon Society in Columbia, and he leads international birding tour pelagic trips for the Bay Area-based ecotourism company, Alvaro's Adventures. He is an accomplished bird photographer, and is working to finish a book about his bike-birding adventure.

**Directions: From San Francisco / Oakland :** Take I-880 south then merge onto I-238 east toward I-580 / Castro Valley/ Stockton. I-238 S becomes I-580 E. Take the Redwood Road exit. Turn LEFT onto Redwood Road. Drive 1.2 miles, then turn right onto Alma Avenue. The school is on the left. Park in larger lot on top.  
**From Tri-Valley Area:** Take I-580 West toward Oakland. Exit Castro Valley. Turn LEFT onto E. Castro Valley Blvd. Turn RIGHT onto Redwood Road. Drive 1.2 miles to Alma, and proceed as above.  
**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. Drive 1.2 miles, then turn right onto Alma Avenue and proceed as above.

**Meet in Gym/Cafeteria, on the west side of the campus**

## Field Trips (continued)

**Ward Creek Canyon, Hayward**  
**November 20, Wednesday, 8:30 - 11:30 AM**  
**Leaders: Vicki Robinson & Lynn Feindel**  
**fieldtrips@ohloneaudubon.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 shuttle 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.)*



SAVE THE DATES:

HAYWARD-FREMONT CBC  
 Sunday, December 15, 2019

EAST COUNTY CBC  
 Friday, December 20, 2019



**Sooty Shearwaters, Half Moon Bay, 9/8/19 (P. Gordon)**

## BIRDING OBSERVATIONS

Fall 2019

By Stephanie Floyd

Fall migration is underway! Listen and look in our parks and gardens. **Pacific-Slope Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Warbling Vireo** and more are all coming through.

Birder Teale Fristoe found a "really good bird": a hatch-year **Blackpoll Warbler** in the always productive big oak by the tule hut at Coyote Hills Regional Park.



**Blackpoll Warbler, Coyote Hills RP, 9/13/19 (Jerry Ting)**

Along the bayshore in Hayward and Middle Harbor we hear scattered reports of rare **Baird's Sandpipers**. On a mid-September field trip led by Jerry Steenhoven, hundreds of **Elegant Terns** were seen in Alameda. **Common Terns** have also been seen along with at least one **Heermann's Gull** and a **Pectoral Sandpiper**. **Wandering Tattlers** have been seen at San Leandro Marina and Middle Harbor. Contra Costa County birders are reporting **Black-Throated Gray Warbler** and **Hermit Warbler**. And a stray **Brant** continues with the **Canada Goose** flock at Martin Luther King shoreline center in Oakland. Fine fall weather, leaves changing color... what a great time to go birding!

**Editor's Note:** there was also a lot of action along our coast. The Ohlone Pelagic Trip September 8 saw a spectacle of about 50,000 **Sooty Shearwaters** in the Half Moon Bay harbor! So full of anchovies it seems they barely moved. . .

# President's Corner

Greetings from Alaska. Bummer news on the status of two of the most interesting species in California. The USFWS determined in August that neither the Tri-colored Blackbird nor the Joshua Tree merited protection under the Endangered Species Act.

The Tri-colored Blackbird is a remarkable bird. Found almost exclusively in California, its breeding colonies can sometimes grow to more than 20,000 birds, often all settled into a single 10-acre field or wetland. While similar to the more widespread Red-winged Blackbird, male Tri-colored Blackbirds are distinguished by their red shoulder patch with a bright white bar. In the 19th Century, Tri-colored Blackbird flocks were described as so numerous "as to darken the sky." Since then, the population has declined from several million to fewer than 180,000 today. As a result of recent population declines and ongoing threats, the species was listed as threatened under the California Endangered Species Act in April 2018. On February 3, 2015, The Center for Biological Diversity petitioned the USFWS to list the Tri-colored Blackbird as an endangered or threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. In August, the USFSW found that although many threats are continuing to impact the Tri-colored Blackbird and its habitat, the State of California and various nonprofits were doing such a good job in managing the blackbird and its habitat that federal protection wasn't needed. Go figure.

Wild Earth Guardians, petitioned the USFWS in September 2015 to list the Joshua Tree as threatened and, if applicable, designate critical habitat for the species. USFWS then undertook a 12-month review of the status of the Joshua Tree. In its review USFWS noted that the primary stressors to the Joshua Tree include wildfire, invasive plants, climate change, and habitat loss. USFWS concluded that while these stressors are affecting individual Joshua Trees, there was no evidence the trees are experiencing the stressors at a population-level or species-level scale. The USFWS concluded that the Joshua Tree is not in danger of extinction or likely to become so within the foreseeable future, citing, among other things, (1) the long-lived nature of the species, (2) its large range and distribution, and (3) the fact that Joshua Trees mostly occur on federal lands.

So, as in so many cases, it is back to the trenches to work for the benefit of these and many other species that are facing challenges. It will take engagement by concerned citizens and nonprofits in the management decisions of public agencies to keep the trends for these and other species from continuing to move in negative directions.

*-Bill Hoppe*

## 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:*



Debbi Brusco, Stephanie Byous, Chris & Gary Bard, Cheri Boulton, LaVonne Gallo, Cherie Holcomb, Pat Kite, Patricia Mann, Paul McCollom, Laurie Price, Judy Rudolph, Rita Sklar, Christine Smith, Kathleen Yamamoto

**And thank you for your donation:** Chris & Gary Bard, Jan Elred, Judy Rudolph, Peter Szutu, The Sara Mathews Trust

## PLEASE CONSIDER AN ELECTRONIC KITE CALL!

**We are urging members to switch over to an electronically issued *Kite Call* (but you don't have to!)**

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!**

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



Is it time to renew? Look at your mailing label - it will tell you. For example: "Pd Thru 10/19" indicates that you are paid thru October 2019. A "**RENEW?**" indicates that this is your last Kite Call! A **cmp** means you are chapter membership paid; a **nnmp** means you are a national member only and a "**JOIN LOCAL?**" on your label 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 Or thru PayPal on our website ([www.ohloneaudubon.org](http://www.ohloneaudubon.org)) Thanks!**



<https://cranefestival.com/>

# Conservation



**GOOD NEWS**—We are incredibly happy to report that AB 1086 (Bauer-Kahan)-**Alameda-Tesla Expansion Area Bill** was PASSED by the Legislature. It was a herculean effort in the last 2 weeks to use a legislative gut and amend procedure to put the language from **SB 767** into **AB 1086** and get the Tesla preservation bill passed by both houses of the Legislature by the end of this year’s session- midnight Friday September 13, 2019.

We owe a special thanks to **Senator Glazer** for starting the effort to pass the Tesla preservation bill in 2017 and for **Assembly Member Bauer-Kahan** and her team for leading this current legislative process and using her standing in the Assembly to push the bill over the legislative goal line during the equivalent of the 2 minute warning. There are so many others to thank for this success, including all of you, local officials and agencies, and the legislative advocates in the Capitol. Tesla is lucky to have so many pulling for her.

While passage of AB 1086 is an essential step in the process to permanently protect Tesla, it is not the end of our work. Next, we need to ensure Governor Newsom signs AB 1086 into law. He has a month to act. Members were requested to contact the Governor. Ohlone has done so as an organization. After the bill is signed, we will then begin work to obtain the determination by the State Parks Department that it is in the public interest to sell Tesla to a local agency or non-profit for conservation purposes.

## Area 4



Under the category, “the hits just keep on coming” the **City of Newark** gave notification of a 20-day public review period for the “Sanctuary West” project. We hope the irony of the name isn’t lost on anyone.

The proposal is to construct approximately 469 detached single-family residences, parks, trails and roadways spread across the site, to take advantage of where ever there are sufficiently sized upland areas to place development, in some places only a road and a single row of houses. This allows the developer to avoid having to obtain permits from the Corps and the Regional Water Quality Control Board for fills placed in waters of the U.S. or waters of the State. Rather than consolidating the development footprint impacts, they are spread across a larger area of the landscape leading to the potential for adverse indirect impacts to wetlands and wildlife over a greater footprint. The development still requires the import of fill to raise the site out of the FEMA 100-year floodplain.

This may go before the Planning Commission on **10/22/19. It would be great to have a crowd of folks voicing their opposition to the plan.** Information can be found by clicking on “draft compliance checklist” once at the webpage (there are many links that pertain to the original environmental review process): <http://www.newark.org/departments/community-development/specific-plans-master-plans/area-3-and-4-specific-plan-project>



## Patterson Ranch

**SAD NEWS**—The East Bay Regional Park District Board of Directors approved the FEIR and Land Use Plan Amendment for the restoration and public access plan for the donated Patterson Ranch lands. Board members did agree at the last minute to remove the spur trail and observation deck on the east side of Patterson Slough and to “consider” removal of the observation deck from the spur trail on the western side of Patterson Slough. The parking lot, picnic area and restrooms will remain north of Patterson Ranch Road, though the parking lot may be made longer and narrower and the restrooms flipped to the western side of the parking lot. Language was also added that EBRPD would consider seasonal closure of the spur trails.

We had strongly urged the Board to relocate these facilities to the general area of the informal parking lot at the corner of Paseo Padre Parkway and Patterson Ranch Road, and to remove both spur trails and observation decks to reduce the adverse impacts of human disturbance on wildlife utilizing Patterson Slough. We are disappointed by the decision – a sad conclusion to a campaign to protect these lands that has lasted for more than a decade.

## Conservation continued



### Capitol Corridor Presentation

Shirley Qian, Buzz Berger, and John Bourgeois provided an update to local environmental groups, their analysis of potential alignments and configurations of a triple-tracked rail line through the Don Edwards Refuge from Newark south through the community of Alviso. Possible alignments were presented, along with potential modes of construction, including an all trestle triple-track through the Refuge, or triple-tracks on the existing berm alignment, or a blend of the two techniques with areas of potential refugial escape habitat constructed beneath some portions of the tracks on trestles. Presenters stated they realize potential impacts

to the Refuge are a concern and that their goal is to avoid and minimize impacts and then deal with compensatory mitigation which may be significant. Many questions were asked and there was a lot of discussion regarding the advantages or disadvantages of the various potential options. The purpose of these meetings has been to receive input from the many stakeholders. The result of this outreach will be presentation of the information gathered throughout this outreach process to the powers that be, to inform potential alternatives that would be explored in more detail as the process moves forward towards formal environmental review. We appreciate the outreach the Capitol Corridor team has made to the environmental community long before the project goes through the formal environmental review process.

### Wildlife Corridors

Habitat fragmentation is thought to be one the biggest threats to the global biodiversity of birds and other wildlife. We know that genetic diversity is essential to maintain a species. Creeks and the vegetative strips and upland areas adjacent to them provide an opportunity for small fragmented populations of wildlife species to continue the movement and mixing of genetic material necessary to sustain a healthy population.

These streamside buffers are a sanctuary for animals because they provide cover, water, food and breeding and nesting habitat, all of which are necessary for survival. For aquatic species, streamside buffers are important because they provide shade to regulate air and water temperature.

A proposed Eden Housing project in Castro Valley, although relatively small, is a good example of how even well-intentioned urbanization pushes wildlife to the distant edges of former habitat and closer to extinction through cumulative effects of similar projects.

This project along San Lorenzo Creek in Castro Valley, locally called **Ruby Meadows**, lies within the Alameda County jurisdiction and adjacent to land regulated by the City of Hayward. The project is a 72-unit apartment structure surrounded by a 109-space paved parking lot. If approved it will require the removal of several heritage oaks, native vegetation and an historical fruit orchard. It will destroy one of the few upland wildlife areas remaining along this creek after many years of poorly planned urbanization in one of the major watersheds in Alameda County.

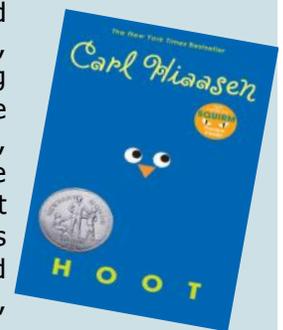
Awareness of the gradual loss of these wildlife corridors and buffers is vital if we are to maintain even these small remaining patches of habitat for wildlife. This project is currently still in the discussion and planning phase. We have been and will continue to pay close attention to this and other projects that threaten the remaining wildlife habitat throughout our area. **For information and if you would like to get involved please contact Terry Preston at [Mtmprston@comcast.net](mailto:Mtmprston@comcast.net).**

### Would you give a HOOT for a children's book?

Carl Hiaasen has crafted a smoothly told adventure tale for children, **Hoot**, featuring children, and giving voice to children's worries, curiosities, cares, and concerns. Adults play secondary roles, make mistakes, learn from kids, and upend stereotypes. Environmental ethics come alive at the center of the plot and define success in the end. Heavy moral lessons are presented with a touch as light as the feathers on the Burrowing Owls whose peril provides the plot.

Homesick for Montana, with memories of Ospreys, Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, and large owls heard at night, the boy in chapter 1 has just moved to Florida and faces the challenge of making new friends at school and coping with new bullies on the school bus. When he sees Ospreys doing well in Florida, he thinks he might do well himself. In time, his allies in a growing fight to defend Burrowing

Owls turn out to be stressed members of a dysfunctional family, realistically in need of a distracting common cause. Pondering what we would call green civil disobedience, the boy asks his mother what's the right thing to do? She says, I don't have an answer, except sometimes your brain tells you one thing and your heart, another. The boy says, that was an answer.



This birdy book mentions the Audubon Society and Sibley's guide, compares habitats in Montana and Florida, has kids running through fields and forests or silently sitting to watch a sunset on a shore. The lessons and examples are hidden gems, making Hoot an award-winning read for the child in your family or the child in your heart.

-Tadd Ottman

## UGH! Another Gull

By Bill Hoppes

Gulls do not elicit the excitement in birders that, say, warblers do. That stream of white bodied birds commuting to the landfill or sitting on the pilings in the bay or competing for tourist's lunch leftovers just don't seem to command much interest from birders. One reason is that many beginning birders think identifying gulls is hard. There are just too many of them and they all look alike. Not true. Identifying gulls isn't that difficult.

There are nine species of gulls that we can reasonably expect to see in our area. The vast majority consist of only five species. When I started birding in the 70's it was only four, but times change. With only three or



**Ring-billed Gull, note the distinct ring on the bill and the light eye**

four field marks you can confidently identify each of these. Now I am not going to cover immature gulls (that's for a later article) or breeding-nonbreeding, or hybrids. First things first. Learn to identify the mature adults and then add the complicated stuff later. The five species that make up the vast majority of gulls in our area are: **Western Gull, Herring Gull, Glaucous-winged Gull, California Gull, and Ring-billed Gull.**

The first field mark I look for in identifying these five is "is it big or is it small". Three of the gulls, the Western, Herring, and Glaucous-winged are "big", the California and Ring-billed are "small". We need a reference point for size and another

one of our favorite birds, the American Crow, will do. If the gull in question is no bigger than a crow, it is "small". If it is definitely bigger than a crow, say approaching Raven size, then it is "large".



**California Gull, look for the red spot on the lower mandible and the "dark eye".**

Let's do the small gulls, **California and Ring-billed** first. It may not work for you but when I first look at these gulls I see a difference in body shape. To me, California Gulls look sleek and trim, whereas Ring-billed Gulls look kind of chunky as if they need to be hitting the gym some more. More importantly for these two species are the markings on the bill and the color of the eye.



**Immature California Gull. Don't be fooled by the black at the tip of the bill, For Ring-billed Gull, look for the distinct ring.**

As its name implies, the Ring-billed Gull has a distinct ring around the end of the bill. In all plumages, the California Gull has a red spot at the end of its lower bill. These are distinctive and should be the first thing you look for. One note of caution, immature California Gulls have black at the tip of their bill that can fool you into thinking it is a ring. Look for the red spot of the California Gull and the distinct ring of the Ring-billed Gull before making a judgement.

**(Gulls continued)**

There is one other field mark that can help you. We will use this on some of the other species as well and that is whether the bird has a “dark eye” or a “light eye”. California Gulls have a “dark eye” and Ring-billed Gulls a “light eye”. So when you see these gulls, confirm it is a “small” gull. Look for a distinct ring around the bill or the red spot. Light eye or dark eye. With practice you should have these down.

Now the “big” gulls:

The first thing I look for with the big gulls is the color of the upper side of the wings. Western Gulls have a dark gray, some call it slate gray, color on the upper side of their wings. In Herring Gull and Glaucous-winged Gull, this is light gray. The Western Gull has a large yellow bill, some call it a “banana bill”. This gull is another one with a “light eye”. There are other field marks, but the dark gray wings and bright yellow bill should make this one easy.



**Western Gull, slate-gray upper wings and “light eye” make this an easy ID.**

That leaves two gulls with light gray wings. The Herring Gull has the light gray wings and the “pale eye”. Glaucous-winged Gulls have the pale gray wings, but the wing-tips are also only a slightly darker gray, not black like the Herring Gull. Glaucous winged Gulls also have the dark eye, unlike the “light eye” of the Herring Gull.



**Herring Gull (left), again light gray upper wing but the wingtips are black compared to darker gray in the Glaucous-winged. Also note the “light eye”.**



**Glaucous-winged Gull (right), light gray upper-wings, wing-tips a darker shade of gray. Note the “dark eye”.**

There are other field marks to use such as leg color and streaking on the head, but keep it simple.

You see a gull, is it big or small. If it is small-the size of a crow, does it have a distinct ring around the bill (Ring-billed Gull) or a red spot on the lower mandible (California Gull). If it is a big gull-larger than a crow, is it dark gray on the upper wings (Western), or light gray. If light gray upper wings are the wingtips black (Herring) or also light gray (Glaucous-winged.)

Gulls can be and are much more complicated than this. But get confident in these five, then add in the other four-five species you might see, learn some of the breeding/nonbreeding variation, and then you are ready to move on to immature gulls. But that is for later.



**Monarchs and Milkweed: *Problems with Tropical Milkweed***

Many of us have been planting milkweed to help our monarch friends only to find out that the type we have been planting is a problem. Tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) is a non-native milkweed that has exploded in popularity in response to the demand for milkweed. It is simple to propagate, allowing growers to rapidly produce the plant for quick sale. The plant is also attractive, both to humans and monarchs, providing flowers and lush green foliage throughout the growing season – and that’s a problem. Tropical milkweed becomes a problem when planted in our area where it does not die back in winter. A protozoan parasite of monarch butterflies (*Ophryocystis elektroscirrha* or OE for short) can travel with monarchs visiting the plants and become deposited on leaves. When caterpillars hatch and start eating the plant, they ingest the OE. High OE levels in adult monarchs have been linked to lower migration success in the eastern monarch population, as well as reductions in body mass, lifespan, mating success, and flight ability. Be sure to plant the native milkweed. As an alternative to tropical milkweed consider planting orange butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*). For native milkweed you can visit the Annie’s Annuals website at <http://www.anniesannuals.com> or even better, visit the store located in Richmond, CA. It’s a fun place to visit.

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