



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

- Jan 4 GENERAL MEETING
Via Zoom
- Jan 8 FIELD TRIP
Shadow Cliffs
- Jan 23 FIELD TRIP
Panoche Valley
- Feb 1 GENERAL MEETING
Via Zoom
- Feb 5 FIELD TRIP
North Livermore

Membership Meetings

Youth Night!

Date: January 4, 2022 **Time:** 7:30PM
Location: Online via *Zoom* (*Zoom details next page*)

We are so excited to share the work of three incredible, awesome young adults! **Emi Fogg, Sahithi Adiraju, and Kabir Samsi** will present their projects thru a zoom meeting. Please join us. You are going to love these young people! Use the same Zoom meeting link to join the meeting, as you have in past virtual membership meetings.



Emi Fogg will share with us her work with the **Junior Wildlife Rangers**, a program whose mission is propelling childhood curiosity into Lifelong Environmental Stewardship. The program brings accessible outdoor environmental education to children 7-12 yrs. old to National Wildlife refuges and other public lands. The Junior Wildlife Ranger Program is a youth, female led 501 (3c) organization that rectifies inequities in outdoor education in underserved urban and rural communities around the United States. Ohlone Audubon helps support this.

Despite the pandemic, the past year has been one of accelerated growth for Junior Wildlife Ranger. Emi will share some of the exciting new ways JWR has brought environmental education to local communities during the era of social distancing.



Emi Fogg graduated from Brown University with a BS in Cognitive Neuroscience. She has served as Associate Director of Design for Junior Wildlife Ranger since 2015, starting as a graphic designer and shifting to operations and project management. Her love for nature grew from childhood trips to Yosemite Valley, and from the Mourning Doves that cooed outside her bedroom window each day. She is currently pursuing a career in User Experience to design accessible technology for the common good. Emi just participated in her first Christmas Bird Count with us.

(Continued on page 2)

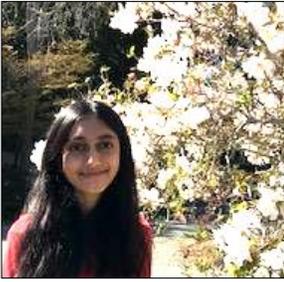
FEBRUARY MEETING

ISLANDS & AVIAN EVOLUTION

By Bob Lewis

Date: February 1, 2022 **Time:** 7:30PM
Location: Online via *Zoom*

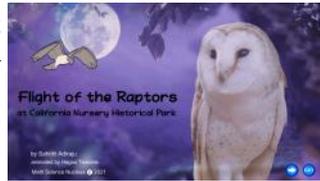
Islands play a key role in both the evolution of new avian species and the extinction of others. Because of their isolation, birds that arrive on islands evolve separately from their parent group and eventually become unique... thus a new species is born! But that isolation also makes them vulnerable to threats like hurricanes, volcanoes, rising seas, and introduced diseases or predator species. Although over 80 percent of bird species live on continents, 92% of extinctions since 1500 have been on islands. Join us to view some marvelous island species and learn about the conservation Issues unique to islands. *(Cont'd on pg 2)*

January program (continued)

Our second presenter will be Sahithi Adiraju. She completed a Girl Scout Gold Award project on the Raptors of the California Nursery in Niles, completing an environmental internship with Dr. Joyce Blueford at the Math Science Nucleus. She had become

fascinated by the nursery and wrote an animated storybook about the raptors at the nursery for children. She is interested in a future career in educational outreach.

Sahithi is a senior at Mission San Jose High School in Fremont and has been birding for 6 years. She also worked as a volunteer this past summer with the South San Francisco Bay Observatory learning about the science side of birding – collecting and interpreting data. She considers shorebirds a challenge!



Our final presenter will be **Kabir Samsi**. The goal of his projects is to create an engaging and fun forum for young, aspiring birders. Join us as he presents his program outline, including ID skills, workshops and virtual bird tours, and possible youth birding competitions.



Kabir is a senior at Alston Montessori and has been birding since he was 7 years old. He has been inspired to develop a couple of his own projects – a birding club at his high school, a birding blog <https://kbirdventures.org/>, and a bird id website <https://find-your-bird.org/> and a future youth program with Ohlone Audubon.

KBirdVentures

Chronicles of my avian adventures from here, there and everywhere

**ZOOM MEETING INSTRUCTIONS:**

Due to COVID-19 and the new variant, Ohlone Audubon's membership meetings will continue to be online via Zoom for the next two meetings. Registration is needed for OAS's membership meetings in 2022! As before, you only need to do it once for ALL meetings. Click the URL / link below to register for OAS's 2022 membership meetings:

Ohlone Audubon is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88107564735?pwd=dEpPajh4bGJKWjJHYmZFU1dVSStJdz09>

Meeting ID: 881 0756 4735

Passcode: 0mh5Zt

One tap mobile

+12532158782,,88107564735#,,,,*544710# US (Tacoma)

+13462487799,,88107564735#,,,,*544710# US (Houston)

Dial by your location

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 720 707 2699 US (Denver)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 881 0756 4735

Passcode: 544710

Find your local number: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/kbpBw31AUG>

(After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.)

February Meeting (continued)

Tuesday February 1, 2022



Bob Lewis has taught birding classes in the Bay Area for over 25 years and loves to travel, especially to islands in search of birds. He is a board member of the Farallon Islands Foundation, created to foster life on islands. Bob has visited many of the larger islands populated with unique species, including Madagascar,

Borneo, Hawaii, Indonesia, New Guinea, New Zealand, Cuba etc. The talk will be illustrated with his photos of birds from these places.

Shadow Cliffs Regional Recreation Area
Saturday 8 January 2022, 9:00am - noon
Leaders: Kathy Robertson & Rich Nicholson
katbirdca@aol.com

Join us at Shadow Cliffs Regional Recreation Area to explore the lake, levees, and marsh for wintering waterfowl, Common Gallinules, egrets, herons, and grebes. Osprey are found around the lake and ponds, while the trees hold woodpeckers and nuthatches. Notable sightings in past years included Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Great-tailed Grackle, California Thrasher, Common Loon, Common and Hooded Merganser, Wilson's Snipe and Peregrine Falcon. Wide, level trails make walking fairly easy except for one short, steep uphill section to get onto the levee. Scopes are helpful.

***Directions:** From I-580 eastbound, take the Santa Rita Road exit, keep right and follow signs for Downtown to merge onto Santa Rita Road. Turn left on Valley Avenue and left on Stanley Boulevard. Turn right in to the park. Meet in the first parking lot by the swimming beach. \$6 parking fee.*

Panoche Valley
January 23, 2022, Sunday, 8:30AM - 4:30PM
Leaders: Bob Toleno & Juli Chamberlin
birding@toleno.com

We'll meet at 8:30AM at the dirt parking lot overlooking Little Panoche Reservoir, just over four miles down Little Panoche Road from I-5. We'll start at the reservoir, bird a few spots in Little Panoche Valley and Griswold Hills. If the group wants to, we can also stop at Mercey Hot Springs to try for Long-Eared Owl, if everyone is OK with paying the \$10 per person fee. We'll then continue through Panoche Valley and finish in Paicines around 4:30 PM. We'll be looking for all the area specialties, especially Ferruginous Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Phainopepla, Mountain Bluebird, Bell's Sparrows (and maybe even a Sagebrush Sparrow), Sage Thrasher, and of course, Mountain Plovers.

All are welcome, but please RSVP via email if you plan to attend. Bring a lunch. Only heavy rain will cancel the trip. There's a port-a-potty at Little Panoche Reservoir, and a couple other spots on our route, but services are limited. A little walking may be involved, but nothing difficult, and no serious hiking.



Field Trips

***(Panoche) Directions:** From Castro Valley, head east on I-580, then head south on I-5, continue past Los Baños, and take exit 379 (Shields Avenue/Mendota). From there, turn right onto Little Panoche Road and drive west about 4 1/2 miles to Little Panoche Reservoir.*

North Livermore/Springtown
February 5, Saturday, 9:00 AM - 12 noon
Leader: Kathy Robertson
katbirdca@aol.com

We will walk along the Arroyo, where we can expect wading birds such as stilts and egrets, ducks, incl. Cinnamon Teal, and many wintering and resident songbirds. Rails and snipe are possible. The open fields are productive for raptors - Golden Eagle has been seen here. Wide, level trails make walking easy. Bring your scope if you have one. Heavy rain cancels.

***Directions:** Take I-580 east to Exit 54 for First Street/Springtown Blvd; turn left onto First Street, which becomes Springtown Blvd. Turn right (east) on Bluebell Dr. and continue about a mile and a half to Marlin A. Pound Neighborhood Park. We will meet at the bridge crossing the Arroyo. Park on either side of the street. No restrooms are on our route, so you may wish to make a pit stop before arriving at the meeting point.*



Our Field Trip Chair, Bob Toleno and his wife Juli, just returned from trip to Ecuador. Couldn't resist sharing this **Sparkling Violetear!**

BIRDING OBSERVATIONS

Winter 2021

By Vicki Robinson

We are finally getting to winter birding. The days are shorter and colder. We have even had some rain. Yeah.

Some uncommon visitors have been showing up at Oakland and Alameda Shores. A **Long-tailed Duck** has been puttering about Ballena Bay in Alameda (**Ed Note:** one showed up at Don Edwards for our CBC December 19!). A rare **Black Scoter** is still at San Leandro and Ballena Bay waiting to be counted on the Christmas bird count. A **White-winged Scoter** was seen by many at a new location - John Sutter Regional Park near the Sf Bay bridge.

The expected winter visitors, **Lesser and Greater Scaup, Surf Scoters,** and **Canvasbacks** are found in the bay waters. **Common Goldeneyes, Redheads,** and **Ringed-necked ducks** can be found in various water streams including Alameda Creek and Quarry Lakes Regional Park. The rarer **Barrow's Goldeneyes** have once again been over-wintering at Lake Merritt.

Hooded Mergansers (yeah, found on CBC!) can be seen on Alameda Creek as well as **Common and Red-breasted Mergansers** out on the bay.

The reliable **Lapland Longspurs** have again stopped over at Mt Trashmore at the Hayward Shoreline (and disappeared by CBC on December 19th!).

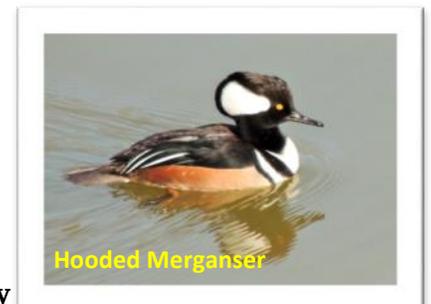
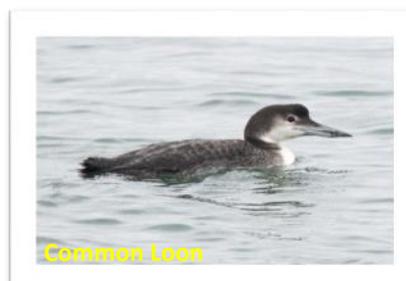
Another favorite—the **Ferruginous Hawk** is back at Pacific Commons and **Merlins** have been seen in many parks including Coyote Hills. A **Rough-legged Hawk** was reported at Coyote Hills and maybe the same bird as at Pacific Commons.

Our winter gulls are back including the rare **Glaucous Gull** again at Coyote Hills' No Name trail.

Loons are back! **Red-throated** and **Common Loons** in SF Bay waters. **Snow Geese** and **Ross's Geese** have made their appearance on Mt Trashmore at the Hayward Shoreline and a rare **Tropical Kingbird** has shown up in Berkeley.



Addendum: Kathy Robertson, our Recording Secretary, had a rare occurrence in her Hayward yard—a **Rufous-crowned Sparrow!**
(Photo by K. Robertson 11/25/21)



All photos by Vicki Robinson, except as noted

President's Corner

New Years Resolutions for Birders

By the time you read this 2022 will be fast approaching. Among all the promises to exercise more, and eat better and read all the great books, birders can make their own resolutions. I have been thinking about this and decided to make (what else would a birder do) a list. Feel free to adopt any of these as your resolutions for the coming year.

Chase one rarity

If you don't make a habit of this, chasing a rarity can be fun. Tap into the rare bird alerts and when you spot one you need for your life list, take that 100 mile road trip and get it.

Attend one birding festival

There are many, wonderful festivals in our area and across the country. If you haven't been to one, commit to go.

Go birding at least 24 times

The only way to get better is by birding. Many local Audubon Chapters have started up their field trip programs. Go as often as you can.

If I haven't done so, go on a pelagic trip

I promise, you will either have a spectacular time or curse the heavens that you ever went out on a boat. There is no middle ground.

Target 10 life birds and get them

This will take planning, travel and birding, but isn't that the point of it all.

Learn 20 bird songs

This can seem hard, but there are many "birding by ear" guides and even field trips. Identifying birds by song adds a great deal of enjoyment to your field trips.

Get your nemesis bird

Your nemesis is out there, plan a campaign. Great Gray Owl, my nemesis bird for 2022. A campaign has been planned.

Start using eBird

It isn't that difficult and your observations add to the largest citizen science project in history.

Buy a new gadget or guide

There are some wonderful new guides being published and if your idea of a gadget is a cool new pair of binoculars-go for it.

Volunteer for one citizen science project

Citizen Science takes your birding to another level. There are many projects that require one day a year to a day a week or more investments in time. The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, Point Blue, Don Edwards NWR and EBRPD all have Citizen Science projects that need help.

Adopt a birding hotspot and get to know it

Find a spot that is your go to when you want to bird. Get to know it and its birds. For me it is Coyote Hills. It is my favorite spot.

Write one letter or attend one meeting promoting bird conservation

Finally take action that helps birds. Become aware of the challenges facing birds and their habitat. Learn about a specific issue that interests you and get involved.

That's twelve. Do them all, do one or make your own list. But overall, have fun and go birding.



Great Gray Owl, my nemesis bird for 2022. A campaign has been planned.

- Bill Hoppes

Conservation

Alameda County BOS fails to adopt moratorium on rural solar plants

The Alameda County Board of Supervisors voted against imposing a 45-day moratorium on new large scale solar projects in rural Alameda County while the county develops policies to regulate their

construction. The board then directed county staff to complete these new policies by the end of March. County residents have called for siting policies on large scale solar plants since the Board of Supervisors approved the 140 acre Aramis solar project.



Newark’s Wetlands—Area 4

Ohlone Audubon has signed onto a joint letter submitted with other environmental organizations (Greenbelt Alliance, Committee to Complete the Refuge, Alameda Creek Alliance, Sierra Club, Santa Clara Audubon, Center for Biological Diversity, Mission Peak Conservancy) to the City of Newark noting our sincere concern regarding the proposed Mowry Village subdivision (Pick-n-Pull site) in Newark’s shoreline areas 3 and 4.

The site (pictured), is surrounded by jurisdictional wetlands and current open space, including the areas of Newark Area 4 which are being proposed to be included as part of the Refuge, and the Cargill Newark salt ponds, and is at risk of being completely inundated by sea level rise in the coming decades. The proposed development of 203 single-family detached houses on these 29 acres is a departure from the City of Newark’s Specific Plan for the area, which planned recreational use in this area, and requires a zoning change and an EIR.

The “Pick-n-Pull” site is located in the midst of significant wildlife habitat and considerable restoration potential that should be embraced rather than squandered. With Alameda County already facing \$15 billion in infrastructure and property at risk from sea level rise (“The impacts of Sea Level Rise on the San Francisco Bay, Pacific Institute, July 2012) - the 2nd most of any county in the state - and global wildlife species facing rapid declines, we all need to work together to quickly increase the resilience and adaptability of our communities and environment - not make these problems worse, as this development proposal would do.



SAVE Tesla Park

Protecting the Tesla Park Land

So THANKFUL to all who helped protect Tesla Park from damaging motorized recreation. Now we work to establish Tesla as a Reserve that’ll provide public

access for passive use and education with resource protection the priority.

Tesla Park needs to be Classified as a reserve to protect 42 special status wildlife species, 7 vegetation communities, and 20 locally rare plants, as well as protection for Native American sacred and archeological sites



TO PROTECT RARE SENSITIVE NATURAL RESOURCES, STATE PARKS MUST CLASSIFY TESLA AS A RESERVE UNDER PRC 5019.65
#SaveTeslaPark

ACTION ALERTS

Want to be included in our action alerts when items come up that need your help?

Please send an email to pagpeg@aol.com.
(We do not share contact information)

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

Thank You!

New Members and Renewals

Vinnie Bacon	Paul & Lisa McCollom
Walter & Julie Ballard	Nancy Mendoza
Mary Beth Barloga	Janice Mitchell
Janet Barton	Jennifer Moran
Liz & Bob Bathgate	Marty Morrow
Peter Beiersdorfer	Merna & Gary Morse
Juan & Florence Benjumea	Jeff Nelson
Allen & Jackie Bertillion	Carolyn Norman
Geraldine Bishofberger	Hank & Julie O'Brien
Mona Brauer	Lisa Oliver
Tom Browne	Duke Otoshi
Lynn Candaux	Deborah Pan
Malca Chall	Wendy Parfrey
Nancy Christensen	Ana Penny
Michael Christopherson	Hans Peeters
Michael Clive	Donald & Judith Person
Thomas Colby	Gordon Porter
Evelyn Cormier	William Quirk
Marilyn Davis	Saritha & Sanjay Reddy
Denise Dugas	James Ross
Don & Margaret Emery	Steven & Suzanne Rothi
Beth Farmer	Ken Roux
Judith Felber	Marguerite Ryan
Paula Fiessatti	Nancie Ryan
Ray Fontaine	Stephanie Pruegel
Norma Foss	Vicki Robinson
Jeff & Carol Garberson	Gail Ryujin
Alan Goggins	Armida & Harley Schultz
Ramesh Gopalan	Jessie Seymer
Anne Marie Gonsalves	Steven Shay
Phil & Pat Gordon	Peter Shen,
Gerald Green	Paul Smith
Doug Green	Shawne Sorenson
Joyce Gross	Terry Spaggins
Helen Hancock	Susan Stanton
Mary Ann Hannon	Mary Steel
Lloyd Hartshorn	Jerry & Judy Steenhoven
Christine Hayamizu	Ricka Stoelting
Erica Herron,	Margie & Myron Swenzey
Philip & Kelly Hirschberg	Susan Teefy
Angela Ippolito-Land	Lawrence Thompson
Renate Johnson	Irv & Diane Tiessen
Irene Jones	Jerry Ting
Karen Kenney	Susan Towle
Jeani King	Suzanna Townsend
Jeanette King	Helene Victor
Joanna Koch	Martin Vitz
Craig Lanway	Ken Walters
Jann Lepson	Robert Wieckowski
Joan Lewis	Julice Winter
Sherman Lewis	Stanley Winterman
David Lovejoy	Shirley Wodke,
Lois Lutz	Fred & Marge Wood
Ned & Carol Lyke	Stephanie Woods
Susan Mayfield	Judy Wuelfing
	Faye & Lee Younker
	Esteban Zapiain
	The Zermano Family



Donations

Walter & Julie Ballard	John Mena
Liz & Bob Bathgate	Nancy Mendoza
Peter Beiersdorfer	Jennifer Moran
Allen & Jackie Bertillion	Marty Morrow
Joann Bloom	Merna & Gary Morse
Mona Brauer	Jeff Nelson
Tom Browne	Carolyn Norman
Karalee Brune	Mary Norton
Lynn Candaux	Hank & Julie O'Brien
Art Carey	Lisa Oliver
Malca Chall	Duke Otoshi
Nancy Christensen	Deborah Pan
Michael Christopherson	Ana Penny
Michael Clive	Donald & Judith Person
Thomas Colby	Gordon Porter
Patti Cole	Srividya Prahesh
Evelyn Cormier	William Quirk
Barbara Correa	Kathy Robertson
Don & Margaret Emery	Bill Rose
Beth Farmer	Laura Jo Ruffin
Lynn Feindel	Steven & Suzanne Rothi
Judith Felber	Barbara Ryan
Sandy Ferreira	Marguerite Ryan
Ray Fontaine	Nancie Ryan
Norma Foss	Gail Ryujin
Jeff & Carol Garberson	Harley & Armida Schultz
Alan Goggins	Brenda Senturia
Harish Goli	Paul Smith
Ramesh Gopalan	Shawne Sorenson
Anne Marie Gonsalves	Terry Spaggins
Phil & Pat Gordon	Jean-Marie Spoelman
Gerald Green	Donna Stanley
Helen Hancock	Mary Steel
Mary Ann Hannon	Jerry & Judy Steenhoven
Lloyd Harshorn	Ricka Stoelting
Christine Hayamizu	Susan Teefy
Philip & Kelly Hirschberg	Lawrence Thompson
Angela Ippolito-Land	Irv & Diane Tiessen
Irene Jones	Jerry Ting
Bruce & Judy Jund	Susan Towle
Ed & Esther Keller	Suzanna Townsend
Karen Kenney	Helene Victor
Jeanette King	Martin Vitz
Joanna Koch	Ken Walters
Karen Kramer	Robert Wieckowski
Craig Lanway	Julice Winter
Jann Lepson	Stanley Winterman
Joan Lewis	Shirley Wodke
David Lovejoy	Fred & Marge Wood
Ned & Carol Lyke	Stephanie Woods
Siv S. Mahanty	Faye & Lee Younker
Sherry Mattson	The Zermano Family
Susan Mayfield	
Paul & Lisa McCollom	

*And in honor of Phil
& Pat Gordon
Bob Battagin*

The Association for Women in Science (AWIS) is a national organization that inspires bold leadership, research, and solutions that advance women in STEM, spark innovation, promote organizational success and drive systemic change. 2021 marks the 50th Anniversary of AWIS! AWIS is also comprised of local, volunteer-run chapters, and our local chapter is AWIS East Bay (Northern California also includes Palo Alto, San Francisco, and Sacramento Valley chapters). Each chapter strives to support the local STEM community by providing networking opportunities, career development resources, and scholarships for students.



2021 Sara Matthews and Helen Sowers Memorial Scholarship Recipients

Ohlone sponsored two scholarships last year thru The Association for Women in Science (AWIS). These were funded from our Sara Matthews and Helen Sowers Memorial Scholarship Funds. Below are the biographies of the two women, Erica Varon Rodriguez and Fikreta Salihovic.



Erica Varon Rodriguez 2021 Sara Matthews Memorial Scholarship Awardee

Erica grew up in Colombia but moved to the US to pursue her dream of becoming a conservation biologist. She's currently a senior at UC Berkeley, working towards her Bachelor's in Conservation and Resource Studies. Her next goal is to obtain a Ph.D. in biology/ecology. Erica's interests include understanding the impacts of anthropogenic activities (such as climate change and land development in wildlife) especially in migratory species, human-wildlife conflict due to these activities, and applying community-based conservation strategies to help vulnerable communities develop sustainable livelihoods. She wants

her research to focus on Latin America to share her learning with her community, and so we can all join forces in protecting our incredible ecosystems.

Fikreta Salihovic, 2021 Helen Sowers Memorial Scholarship Awardee

Fikreta grew up in Saint Louis, MO and moved to the Bay Area in 2018 in pursuit of opportunities for her education and career. She is currently pursuing a Bachelor's in Health Science- Health Policy at California State University East Bay. Fikreta hopes to apply her career skills to a higher management or care coordination role within the healthcare system. She enjoys working out, cooking and spending Time with family, and her passions are to help people and give back to the community. She loves to try new things, whether it's food or a new job. Fikreta is beyond thankful for CSU East Bay, AWIS, and the Ohlone Audubon Society for the wonderful guidance and help they provide for her success.



Three Cormorants

By Bill Hoppes

You see that big black thing fly by, or that snake-like head sticking out of the water and you think "cormorant" and you are likely to default to double-crested. Not so fast. The double-crested may be the one we are most likely to see in our area, but there are other cormorants out there and when we are on the coast, or even on the bay you need to be aware, and consider these other two species, and not always assume what you are seeing. So, I want to spend some time going over the identification of the three species of cormorants we are likely to see in the SF Bay Area. Let's start with the likely one.

Double-crested Cormorant.

In most of the bay and certainly inland, this is the cormorant you are most likely to see. Just because that is the case, doesn't mean we shouldn't learn its characteristics. Let's start with the basics, identification of cormorants in general. Cormorants are large dark-bodied birds with long, slender necks and long bills. They inhabit fresh and salt water where they dive for fish. In flight they have rapid wing beats and extend their neck out.

(Continued on page 9)

Cormorants continued

There aren't too many birds you should confuse with a cormorant. Sometimes, they swim with just their head and neck out of the water somewhat like a loon, but the differences in coloration should help there. So, you have a cormorant, what lets you know that it is a Double-crested.

First habitat. If you are inland, you can be pretty certain it is a Double-crested. You will need to get to the bay or to the coast for it to be more than a very remote chance it is one of the other two. However, since Double-crested also occurs along the coast you need to be able to tell all three apart.

Second, flight. If you are fortunate to see it flying, the Double-crested has a conspicuous "kink" in its neck that the other two lack. If you can spot this, then you can be certain that it is either a Double-crested or one of the other two.



On left, Double-crested Cormorant in flight with diagnostic "kink" in its neck. On right, a Brandt's Cormorant for comparison. Note the straighter neck.

Third is size. If you have birded Quarry Lakes or the Central Valley Refuges, you have likely seen lots of cormorants. These were probably all Double-crested. So, you should have a good idea of "cormorant size" If you are over at Pigeon Point looking at a bunch of cormorants sitting out on the rocks, we are first going to note size. If the bird is "cormorant size", we are going to have to figure out if it is a Double-crested or a Brandt's, as they are about the same size. If the bird looks about half "cormorant size", then we are going to have to see if it could be a Pelagic.

Both these birds are "cormorant size" (see photo to right).



Double-crested (left) and Pelagic (right) Cormorants for size comparison



Is it a Double-crested or a Brandt's?

Look very closely at the head. Both cormorants have strong, hooked bills. But there is something else to notice. In all plumages, the Double-crested Cormorant has a light colored bill with yellow around the base. In all plumages, the Brandt's cormorant has a darker bill. In breeding plumage, it develops a beautiful, turquoise gular patch at its throat). This is not always easy to see, but be patient and you will spot it.

Head of Double-crested Cormorant (top) and Brandt's Cormorant (bottom). Note lighter colored bill and yellow at the based of the bill on the Double-crested. On the Brandt's note the darker bill and lack of yellow around the base. In the breeding season look for the turquoise gular patch on the Brandt's.

(Continued on page 10)

*Cormorants continued***Finally, the Pelagic Cormorant**

Okay, so we are out at Pillar Point scoping the rocks and we see cormorants that look half “cormorant size”. What do we need to see to call it a Pelagic. My first impression when seeing a Pelagic Cormorant is that this is an “inky black” bird. Field guides will talk about impressions of brown on a Double-crested and green sheens on a Pelagic, things I have never been able to see, but a Pelagic is all dark from the tip of its bill to the tip of its tail. Its bill is also very different. It is very dark, approaching black. Look at above photos, the other two cormorants have prominent hooks at the end of their bills, the Pelagic lacks this. Finally, instead of yellow or turquoise at the base of the bill, the Pelagic has the slightest hint of red.



Typical view of Pelagic Cormorant (left) all dark bird with a thin, dark bill. Remember it is half “cormorant size”

View of the head (right) with the touch of red at the base of the bill.



The Pelagic has one more great clue. Just as the Double-crested has its “kinked” neck in flight, during the breeding season the Pelagic develops white patches on its flanks. These generally can’t be seen when the bird is sitting, but are diagnostic when in flight.

Pelagic Cormorant in flight showing its white flanks.

When working on cormorants, first consider where you are. eBird shows no records of the Pelagic Cormorant east of Lake Chabot and only one record there. For Brandt’s, eBird shows a couple of records at Quarry Lakes in Fremont and one at Clifton Court Forebay. Everything else to the west.

So if you are east of the bay, odds are 99.9% that you are looking at a Double-crested. But go through your field marks anyway for practice. On the bay, especially the north bay and the Pacific Coast, you could encounter all three. Then is it “cormorant size” or half that. If it is the smaller bird, does it look “inky black” with a dark bill without a strong hook at the end. If so, you likely have Pelagic. Look closely and see if you can spot the red at the base of the bill to confirm it. If the bird is “cormorant size” look closely at the head. Is the bill light or dark, can you see yellow at the base of the bill? If it is in the breeding season can you see a turquoise gular patch. Light bill with yellow at the base and you have a Double-crested. Dark bill with no yellow and perhaps a turquoise patch and you have a Brandt’s. If you see them flying, use the neck “kink and white flank patches” for additional confirmation.

There are other clues as well. Brandt’s are usually darker than Double-crested and they all have various plumes and crests which can be difficult to see and I can never remember. If you work at it, these birds are not too hard. Once you get the sizes down, Pelagic will be much easier. Be patient with the other two and with practice you will have them down as well.

The Great Backyard Bird Count

February 18-21, 2022



In 2021, there were a record number of participants who entered bird sightings—more than 300,000 people from around the world! Many people chose to use the Merlin Bird ID App to share sightings, which is wonderful. For 2022, if you want to tell us more about the specific numbers and diversity of birds you are seeing or hearing, consider trying eBird. We offer a [FREE eBird Essentials course](https://cornell.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=b35ddb671faf4a16c0ce32406&id=91cf29fc93&e=efe6b3d204) (<https://cornell.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=b35ddb671faf4a16c0ce32406&id=91cf29fc93&e=efe6b3d204>) that will help you enter birds either on your phone or computer.

While enjoying the birds with friends and family this holiday season, consider practicing entering bird data on your February count. It is seamless. Or, if you are an eBird wiz, maybe [Merlin Sound ID](https://cornell.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=b35ddb671faf4a16c0ce32406&id=9c5887a306&e=efe6b3d204) (<https://cornell.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=b35ddb671faf4a16c0ce32406&id=9c5887a306&e=efe6b3d204>) will be a fun new way to share birds!

[Review the Tools to Participate for 2022](#)

Registration Now OPEN!

Snow Goose Festival
January 27-30, 2022
Chico, California
Wild Adventures, Wild Birds!

Snow Geese by John Seid

<https://snowgoosefestival.org/#>

This action-packed 4-day event celebrates the remarkable journey of millions of waterfowl and raptors along the Pacific Flyway that call the Northern Sacramento Valley their home during the winter months.

Choose from more than 50 field trips that are sure to appeal to a wide variety of interests and ability levels. In addition to numerous bird-watching field trips for waterfowl, cranes, raptors and songbirds, you might choose to take a guided tour of a nature preserve, visit a local vineyard, or hike the scenic Sutter Buttes in search of lofty views and resident wildlife.

Hosted by [Altacal Audubon Society](#)

If you have any questions, you can reach us at info@snowgoosefestival.org, or by calling the Festival Office at 530-592-9092.

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

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