



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

Calendar

- Sept 1 GENERAL MEETING
Via Zoom
- Sept 26 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION PICNIC
CANCELLED
- Oct 3 FIELD TRIP Coyote Hills
TENTATIVE
- Oct 6 GENERAL MEETING
Via Zoom
- Oct 10 FIELD TRIP Tilden Reg Park
TENTATIVE
- Oct 17 FIELD TRIP Big Break/Blk Diamond
TENTATIVE

Membership Meetings

The Canary Islands

By Jaan Lepson

Date: September 1, 2020
Time: 7:30PM
Location: Online Video Conference via **Zoom**
(Details on page 2)

Trans-Pacific Migrations

By Peter Pyle

Date: October 6, 2020
Time: 7:30PM
Location: Online Video Conference via **Zoom**
(Details on page 2)

SEE ZOOM REGISTRATION DETAILS NEXT PAGE



IMPORTANT NOTICE REGARDING THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS AND OHLONE AUDUBON ACTIVITIES

Dear Ohlone Members and Supporters,

BE SURE TO CHECK WEBSITE AND/OR FACEBOOK BEFORE VENTURING OUT TO CHECK STATUS OF EVENTS/TRIPS

As this pandemic continues, and with an abundance of caution for the safety and health of our members, please check our website for updates regarding our activities. Currently all field trips are cancelled in the near future and Debbie Wong, our program chair, has set us up for **ZOOM** virtual meetings in September thru December. Please connect and tune in! See the details next page. Also included in this issue is our annual field trip teaser. We are looking forward to the other side of this to enjoy our birds and our friends again.

Remember, we can make a difference in the spread of Covid -19 by being vigilant in wearing masks, social distancing, and staying in our social bubble. It goes without saying again how important nature is to us and it looks like this may be our new "norm" for awhile. We hope you are all well, staying safe, and enjoying your "backyard" birding.

Stay Safe Stay well Practice Social Distancing
Take care of each other Stay Connected!

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

ANNUAL FIELD TRIP LIST
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MEETINGS DETAILS

SEPTEMBER 1, 2020 MEETING

The **Canary Islands**, according to **Jaan Lepson**, are the Hawai'i of Europe. This group of rugged, volcanic islands lies off the coast of Western Sahara, but is a part of Spain. The islands have a mix of European and African avifauna, with a number of endemic species and subspecies, as well as some wonderful succulent plants. Jaan will take us from the lava fields of Lanzarote and the arid scrublands of Fuerteventura, to Tenerife with its snow-covered peak of El Teide (the highest point in Spain) and the lush laurel forests of La Palma.

Jaan Lepson is a long-time member of the Ohlone Audubon Society, and has given several programs in the past; such as: the birds of Hawai'i, the Mariana Islands, and South Africa, etc. Jaan grew up in Hawai'i, where he started birding in his teens. It all began with the Hawai'i Audubon Society's book on Hawaiian birds, which had a cover photo of an 'I'iwi. He was entranced – and hooked.

Later, Jaan delved into natural history, and has a particular interest in the biology of oceanic islands, especially birds of course.

Jaan received his B.A. in biology at Princeton University in New Jersey, where he marveled at the Spring migration and spent a summer at Manú National Park in Perú, where he was awed by the riches of the neotropics. He then returned home to earn a Ph.D. in zoology at the University of Hawai'i, studying the role of color in the life history of the Hawai'i 'Akepa, an endangered Hawaiian honeycreeper found in the high rainforests of Hawai'i Island. He spent five years living in a tent camp at Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge on Mauna Kea for his field work, four years of which he was by himself with just the birds for company – it was magical! After graduation, he moved to California and had a major change in course, pivoting to laboratory astrophysics, and he is now an Associate Research Physicist at U.C. Berkeley's Space Sciences Laboratory.

Jaan and his husband, Peter, have made a number of trips over the years for bird watching, cacti, and other succulents in Pacific, Caribbean, and Atlantic islands, as well as South America and Southern Africa.

October 6, 2020 Meeting

Discover the amazing movement patterns of albatross, sharks and other open ocean creatures as Peter Pyle, Institute for Bird Populations wildlife biologist, presents his research on **Trans-Pacific Migrations**. Find out how Pacific Ocean migrants overcome the hardships and risks of long-distance travel through and over inhospitable and food-deprived central Pacific ocean. The great flights of Black-footed Albatrosses, which come 4000 miles to California to get food for their chicks, will be a primary focus. In addition, he will discuss the fasting of turtles, tuna, Great White Sharks and other marine animals, as well as the surprising over-water journeys of various shorebirds, land birds, insects, and bats, and he will put all of this information into conservation contexts.

Peter Pyle is an ornithologist and marine biologist studying bird, bat, and butterfly migration as well as the habits of the Great White Shark. During the late 1970s and early 1980s he partook in the Hawaii, Micronesia, and Samoa Forest Bird Surveys. From the

early 1980s through the early 2000s much of his research was conducted on birds and white sharks at the Farallon Islands, California. He has developed a special interest in bird molt and how it can be used to age birds, and has published many papers and taught many workshops on this subject in North and Latin America.

His books: "*Identification Guide to North American Birds, Part I and II*", summarizing molt, aging, and sexing information for North American birds in the hand, are revered among bird banders. To date, he has authored over 120 papers in scientific journals and three books, and has been a co-author on over 70 additional scientific papers and an on-line monograph on the birds of Hawaii.

He is a Research Associate both at the California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, and the B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu. Peter currently works for the Institute for Bird Populations where he conducts research on changes in the abundance, distribution, and ecology of North and Latin American bird populations.



ZOOM MEETING INSTRUCTIONS:

Due to COVID-19, Ohlone Audubon's membership meeting will be online via Zoom for the rest of 2020. To participate for the monthly meetings: **September 1, October 6, November 10, and December 1**, members need to use a computer or smart phone. **Pre-registration request for meeting participation is needed.** No need to be a member to join the meeting. Using Zoom to participate in the meetings is free. Members should familiarize themselves with using Zoom. Ohlone Audubon will send pre-registration request email to members who currently receive Kite Call online. Others who would like to join the meeting should go to the Ohlone Audubon website (www.ohloneaudubon.org) to send pre-registration requests.



Field Trips

BE SURE TO CHECK WEBSITE AND/OR FACEBOOK BEFOREHAND TO CHECK STATUS OF OUR TRIPS

Please remember the new birding etiquette guidelines:

Keep optics to yourself (and disinfect eye cups when you get home); maintain a 6 ft social distance; avoid touching communal surfaces; respect any trail restrictions/closures; share checklists not phones! Wear a mask when around others.

Coyote Hills Reg Park
Saturday, October 3, 8:00 - 11:30 AM

Leaders: Jerry Ting and Vicki Robinson
fieldtripsATOhloneAudubon.org
TENTATIVE

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 the kiosk, free to East Bay Parks annual pass holders.

Tilden Reg. Park
Saturday, October 10, 8:30 AM - Noon

Leaders: Rich Nicholson & Bob Dunn
fieldtripsATOhloneAudubon.org
TENTATIVE

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.

Directions: 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>

BIRDING OBSERVATIONS

Late Summer 2020

By Stephanie Floyd

South Bay birders reported several notable sightings in July. A juvenile **American Dipper**, known to nest here, was spotted along Los Gatos Creek, and a striking non-native **Northern Red Bishop** was seen (not unusually) in Mountain View. At the end of the month, Steve Tucker reported a **Yellow-Headed Blackbird** among the **Red-Winged Blackbirds** coming to a feeder near Los Capitancillos Ponds in San Jose.

On an outing to Hayward shoreline, California Young Birders spotted a **Pacific Golden Plover** at Frank's Dump. Hugh and Rosita Harvey followed up and also found **Red Knots** and a number of **Snowy Plovers**, including chicks. On a first visit to Clifton Court Forebay, Alan Bade posted a sighting of four **Bald Eagles**, numerous **Western** and **Clark's Grebes**, and a pair of **Blue Grosbeaks**.

On July 29, Jim Chiropolos reported the first **Hermit Warbler** of the fall moving through his yard's Monterey pines, commenting "it's the first big sign that birds are on the move in the Oakland hills."

Jerry Ting's puzzling "calidris" sandpiper at Coyote Hills launched a spirited ID challenge on the birding digest in late July, concluding it was a highly variable juvenile **Least Sandpiper**.

Watch your bird feeders for juvenile **Cooper's Hawks** newly making their own living. Especially if **Mourning Doves** are present, you may find a hawk perched on the fence just waiting for the opportunity to pounce.

Conservation



- How You Can Help Save Tesla Park?

We continue to work to Save Tesla Park and re-designate it as a non-motorized preserve. You can help too.

1. Contact Alameda County Supervisor Elect District 1 **Vinnie Bacon** (510) 284-4084—vbacon@fremont.gov or **David Haubert**(925)833-6665-David.haubert@dublin.ca.gov to ask for their active support to Save Tesla Park should they be elected.
2. Ask **State Senator Bob Wieckowski** to do all he can at the State Capitol to Save Tesla Park (510-794-3900)
3. Increase support for Tesla by following Tesla Park on Twitter at @tesla_park, #saveteslapark and @SFBaySierraClub and at [SaveTeslaPark](https://www.facebook.com/SaveTeslaPark) on Face book or at www.teslapark.org



Thank you for your continued work to Save Tesla Park!

Corral Hollow watershed

Save Ruby Meadow

Currently, there is a project proposal in the Grove Way Neighborhood of unincorporated Castro Valley. The project is located in the Riparian Oak Woodland and Wildlife Corridor along San Lorenzo Creek Watershed; this area is known as Ruby Meadow. Two forks of the San Lorenzo Creek converge here and Ruby Meadow is the last riparian wildlife habitat before the creek is channeled the rest of the way to the Bay. Losing it by development drives all wildlife back further into the hills. The project is Eden Housing's proposed Ruby Street Project (Site Development Review PLN2019-00024), which was recently approved by the Alameda County Planning Department *without* the public hearing that residents were assured would occur in early July. This project includes a

four-story apartment building containing 72 dwelling units (at 24.5 units per acre) and approximately 109 open parking spaces all on 2.95 acres, and a trail corridor design. **The project paves over Ruby Meadow and removes 90% of the trees.** There are several other more suitable locations in the local area that the planning department and housing agency have declined to look at for this project.

Around 1970, Caltrans took the land for the 238 freeway bypass. If the freeway would have gone through, Ruby Meadow would have been preserved as a mitigation site, with the freeway running overhead. In 2010, Caltrans cancelled the 238 freeway, clearing the land to be sold. It was not offered to parks first. Instead, deals were made between the Alameda County Board of Supervisors (represented by the Housing Authority) and Eden Housing, Incorporated, with no public transparency or knowledge.

There is abundant wildlife in Ruby Meadow, which reflects its designation in the Castro Valley General Plan as a Biological Resources Overlay Zone (BROZ). Monitoring for bats resulted in the identification of three species that were not identified in the CEQA Analysis for this project. The Western Red Bat was one of the newly identified species. This species is an uncommon bat, a California Species of Special Concern, and is given the highest priority for planning and conservation actions by the Western Bat Working Group.

Seven community groups, including **Ohlone Audubon Society**, have appealed the Alameda County Planning Director's decision to administratively approve the development and the environmental exemption (CEQA). Our appeal was heard on Monday, August 3, 2020 and rejected by the commissioners.

Marlina R. Selva, Psy.D.



FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE FOR 2020-2021 (TENTATIVE)

	2020	
SATURDAY, 10/3 (tentative)	COYOTE HILLS REG PARK	JERRY TING & VICKI ROBINSON
SATURDAY, 10/10 (tentative)	TILDEN REGIONAL PARK	RICH NICHOLSON & BOB DUNN
SATURDAY, 10/17 (tentative)	BIG BREAK/BLACK DIAMOND MINES	RICH NICHOLSON & BOB DUNN
SUNDAY, 11/1	HAYWARD SHORELAND (MT. TRASHMORE)	BOB TOLENO & JULI CHAMBERLIN
SUNDAY, 11/8	PACIFIC COMMONS	RICH NICHOLSON & MIKE CHRISTOPHERSON
WEDNESDAY, 11/18	WARD CREEK (HAYWARD)	VICKI ROBISON
WEDNESDAY, 11/25	VARGAS PLATEAU	JERRY TING & VICKI ROBINSON
SATURDAY, 12/12	SANDHILL CRANES (LODI)	STEPHANIE FLOYD
THURSDAY, 12/17	GARIN REG PARK (CBC PREVIEW)	JERRY & JUDY STEENHOVEN
FRIDAY, 12/18	EASTERN ALA COUNTY CBC	JEFF MILLER (COMPILER)
SUNDAY, 12/20	HAYWARD-FREMONT CBC	PHIL & PAT GORDON & MIKE CHRISTOPHERSON (CO-COMPILERS)
	2021	
SUNDAY, 1/3	NORTH LIVERMORE/ SPRINGTOWN	KATHY ROBERTSON
SATURDAY, 1/9	LAS GALLINAS PONDS	PHIL & PAT GORDON
SATURDAY, 1/16	AMERICAN CANYON WETLANDS	CHRIS & TERRI WILLS PHIL & PAT GORDON
SATURDAY, 1/23	SHADOW CLIFFS RRA	KATHY ROBERTSON
SATURDAY - SUNDAY, 2/6-7	MERCED NWR & PANOCHÉ VALLEY	PHIL & PAT GORDON
MONDAY, 2/8	LAKE ELIZABETH & GOMES PK	STEPHANIE FLOYD & SANDY FERREIRA
SATURDAY, 2/20	REDWOOD REG. PARK	JERRY TING & ELIZABETH OLIN
SATURDAY, 3/6	VIC FAZIO WETLANDS	PHIL & PAT GORDON
SUNDAY, 3/7	QUARRY LAKES	JERRY TING & KATHY ROBERTSON
SATURDAY, 3/13	DON EDWARDS NWR-ALVISO	RICH NICHOLSON & VICKI ROBINSON

2021 (cont'd)

(To Be Determined)	MOUNTAIN VIEW CEMENTARY	PHIL GEORGAKAKOS & MEGAN JANKOWSKI
SUNDAY, 3/28	BIRDING BY EAR AT GARIN FOR BEGINNERS ONLY	BILL SCOGGINS & MAGGIE CLARK
WEDNESDAY, 4/7	ALAMEDA SOUTH SHORE	MAGGIE CLARK
(To Be Determined)	REDWOOD REG PARK	PHIL GEORGAKAKOS & MEGAN JANKOWSKI
WEDNESDAY, 4/21	SUNOL REGIONAL WILDERNESS	JERRY TING & VICKI ROBINSON
SUNDAY, 4/25	SWALLOW WALK: LAKE ELIZABETH	SANDY FERREIRA & PHIL GORDON
SATURDAY, 5/8	VARGAS PLATEAU	VICKI ROBINSON & JERRY TING
SUNDAY, 5/16	MITCHELL CANYON	RICH NICHOLSON
WEDNESDAY, 5/19	LAKE CHABOT	RICH NICHOLSON & KATHY ROBERTSON
WEDNESDAY, 5/26	NILES HOTSPOTS	KATHY ROBERTSON & STEPHANIE FLOYD
SATURDAY, 6/5	<i>FIELD TRIP PLANNING MEETING</i>	BOB TOLENO
SUNDAY, 6/6	BEHIND THE SCENES @HAYWARD SHORELINE INTERPRETIVE CENTER	MAGGIE CLARK, PHIL & PAT GORDON
SATURDAY-SUNDAY, 6/19-20	YUBA PASS, SIERRA VALLEY (postponed from 2020!)	PHIL & PAT GORDON

Other trips planned for 2020-21:

If conditions permit, a **pelagic trip** may be planned for the fall of 2020 with Alvaro Jaramillo out of Half Moon Bay.

Also, new and exciting - a series of field trips for children with Ranger Sandy Ferreira. Watch for details!

And finally, always watch for the **Pop-up** field trips!

FYI

Gray Lodge Wildlife Tour Loop Closed

Improvements are coming to the Gray Lodge Wildlife Area in Butte County. Hosting some 80,000 visitors each year, Gray Lodge is one of the most heavily visited and used wildlife areas in the state, and construction work will restrict some public access over the next several months.

Work is scheduled to begin the week of June 15, 2020, on the auto tour loop on the west side of the wildlife area near Parking Lot 14. The auto tour loop and some nearby hiking trails will be closed during this construction period, which is expected to conclude around the first week in October, reopening in time for bird watching during peak fall and winter migrations.

Crews will regrade the steep slopes on the auto tour roadway to improve safety and add additional turnouts for wildlife viewing and passing. The pond bottoms along the auto tour loop will be reshaped to improve water movement and habitat management. The work is being funded through a \$1.4 million grant from the state Wildlife Conservation Board.

President's Corner

It is always fun when revisions to the *American Ornithologist's Checklist of North and Middle American Birds* come out. Birders either lose or gain species already on their life list or on their target list. The 2020 revision is no exception. There are a slew of changes, such as in scientific names and the order in the list for many hummingbirds. Most changes won't impact the average birder.

Two changes could impact your life list. The first of these is lumping Northwestern Crow with the American Crow. The Northwestern Crow always was a "maybe" species, and considered a close cousin of the American Crow. Even when it was first described by Spencer Fullerton Baird in 1858, he wasn't sure it merited full species status. The Northwestern Crow has a range limited to the Pacific Northwest. It is smaller than American Crow and has a lower, huskier voice. A recent study on the genetics of the two species prompted AOU's North American Classification Committee to conclude what most ornithologists already believed, that the two species are actually one and the same. I remember standing on the shore of Puget Sound in Washington watching crows in the early 1980's trying to convince myself that some of them were indeed smaller and with a different voice than crows I was used to seeing. All for naught, life list minus one.

When I was living in El Paso, Texas in the 1970's one of the few reasons birders came to our city was to see a Mexican Duck. The Mexican Duck

breeds from southeastern Arizona, southern New Mexico, and west-central Texas south to the highlands of Mexico. It usually winters within its breeding range. Both sexes of the Mexican Duck look like a female Mallard. Mexican Ducks were considered a separate species from the Mallard up until 1983 when the two were lumped. Now, as genetics rules all in avian taxonomy, the situation has changed. To simplify a complicated story, Mexican Ducks are part of a "Mallard" complex that includes, among others, the Mallard, Mottled Duck and American Black Duck. All these species interbreed to some degree where their ranges overlap. Mexican Ducks interbreed with Mallards to the same degree as Mottled and American Black Ducks. So the argument went, if Mexican Duck wasn't a true species, then neither were Mottled or American Black Ducks, they should all be Mallards. That apparently was a bridge too far for the AOU so Mexican Duck is back.

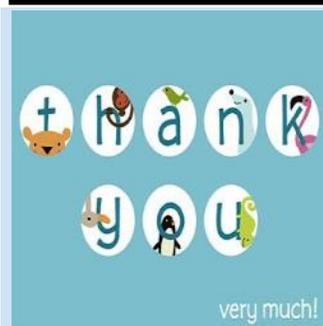
Identifying the Mexican Duck isn't easy. They tend to have a darker brown body with greater contrast to

the head and neck of the female Mallard. Unfortunately in addition to the female Mexican Duck on the left and female Mallards on the right. Note the contrast between the brown on the body and on the head and neck. If you look at enough birds you can convince yourself you got it right. Mallard, this is pretty much what the American Black Duck and Mottled Duck look like. Fortunately the range of the Mexican Duck doesn't greatly overlap these two species. There are a very few other field marks such as lines on the wing, a somewhat darker eye-line and markings on the bill that I was never able to see. When we went to see Mexican Ducks in El Paso we would watch all the female "Mallards" until we found one with a darker brown body that contrasted with the head and neck enough that we could convince ourselves we had it right. I am sure now that the Mexican Duck is back, more information to help birders ID this species will be forthcoming. So Hurrah! Life list plus one. So it is a net of zero life list wise. Time to get back out into the field.

Bill Hoppes



Mexican Duck on the left and female Mallards on the right. Note the contrast between the brown on the body and on the head and neck. If you look at enough birds you can convince yourself you got it right.



A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW AND RENEWING OHLONE MEMBERS!

Elizabeth Boulton, Ron Brazil, Natalie Brophy, Victoria Cloutier, Ed Ellebracht, Sandy Ferreira, La Vonne Gallo, Ruth Ann Hunt, Don & Roberta Lenkeit, Siv S. Mahanty, Candice Niccolson, Mary Norton, James Park, Murli Rao, Marlina Selva

Donations: Erica Herron, Ruth Ann Hunt, Kerri Duggins Rames, Marlina Selva.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS –CHANGES!

We are very pleased to announce a couple of changes to our Board of Directors:

We welcome **Ranger Sandy Ferreira** as a **Director at Large**, replacing the invaluable Terry Preston, who had to unexpectedly resign. Sandy fills the directorship expiring in 2022. Also new to the board, is **Bob Toleno**, who stepped in as **Field Trip Chairman**, replacing Lynn Feindel, who will be moving to Maine in the fall. Stephanie Floyd is helping in this transition. Many thanks to all. Please read the bios of Bob and Sandy and see how fortunate we are!

BOB TOLENO — FIELD TRIP CHAIRMAN

(and birder extraordinaire!)

Bob Toleno has been birding for just over a decade, and plunged in headfirst from the very start. He and his wife, Juli Chamberlin, got into it together when they got close looks at their spark bird, a Cooper's Hawk, and identified it together using photos from the Internet. The process of figuring that out led to field guides, binoculars, birding classes, more expensive binoculars, and vacations planned exclusively around birds they want to see. They spend nearly every weekend birding, and started leading trips for Ohlone Audubon since moving to Hayward seven years ago from San Francisco.



For his day job, Bob has worked at a tiny tech company in South San Francisco for the past 15 years, primarily doing technical support and production work, but birding is his real passion.

SANDY FERREIRA — DIRECTOR AT LARGE

Hello Audubon Members,

I would like to introduce myself as your newly appointed Board member. I was appointed by the Board of Directors to fill a vacancy. For those individuals and the community who know me, I am affectionately called Ranger Sandy because of my many years of public service and employment with the City of Fremont.

I retired 5 years ago, from my full-time position as a Ranger/Naturalist and returned to teach part-time and continue to oversee the Clean Water Education Program for the Environmental Services Division. When you have a job that you really enjoy and are passionate about, time flies for these 32 years! When you're at the park, I invite you to stop by the Nature Learning Center to learn about our programs and to visit the Pollinator Garden.

While employed with the City, I have been very fortunate to work with the public, Fremont Schools, volunteer service groups and the community at large. It's very rewarding to know that you can make a difference through your service, education and public contacts. Teaching the Clean Water Program has been very rewarding, the kids are excited, they love to explore and be out in Nature!



I am most proud of the projects that I have worked on and continued to manage throughout my career. Starting with the Urban Canada Goose

Management Plan, which became the standard at the time for problem solving with nuisance Urban Canada Geese. We put Fremont on the map because of our management strategies such as the first agency to use Goose Herding Dogs, like Luke, a McNab Border Collie was the star!

I am also proud of the Tree Swallow Nest Box Project that I established in 1994 with the help of Ranger staff on Duck Island. The swallow project has been very successful. Currently, we have four monitoring sites in Central Park and have fledged over 3000 birds! Service Learning and Eagle Scout Projects have also been at the forefront of my work for many years. These projects have greatly benefited the parks and surrounding communities.

Another program that I work with is the California Wood Duck Program, serving as the District Manager of Alameda County and parts of Northern California. Since I was a Ranger/ Naturalist, my goal when I first became a DM, was to establish partnerships with parks and neighboring agencies, and to establish Wood Duck projects in their respective parks. This was very successful, and the parks loved the idea. After training staff, they were able to recruit volunteers to help with monitoring and servicing the boxes. During box checks, if a hen was present, I would band the wood duck or owl, since I am sub-permitted to band birds such as wood ducks, kestrels and owls who nest in their wood duck boxes. A wood duck project is a win win, a nest site for wood ducks or other cavity nesting species and we are increasing habitat and native populations.

Getting to know Nature through birding, nature walks, hiking, photography and education is my passion, and is something I continue to strive for. As a long time member of Ohlone Audubon, I am grateful for this opportunity to serve the Board and it's members. I look forward to meeting each and everyone of you. Hopefully, you can join me at one of my bird walks at Lake Elizabeth!

Happy Birding! Ranger Sandy

How are you spending your bird time during SIP?

In the last issue we asked members what they were doing during this time. (Please keep sending!) Two of the responses are below:

Hi,

I'm responding to the request to learn about what we are doing during our SIP.

Like all of us, I'm staying in more and watching the activity at my bird feeder while venturing out to nearby EBRPD parks on occasion. I also have a blog (mybirdingworld.com) where I write about my birding experiences here in Oakland. Despite the SIP, I still have things to write about!

Best,
Elizabeth Olin

Trial to survive—Avocets in Arroyo Las Positas

Sometimes we are lucky enough to see nesting pairs of American Avocets and Black-necked Stilts in the Arroyo Las Positas located in north Livermore. This is the first siting of nesting avocets in a couple of years. Beginning last March, we monitored 4 pairs of avocets and three pairs of Black-necked Stilts in about a 1/4-mile stretch of the arroyo. The area was filled with cattails, sedges, rushes and mudflat bars that provide a good nesting site. The freshwater arroyo contains plenty of invertebrates and aquatic plant seeds for the birds to forage. Their diets include beetles, water boatmen, midges, brine flies, water fleas, amphipods and small fish.

We noticed a casual nest of pebbles and vegetation with 4 brownish eggs with spots in late March. Nest building is a task of males and females. Tucked in and around the mudflat were other nests on the ground with pairs of avocets and stilts aggressively defending their chosen nest sites. The adults defended their young using an array of alarm calls and distraction

displays. They also dive-bombed predators when the eggs or nestlings were in danger.

Both the male and the female incubated the eggs and cared for the chicks. It took about 2 1/2 to 4 weeks for the chicks to hatch. They were born downy and able to walk. Avocet chicks swim and feed themselves soon after birth, but they can't fly until they are about a month old. We watched and worried as the families of four tiny chicks turned to three then two. The adult avocet spent considerable energy defending their young against Snowy Egrets, Mallards, stilts even Killdeers. We watched a Snowy Egret grab a 2-week old chick. Both parents attacked the egret which dropped the chick. The chick was muddy, but survived the encounter. As the chicks grew they became bolder and strayed further and further away from their parents. The stilts chased the avocets and vice versa.

This arroyo is in a suburban area with joggers, bike-riders and dog-walkers, but in general, the birds were simply enjoyed by the pedestrians. I think the real problem was the number of predators in the area; ravens, gulls, herons, egrets, hawks, owls, raccoons and feral cats. We noted the alarming daily decrease in the number of Mallard chicks.

We checked on the avocets every couple of days and in early June we noted that they had abruptly left. The chicks were developed enough to be flapping their wings for several days and hopefully they survived. However, the stilt chicks hatched weeks behind the avocets and they too suddenly disappeared. I fear that none of the seven stilt chicks survived. In early June we only observed one or two adult stilts foraging in the area.

The real survival challenge according to Ackerman et al. (2014) is for the chicks to fledge. A study in the San Francisco south bay reported that only 6% of the avocet fledged while 40% of the stilt chicks fledged, the opposite of what we observed. His report stated that gulls predominately predated avocet chicks hatched in nesting sites without vegetation cover. I like to think that the 6 avocet chicks we watched over the weeks successfully fledged. Ackerman et al. did report that most chick in his study were predated in the first week after hatch and we observed the avocets through several weeks, so I hope for the survival and return of these beautiful young birds.

- Polly Krauter, Spring 2020 (Photos by Polly)



Two More Tough Pairs for Birders

By Bill Hoppes

A while ago I wrote about three tough ID challenges for birders. Since there seems to be no lack of frustrated birders out there trying to figure out what they are seeing, I thought I would present two more. (Third tough ID on Yellowlegs next issue). These are pairs that birders in our area are likely to see and usually give folks a tough time.

Cooper's Hawk and Sharp-shinned Hawk

I have known many beginning birders who just give up on these two or just tick what more experienced birders tell them. These two are a challenge, but there are some characteristics you can use to be more confident in your ID. First things first, you need to be able to tell that you are looking at an accipiter rather than a falcon or buteo. Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks are accipiters (Northern Goshawk is our third). They capture their mostly avian prey, not via soaring or diving, but through active pursuit. They are built for fast, agile flight.

Here is a good comparison of three types of raptors. Accipiters have long tails like falcons, but shorter rounded wings, rather than the falcon's long, pointed wings. Accipiter wings are shorter than Buteos and their tail is much longer and narrower. So, wing shape and tail length should help you to tell that you are looking at an accipiter rather than some other raptor. Finally, although accipiters spend a great deal of time perched and watching, you will often see them soaring just like a buteo, so keep your assumptions in check.



Comparison of flight silhouettes of Falcons, Accipiters and Buteos. For Accipiters look for a long tail with shorter, stubby wings.

So we have an accipiter (we will leave the Goshawk out of this). How do we tell the Cooper's and Sharp-shinned apart? The first thing I look for is relative size. In general, **Cooper's Hawks** are about the size of a crow. **Sharp-shinned Hawks** are smaller, about the size of an American Kestrel. Once you get some practice this will be good field mark, but it won't work all of the time. There are juveniles of course, but more importantly, raptors are famous for sexual dimorphism. Females are significantly larger than males. Thus a largish female **Sharp-shinned** can overlap in size with a smallish male **Cooper's**. We should try to base our ID of these two species on more than one field mark.

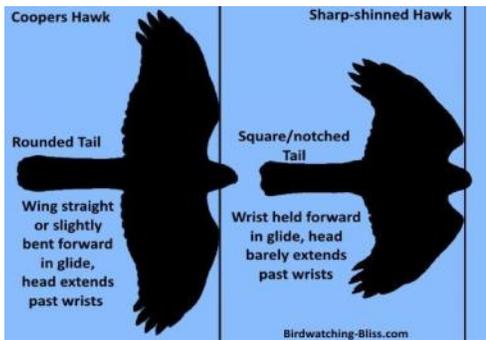
There are a plethora of secondary field marks that birders use. Here are a couple that have worked for me. If you spot the bird when it is soaring, the arrangement of the wings and head can give you a clue. **Sharp-shinned Hawks** generally have a pronounced bend in the wing at the wrist. This brings the head in line with the wrist. The **Cooper's** has much less of a bend so the head extends forward of the bend of the wrist. This is what birders mean when they call out "head" or "no head" for perched birds, the head can also help. The nape feathers on adult **Cooper's Hawks** are lighter than the feathers on the top of the head, making the bird appear to wear a cap. Adult **Sharp-shinned Hawks** have a dark blue gray tone on both parts. Since these birds perch and sit a lot, move around to get the view and sun right to see this mark. There are other field marks folks use. **Sharp-shinned Hawks** have "twinkling flight" something I have never gotten the hang of, as well as something about the barring on the tail. Finally there is the famous rounded vs. squared off tail. That's something I have only been able to reliably see on preserved specimens in a Natural History Museum or in photos like the ones to the right. Anyway, listen to other birders on the field marks they use. Start with size then add other field marks that work for you. If the secondary field marks are consistent with your initial ID, you have very likely gotten this difficult pair right.



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Head and "wrist" relationship in Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks. Not how Sharp-shinned head barely extends beyond the "wrists" compared to the Cooper's

Color on nape of neck of Cooper's (left) and Sharp-shinned Hawks. Note the lighter coloration on the nape of the Coopers leading to the appearance of a "cap". In these photos you can also see the famous rounded tail of the Coopers and the squared-off tail of the Sharp-shinned.

Western and Clark's Grebes

Mixed flocks of these birds occur in our lakes and in the bay all year round. They present less of a challenge to birders than the accipters but still aren't easy. The field mark birders first read about is that on the head of the **Western Grebe**, the black extends below the eye and on the **Clark's Grebe** it stays above the eye. That's true, but good luck spotting that on grebes bouncing around and diving in the bay 100 yards away. I have found bill color a pretty reliable field mark. **Clark's Grebe** has a bright yellow-orange bill, while the **Western Grebe** has a dull olive-green colored bill. A "weak" colored bill-W for Western-that's how I remember it. This won't work for every grebe you see in every light, but it should work enough for you to ID most of the grebes you see. Focus on bill color first and then try to see the extent of black over the eye - it goes "way down" on the Western-see if confirms your initial ID.

Western (left) and Clark's Grebe (right)
Note the dull, olive-green bill of the Western and the bright, yellow-orange bill of the Clarks. You can also see the difference in the extent of black over the eye in these two species.



Next Issue: the "Yellowlegs"

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Photo: Yellow-rumped Warbler (Phil Gordon 7/20)

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