



# CHIRP-N-CHATTER

The Newsletter of the Wintu Audubon Society

Chapter of the National Audubon Society serving Shasta  
and eastern portions of Trinity County, California

January / February 2010

## Christmas Bird Counts

See the November/December issue of the Chirp-N-Chatter for details of this year's Christmas Bird Counts. Here they are with the compiler's contact in case you lost your last newsletter.

**Fall River---December 19.** Compiler: Bob Yutzzy (email: [boby@c-zone.net](mailto:boby@c-zone.net))

**Red Bluff---December 20.** Compiler: Karen Scheuermann (email: [kscheuer@c-zone.net](mailto:kscheuer@c-zone.net)).

Thanks you, Karen, for resurrecting this count which has had a 30+ year record.

**Anderson---December 26.** Compiler: Rob Santry (email: [kingbird@snowcrest.net](mailto:kingbird@snowcrest.net)).

**Redding---January 2.** Compiler: Bill Oliver (email: [wwoliver9@gmail.com](mailto:wwoliver9@gmail.com))

This species breeds exclusively in the sagebrush lands of this picture. This the intermountain West, just touching northeastern California along the Nevada border. Furthermore, it's highly migratory, wintering mostly in the Southwest and Mexico---truly, a very rare winter visitor to Redding.

**WINTU A.S. CHAPTER MEETINGS ARE ON THE SECOND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH AT 7:00 PM** in the theatre of the Turtle Bay Exploration Park, 840 Auditorium Drive, Redding.

**BOARD MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE FIRST TUESDAY OF THE MONTH AT 7:00 PM** in the Turtle Bay Exploration Park classroom adjacent to the visitor center. All members are urged to attend to contribute information and new ideas.

### UPCOMING MEETINGS

January 12, 2010: Bud and Margaret Widdowson present: *Birds of the Indonesian Islands of Sulawesi and Halmaher*

February 9, 2010: Pam Gluck discusses *American Trails Touching Lives*

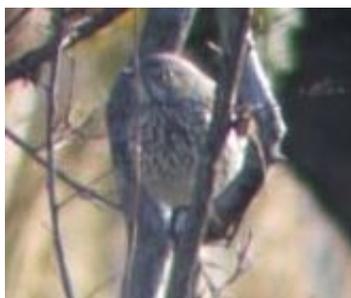
## Wintu Audubon Receives Grant for Burrowing Owl Project

Larry Jordan, our Webmaster, was awarded a Collaborative Grant from Audubon California to install artificial burrows for Burrowing Owls. His was only one of four awarded this year. Burrowing Owls, a California Species of Special Concern, have been declining across much of the state for over twenty years in response to loss of habitat to urban development, ground squirrel



## Sage Thrasher in Redding

That old adage, "birds are where you find them", certainly rang true for Rob Santry on December 8 when he found a Sage Thrasher at the Redding Convention Center. It was foraging in the junipers and ornamental plantings near the 'Veterans Memorial Grove', which is on the Convention Center grounds. So surprised was Rob that he thought it must be an odd juvenile Northern Mockingbird. However, Red and Nancy Modeen confirmed that it was indeed a Sage Thrasher and snapped this picture.



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*Vacant*

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Frank and Darliss Sanderson  
242-8770

**DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE**

Ken Bachman, John Coon,

Laurie Damoth, Mike

Damoth, Connie Word, Bob

Yutzy

control efforts, and intensive agriculture practices. The goal of Larry's project is to increase the population of Burrowing Owls in Shasta County and the northstate by providing artificial burrows located in optimal habitat for this species.

Extensive acreage of suitable habitat has been located in areas where Burrowing Owls have been observed during the past several years and local landowners have given Wintu Audubon permission to install burrows on their property. Groups of artificial burrows will be constructed on these properties and Burrowing Owl activity monitored and recorded by Wintu Audubon according to the protocols

established by Wild At Heart, a non-profit organization for wildlife conservation located in Arizona that has had phenomenal success with Burrowing Owls.

Burrowing Owls are year round residents throughout most of California, including the lower elevations of Shasta County. Since non-migratory owls retain their pair bonds throughout the year, owls occupying artificial burrows in Shasta County would remain here as long as they are safe from predation and have an adequate food supply. Once owls are successfully breeding and fledging young, additional sites will be installed to expand the project if funding is available in the future.

Wintu Audubon members will provide the labor necessary to build the burrows, possibly recruiting volunteers from the community to help, thus raising awareness to the plight of this owl among the community.

## January Activities

### Field Trips

#### **Second Saturday Bird Walk---January 9 @ 8:00 am**

This open-to-the-general-public outing will be at Turtle Bay and Kutras Lake. We will assemble in the parking area behind the monolith at Turtle Bay. A great cross section of waders, raptors, waterfowl, gulls, and other birds can be seen close up with usually a surprise of two on this half day walk. Connie Word will lead.

#### **Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge---Saturday, January 16 @ 7:30 am**

This nationally-known gem is well-worth the 90-mile drive. Enormous numbers of waterfowl fill the skies and numerous impoundments in fall and winter. Snow, Ross' and Greater White-fronted Geese, Northern Pintails, Northern Shovelers and Gadwalls are assured. Other possibilities are White-faced Ibis, Green-winged Teal, Black-necked Stilts and various raptors. We hope to provide 2-way radios to report sightings and alert people in other cars to look for them. Most of the birding is done from cars. Meet at the Redding Convention Center to carpool. Bring a lunch for this full-day trip. Bill Oliver will lead.

#### **Local Weekday Bird Walk – Anderson River Park, Tuesday, January 19 @ 8:00 am**

Ponds, the Sacramento River, riparian habitat and oak woodlands attract a variety of species to this large park. Often there are opportunities to compare related species side by side, such as Common and Barrows Goldeneyes or Great and Snowy Egrets. Meet your leader Ken Bachman at the parking lot at the amphitheater for this half-day trip.

### General Meeting

#### **Tuesday, January 12, 2010 @7:00 pm**

#### ***Birds of the Indonesian Islands of Sulawesi and Halmahera***

Bud and Margaret Widdowson recently visited the Spice Islands on a birding trip. Among the thousands of Indonesian Islands, Sulawesi and Halmahera are the two largest and most biologically diverse in the Wallacean region lying east of the famous Wallace's line, a boundary between distinct faunal regions. The four-legged island of Sulawesi is the largest and geologically most complex Wallacean island, very different from the Grand Sundas to the west. Bud

and Margaret birded fabulous habitats from coastal mangroves to forest-cloaked mountains in search of endemic specialties such as **Diaboliical Nightjar**, **Purple-bearded Bee-eater**, **Greater Shortwing** and the magnificent **Maleo**. They also visited Halmahera, the largest of the fabled 'Spice Islands' with a noticeable shift toward Australian in the bird species. Halmahera holds an equally exciting group of endemic bird species with the highlight being the unique **Wallace's Standardwing**, one of the most spectacular birds-of-paradise.

## February Activities

### Field Trips

**Llano Seco Unit and Pine Creek Unit of the Sacramento River NWR – Saturday, February 6 @ 7:30 a.m.**

Meet at the Redding Convention Center to carpool. Llano Seco has 2 viewing platforms making it a great place to view waterfowl. Last year we had Eurasian Green-winged Teal plus Golden Eagles. It's considered one of the best places in the valley to see Eurasian Widgeon. The Pine Creek unit has some walking so wear hiking shoes. An alternate to the Pine Creek unit is Rancho Esquon near Durham, a private ranch that has fantastic habitat.

We'll decide on exact locations later. Be prepared for a fun day of birding in the Chico area! Members of Altacal Audubon from Chico will join us on this trip. George Horn will lead. Phone 244-0581. Bring a lunch for this all day trip.

**Second Saturday Bird Walk---February 13 @ 8:00 am**

Meet your leader Linda Aldrich at the parking lot behind the Monolith at Turtle Bay for this half-day, trip that is open to the public. Beginners and experienced birders alike will enjoy seeing winter waterfowl on the ponds and river as well as riparian species such as Yellow-rumped Warblers and Spotted Towhees. Bald Eagles and both egrets are resident.

**Local Weekday Bird Walk – Cascade Community Park, Tuesday, February 16 @ 8:00 am**

The Cascade Community Park is at the end of Girvan Road which is off Hwy. 273, South of Clear Creek Road but before crossing Clear Creek. We will assemble at the parking area at this small but bird-friendly park which has frontage on both the Sacramento River and Olney Creek. This varied

habitat attracts a surprising number of species. The elusive California Thrasher has been seen there on many occasions. Linda Aldrich will be your leader.

**Please Note:** Wintu Audubon Society assumes no responsibility for injuries, personal or otherwise, incurred while attending society-sponsored activities and will not be held liable for accidents. You attend at your own risk. A responsible adult must accompany minors on all outings. Rain cancels all activities.

### General Meeting

**Tuesday, February 9 @ 7:00 pm**

#### *Touching Lives (American Trails)*

Pam Gluck is the Executive Director of American Trails. American Trails' national headquarters moved to the Redding area in 2002. Pam's presentation is titled "Touching Lives" and will provide an overview of American Trails and how the work they do makes a difference in the quality of life in Redding and across America. American Trails is the world's largest online resource for planning, building, funding, maintaining, enhancing and supporting trails and greenways. Their web address is [www.AmericanTrails.org](http://www.AmericanTrails.org).

### Trip Reports

**Second Saturday Bird Walk—Shasta College, September 12**

Seven birders spent a rather humid morning birding the campus. Forty species were seen including Say's Phoebe, Yellow Warbler, Lewis' Woodpecker, Western Tanager, Green Heron and Red-shouldered Hawk. The wastewater ponds were extremely low but contained both Western and Spotted Sandpipers. Western Bluebirds were more abundant than usual. Stillwater Creek was very low and the campus was very dry.

**Second Saturday Bird Walk---Turtle Bay, October 10**

Seven birders enjoyed a bird walk under clear, sunny skies and cool temperatures. There were no startling birds at Turtle Bay, but it was good to find that some migrants were in, especially Yellow-rumped Warblers and White-crowned Sparrows. After birding the usual loop, the group decided to check out Kutras Lake.

Small numbers of ducks have shown up including Ruddy Duck, Bufflehead and American Widgeon. It was especially nice to see a Red-head and a Western Grebe. Three of us were still not satiated, so we went to see if any Black-crowned Night Herons still use their old roosting spot. After careful scrutinization, we spotted one individual tucked into a locust tree on one of the islands. Across the driveway from the apartments, we found a few Ring-necked Ducks and a lone female Northern Shoveler. Counting species seen on the extensions, our total for the morning was 40.

### **Mid-Week Outing—Lema Ranch, November 10**

Nine birders gathered in the parking lot under partly cloudy skies and cool temperatures. As the morning gradually became warmer and sunnier, we saw 54 species of birds. Probably the best bird was a Red-breasted Sapsucker. Also of note were numerous Lark Sparrows, a flock of White-fronted Geese, Common Moorhen (a Lema Ranch specialty) and a Sora by ear. Several of the group were beginning birders who got clear views of their avian “neighbors” such as Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, White-crowned Sparrow and Western Bluebird.

### **Second Saturday Bird Walk---Turtle Bay, November 14**

Five birders tallied 31 species. The most memorable species were Black-crowned Night-Heron, the always spectacular Hooded Merganser and a brief sighting of a mature Bald Eagle.

## **The Great Backyard Bird Count —February 12-15**

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent and in Hawaii.

Anyone can participate, for beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. Here's how:

**1. Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count.** You can count longer than that if you wish. Count birds in as many places and on as many days as you like—one day, two days, or all four days. Submit a separate checklist for each new day. You can also submit more than one

checklist per day if you count in other locations on that day.

**2. Count the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at the same time.**

**3. When you are finished, enter your results through the web site [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc).** You'll see a button marked “Enter Your Checklist” on the website home page beginning on the first day of the count. It will remain active until the deadline for data submission on **March 1<sup>st</sup>**. If you do not have internet access, you can phone (941-7741) or email ([wwoliver9@gmail.com](mailto:wwoliver9@gmail.com)) Bill Oliver for more directions and your results.

**Redding always makes a good showing. Twice recently we were the top reporter in the State. Let's be tops again this year.**

### **Birding Tips From The Fertile Imagination of Pete Dunne**

My rule of thumb when viewing a distant Scaup is to ask: "Is there any conceivable way to turn this bird into a female Ring-necked Duck (a bird with a very peaked head)?" If the answer is 'no way,' the bird is a Greater Scaup; if the answer is "yeah, maybe," it's a Lesser.

The image of the bird (Bald Eagle) on the one dollar bill is highly stylized, and while it may not help you identify a Bald Eagle, if you collect 20-30 of them, you can buy a decent field guide to the birds.

--Gleaned from *Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion* by Ken Bachman

## **Comings & Goings Where to watch birds in January and February by Bob Yutzky**

After Christmas Counts have just been completed there are good birds out there waiting to be chased and they've already been nailed down to a spot! All you have to do is go to the correct location, have

patience and lots of good luck. Our regular wintering birds should all be in and the primary groups to be looking for this winter are ducks and geese, hawks, shrikes and sparrows. The best place for these goodies are Fall River/McArthur, Kutras Lake, Turtle Bay, Turtle Bay East, Whiskeytown Lake, Anderson River Park, Lema Ranch, Reading Island and Lone Tree pond.

You only have a month or two left to visit one of our fantastic "local" refuges - Sacramento NWR, Gray Lodge NWR and Tule Klamath Refuges await your visit. Incredible numbers of waterfowl, especially near dusk and dawn, are a lifetime experience, even for non-birders. And, you won't believe the sounds you hear, with swans and geese honking by the tens of thousands. Don't forget, these birds leave the area and start heading North as early as March.

If you have the patience, searching through wintering sparrows in the brush lands and at feeders might yield a White-throated, American Tree, or Harris's Sparrows, especially at locations where they have been seen before like Lema Ranch, just past Bear Creek Bridge and the Shammo Ranch and at the beginning of Rat Farm Road and Horr Road in McArthur and Glenburn. This past fall has already had a good showing of White-throated Sparrows at valley feeders.

A few Red-breasted Mergansers have already returned to the Kutras Lake area. It looks like the fall Surf Scoter at Kutras did not stay with us, but scoters can be quite hard to find. Five Surf Scoters (the most ever in the county!) were seen by Ken Able this fall when they made a brief stop at Fall River Lake. By the way, we are overdue for another White-winged Scoter or a Long-tailed Duck. Don't forget to search for Red-necked Grebe in open water, as one often winters in the county. Sometimes loons overwinter here, so look first for the commonest one, Common Loon, and then for the rarer Pacific, and maybe even the much rarer Red-throated. Whiskeytown Lake, Kutras and Eastman Lake are our best regular locations.

Be sure to search the Fall River area for flocks of White-fronted and Snow Geese and try to pick out the slightly smaller Ross's Goose mixed in with them. This can most readily be done by carefully searching the flying geese and looking for Ross's much shorter neck, somewhat smaller head and smaller body. One of my personal favorite winter sounds is the echoing

calls of Tundra Swans. What a delight to hear! Don't forget we are still looking for a Trumpeter Swan that we can all check out, so keep searching though all the Tundras. Unfortunately, this identification problem is complex and extremely difficult.

Finally, winter means hawk watching, so check out this winter's crop of hawks and see what you can find. It is especially fun to find dark phase hawks and then try to identify them. A dark phase Rough-legged has already been seen in the Fall River valley this winter. Rough-legged and Ferruginous Hawks, including one or two dark phase birds, are not uncommon in the Fall River area. We are still due for our second Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk so sharpen your skills to ID this one. The Millville Plains area is a closer place to look for hawks if you can't make it to Fall River. Our local wintering Peregrine Falcon has already put in its appearance around Kutras Lake and along the Sacramento River so keep an eye out for it. A Peregrine sighting is always a joy to behold!

### **11th Annual Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway---January 28-31 in Chico**

This "local" bird festival gets bigger and better every year. It's so close we urge you to attend one of the 60 field trips, presentations and workshops. Join Oregon naturalist and author Stephen Shunk at Saturday night's *Gathering of Wings* banquet. Alicia Young will lead a field trip to Redding's Hot Spots, Lema Ranch, Turtle Bay, and Kutras Lake as part of the festival. Call: 530-345-1865 or email: [info@snowgoosefestival.org](mailto:info@snowgoosefestival.org) for details.

### **Publicity Post Filled**

The Officers and Board of Directors welcome Frank and Darliss Sanderson who have volunteered to serve as our Publicity Committee.

We continue to seek to fill the vacant **Membership** post. If you have a computer and a bit of extra time and wish to aid Wintu Audubon with this critically important function, contact President, George Horn or Newsletter Editor, Bill Oliver