

# The Sandpiper

July 2023



Redwood Region Audubon Society

[www.rras.org](http://www.rras.org)

## RRAS FIELD TRIPS IN JULY

**Saturday July 1, 8:30-11am.** Join Redwood Region Audubon Society for a free guided field trip at the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary. Bring your binoculars and scope if you have either and meet trip leader Chet Ogan at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake) in Arcata for easy-to-walk trails, a beautiful view of Humboldt Bay, and the opportunity to hear and see a diverse range of species. July is a great time to pay attention to odd-sounding vocalizations, which could be newly hatched songbirds learning to sing, and is also a great time to look for the subtle differences in the plumage of juvenile birds such as White-tailed Kites, Black Phoebes, White-crowned Sparrows, gulls, and pelicans.

**Saturday July 8, 8:30-11am.** Free guided field trip at the Arcata Marsh with trip leader Bill Rodstrom. Meet at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake). July is a great time to look and listen for newly hatched and juvenile birds.

**Sunday July 9, 9-11am.** Join trip leader Ralph Bucher for a walk at the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. This two-mile walk is along a wide, flat, gravel-packed trail easily accessible on foot. Just outside of town, this refuge offers astounding and easy access to tidally influenced habitats, including mudflats, riparian vegetation, conifers, and bay, which host a variety of geese, raptors, shorebirds, and waders. Email Ralph to sign up for this field trip at [thebook\[at\]reninet.com](mailto:thebook[at]reninet.com).

**Saturday, July 15, 9-11am.** This month's **Women & Girls bird walk** will be led by Kate Rowe. Join Kate in exploring Dry Lagoon, a gorgeous stretch of beach where Brown Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, and Black Oystercatchers may be seen flying by, while sparrows, blackbirds, and many songbird species enjoy the marshy area and native dune plants just upslope of the ocean. Elk can sometimes be observed in the marshy area as well, as can Northern Harriers and Peregrine Falcons. Meetup location will be the Dry Lagoon parking lot (41.222585, -124.108113). Just like any Humboldt day, dress for windy or warm, foggy or sunny conditions!

**Saturday July 15, 8:30-11am.** Free guided field trip at the Arcata Marsh with trip leader Jim Clark. Meet at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake). July is a great time to look and listen for newly hatched and juvenile birds.

**Sunday July 16, 9-11am.** Ralph Bucher will lead a walk at the Eureka waterfront, starting at the foot of Del Norte Street. This walk is on a flat, paved trail that is **wheelchair accessible**. From the pier, an active Osprey nest is visible across the bay, and cormorants, loons, egrets, and pelicans can be seen. This time of year Ralph might vary the walk by moving on to the Elk River Mouth to look, and listen, for songbirds. Email Ralph to sign up for this field trip at [thebook\[at\]reninet.com](mailto:thebook[at]reninet.com).

**Saturday July 22, 8:30-11am.** Free guided field trip at the Arcata Marsh with trip leader Gary Friedrichsen. Meet at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake). July is a great time to look and listen for newly hatched and juvenile birds.

**Sat. July 22 - 9-11am.** Wigi Wetlands Volunteer Workday. Help restore a section of the bay trail behind Bayshore Mall. Bring water and gloves, we provide tools and snacks. Contact Jeremy Cashen at [jeremy.cashen@yahoo.com](mailto:jeremy.cashen@yahoo.com) or 214-605-7368 for more information.



Yellow-breasted Chat  
at Mad River Fish Hatchery  
Photo by Gary Bloomfield

**Thursday, July 27, 6-7:30pm.** Bikes, birds, and brews! Join trip leader Janelle Chojnacki in celebrating the long days of summer with an evening birding bike ride along the Mad River.

We'll meet on the curb outside the Mad River Brewery in Blue Lake, will bike at a leisurely pace to the Mad River hatchery, bike down the levee if there's time, then end our trip at the Mad River Brewery for a cool beverage. We can hope to hear and see Belted Kingfishers, Killdeer, and several raptor species as well as some warbler and flycatcher species. The brewery itself can be a nice place to observe crows, ravens, house sparrows, finches, and starlings.

**Saturday July 29, 8:30-11am.** Free guided field trip at the Arcata Marsh with trip leader Jude Power. Meet at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake). July is a great time to look and listen for newly hatched and juvenile birds.

**Saturday, July 29, 4-6:30 pm.** Join Redwood Region Audubon Society at the Russ Ranch Wetlands for this late afternoon, shorebird-centric walk led by Cal Poly Humboldt wildlife student Emmett Iverson. The afternoon light and rising tide will make for ideal conditions to view the beginning of the fall shorebird migration, which could bring curlew, sandpipers, dowitchers, phalaropes, plovers, and, of course, Marbled Godwits. Meet at the main parking lot for Centerville Beach (40.573908, -124.349307).

**Sunday, July 30, 9-noonish:** Join Redwood Region Audubon Society for a 2-3 hour trip exploring the area surrounding the Redwood National Park Visitor Center on the coast near the mouth of Redwood Creek. This site contains a diverse mix of scrub, riparian, wetland, beach, estuary, and ocean habitats that has produced 192 species, according to eBird. Bring your scope for some sea-watching where we may see Clark's Grebe and Pigeon Guillemot, among many other species. Meet trip leader Ken Burton ([shrikethree@gmail.com](mailto:shrikethree@gmail.com)) at the Thomas H. Kuchel Visitor Center at 9:00 am. Contact Ken at least 24 hours ahead if you're interested in carpooling, and provide your location. Optional picnic lunch at the end of the walk.

Note: The fourth Saturday bird walks in Southern Humboldt are suspended until fall. You can always check for updates to the field trip schedule on [rras.org](http://rras.org).



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## President's Column

*By Gail Kenny*

When my daughter was a baby and she was fussing and would not settle down, I would walk out the front door with her and walk around the neighborhood. Most of the time she would quickly settle down. My favorite place to be is out in nature too, especially observing birds, plants, and other animals.

Now there are published studies proving that nature is good for your health and mental well-being, as indicated in two recent findings. See “Birdsongs alleviate anxiety and paranoia in healthy participants” ([www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-20841-0?itid=lk\\_inline\\_enhanced-template](http://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-20841-0?itid=lk_inline_enhanced-template)) and “Smartphone-based ecological momentary assessment reveals mental health benefits of birdlife” ([www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-20207-6?itid=lk\\_inline\\_enhanced-template](http://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-20207-6?itid=lk_inline_enhanced-template)). In the broader view, experiencing nature is beneficial to your mind and body. But like me, you probably already knew that!

Being out in nature is one of my favorite places to be and is something I engage in every day. As a long-time dog owner, walking my dog every day is an incentive to get me outside. Using my five senses of sight, hearing, smell, touch/felt sense, and taste while being outside and moving my body brings my awareness into the here and now, and away from rumination, thinking about the past or future, and back in tune with my physical body which is always in the present. Observing birds (plants, animals, weather, and people) can turn on my senses of curiosity and awe and help me feel the pleasure of experiencing the beauty of nature through my fascination for the complexities of other species I share the planet with.

Here are three recent books focused on birds and nature as therapy:

- **Ornithery: For Your Mind, Body, Soul**, by Holly Merker, Richard Crossley, and Sophie Crossley [ornithery.com](http://ornithery.com) Holly Merker is a cancer survivor who used birdwatching for its therapeutic benefit while undergoing cancer treatment

and recovery. She has a background in art therapy and professional bird guiding. You'll find workshops and programs where you can learn about and experience mindful birding, and a free online mindfulness birding group.

- **Keep Looking Up. Your Guide to the Powerful Healing of Birdwatching**, by Tammah Watts [www.tammahwatts.com/book](http://www.tammahwatts.com/book) Tammah Watts is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), Certified Kripalu Mindfulness Outdoor Guide, and advocate for the equitable accessibility of nature, health, and mental health for all. After suffering a neurological injury following a routine surgical procedure, she turned to the powerful healing of birdwatching to overcome physical and mental health challenges.

- **Finding Ecohappiness: Fun Nature Activities to Help Your Kids Feel Happier and Calmer**, by Sandi Schwartz [ecohappinessproject.com](http://ecohappinessproject.com) Sandi Schwartz is an award-winning environmental author and freelance journalist specializing in nature, sustainability, home and garden, and green living. Through her education, writing work, and personal battle with stress and anxiety, she discovered how several science-backed natural tools can help minimize stress and increase happiness.

Along with sharing our joy and passion for birds, RRAS is dedicated to educating the public about birds and nature through our weekly field trips, monthly programs, and this newsletter. Now you can add birding as an enhancement to your well-being to help you live a better life. When people relate to nature, they value it and are more willing to advocate for its protection and preservation. Please join us on some of our summer field trips or get out in nature on your own to reap the benefits.

Your membership in Redwood Region Audubon Society supports our field trips, programs, education and conservation efforts.

Membership in our chapter is just \$15 a year, and you will receive *EcoNews*, with the *Sandpiper* inserted. To join our local chapter, either fill in the form below, and mail it with a check for \$15 made to RRAS, or join through our website, [RRAS.org](http://RRAS.org).

To join National Audubon and receive the *EcoNews* as well as *Audubon* magazine, either join through our website link at [RRAS.org](http://RRAS.org) or follow the instructions below.

### Membership Application

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of my local chapter. Please send *Audubon* magazine and my membership card to the address below.

**My check for \$20 is enclosed. (Introductory offer)**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

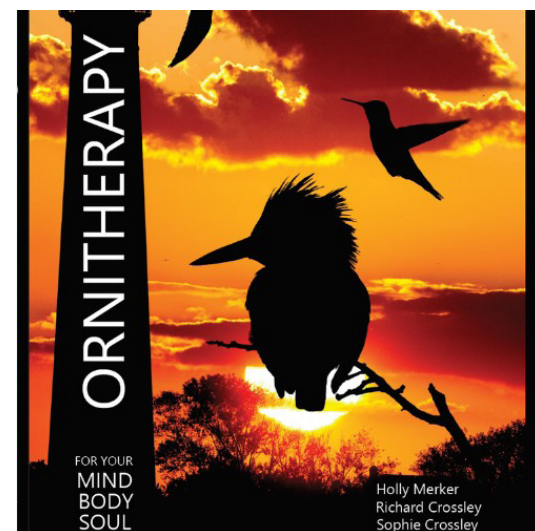
email \_\_\_\_\_

**Local Chapter Code: C24**

*Please make checks to the National Audubon Society. Send this application and your check to:*

**National Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 422250  
Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250**

**LOCAL CHAPTER:  
Redwood Region Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 1054, Eureka, CA 95502**



From [ornithery.com](http://ornithery.com)



## Women & Girls Bird Walk, Mother's Day 2023

Swifts and swallows galore, and more,  
on Mad River Levee, Blue Lake

By Elizabeth Morrison



White-throated Swift  
Photo by Brian Sullivan,  
Macaulay Library/Cornell

I usually scan the Wednesday edition of the *Times-Standard* for birding opportunities, and when I spot an Audubon Society Women & Girls' Bird Walk, I always want to go. These walks were started in June 2021 by Gisèle Albertine and Janelle Chojnacki, and I've been on a number of them. Birding is a joy in all kinds of company, but I find these walks especially congenial and fun.

The paper noted that Janelle would be leading a walk along the Mad River in Blue Lake. I'd been on Janelle's walks by the Eureka waterfront, at Trinidad Head, and at Hiller Park, so this would be a new place to explore. We were to meet at the parking area just south of the bridge at 9 a.m. on Mother's Day.

The day dawned with rare sunshine, but I wasn't up to see the dawn. By the time I had my act together it was going to be tight to get to Blue Lake by nine. I jumped in the car anyway, arrived at 9:15, and was relieved to find the group still in the parking area.

To my delight it was actually warm (!), so I ran back to the car and shed my warm jacket while the group moved out onto the bridge.

There were nine participants, mostly experienced birders. Janelle usually brings a scope, and when we reached the middle of the bridge, she set it up. The views were amazing. The river was much higher than when I'd last seen it, before the heavy rains, and the air was alive with insects. Swifts and swallows were having a field day. We stood for a long time enjoying great looks at White-throated Swifts, Tree Swallows, stunning Violet-green Swallows, Northern Rough-winged Swallows and Cliff Swallows. The Tree Swallows were especially numerous, and we got to look at them from the top as they flew beneath the bridge. One Tree Swallow was kind enough to perch on a wire above the bridge so we could study it at our leisure.

After we enjoyed this sight, we crossed to the north bank and prepared to walk along the levee. It would have been fine birding, but it was actually too hot being out in the sun! It was the first hot day we'd experienced in months, and we weren't used to it. So we walked back across the bridge and headed down into the cottonwoods on the south bank. This turned out to be a good decision. Birds were harder to spot among the leaves, but there were many, and Janelle helped us identify them from their calls as well. We saw or heard many warblers, including three Warbling Vireos, had a great look



Mad River Levee Loop  
Photo by Monica Dekat,  
[www.alltrails.com](http://www.alltrails.com)

at a Hairy Woodpecker, and saw a stunning Red-breasted Sapsucker that made our mouths drop open in amazement.

We also went down to the riverbank, where we saw a pair of Mallards and a Common Merganser. Several Turkey Vultures circled overhead. Janelle noticed two Spotted Sandpipers on an islet in the river, but look as I would, I never saw them, even with the scope. I did see an American Crow on the same islet doing something goofy with some driftwood.

By this time, it was hot even in the trees, and we found ourselves hurrying from one shade patch to another. We were still seeing beautiful birds, including a Western Tanager and a Purple Martin, but it was now 11 o'clock and time to head back. We had seen 29 species, and had a truly memorable morning.

### A Field Trip of Their Own

On the first Sunday of June 2021, RRAS ran its inaugural birding field trip specifically focused on women and girls. The idea—hatched by Gisèle Albertine and Janelle Chojnacki—was to create an environment in which women and girls would feel safe in a nonthreatening and noncompetitive atmosphere, and comfortable asking basic questions or risking incorrect identifications. The turnout at the first field trip was impressive, and the spirit of camaraderie, level of enthusiasm, and curiosity were high. The test of this experiment was whether attendance would continue for the next five trips that were planned at the time. Not only did it continue, but it has established a permanent place in the RRAS field trip roster.

## Bird News Roundup

Compiled by Gina Rogers

**Condors/Avian flu update:** In alarming news, twenty condors from the 118-bird Arizona-Utah population have died since March, with fifteen of those testing positive for avian flu. Wildlife staff at the Northern California Condor Restoration Program in Humboldt County have vigilant protocols in place for protecting the birds here, and are taking extra precautions like donning protective gear to avoid contamination when handling animal carcasses to feed them. They are also seeking funding to build isolation pens for emergency use in preparation for a potential outbreak here. In good news, sightings of the eight *prey-go-neesh* (the Yurok word for condors) released here are increasing, with the eBird reports primarily from east of Orick on Bald Hills Road.

**Changes under way at Arcata Marsh:** Phase One of the three-year, \$54 million Arcata Wastewater Treatment Facilities Improvement Project is under way. It will include an ultraviolet (UV) system to



Clearing the south end of Hauser Marsh  
Photo by Gina Rogers

replace the chlorine gas now used to disinfect the wastewater, as well as new sewer piping, a new pump station, and a new sewer outfall location. Early work cutting down vegetation around Klopp Lake is making room for the new pipe installation, which follows a roundabout route to avoid the area

near the capped landfill locally referred to as Mt. Trashmore. Part of the bulrush-clogged Hauser Marsh has also been cleared, and visitors will see I Street dug up for a pipe that will carry wastewater treated in Hauser Marsh to Brackish Pond. For more information: [www.cityofarcata.org/413/Current-City-Construction-Projects](http://www.cityofarcata.org/413/Current-City-Construction-Projects).

**Looking for something to watch?** The documentary film *All That Breathes*, which received an Oscar nomination for Best Documentary film this year, tells the story of two Muslim brothers in New Delhi who have been caring for thousands of Black Kites that fall from the city's smog-choked skies (streaming on HBO and HBO Max). **Looking for something to read?** A new collection of poems and nature essays reflecting on our relationships with birds has just been released. Proceeds from sales of *Dawn Songs: A Birdwatcher's Field Guide to the Poetics of Migration*, edited by Jamie K. Reaser and J. Drew Lanham, benefit the American Bird Conservancy's Conservation and Justice Fellowship Program.





Pileated Woodpeckers are not as common here as in the past but are always a pleasure to see.

## Carpintero—the Carpenter Bird

By Gary Friedrichsen

Photos courtesy of Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! The sounds reverberate in the Sitka Spruce trees behind our house. Then, as if mocking our inability to find the perpetrator, a cacophony of laughs emanates from the bird's hidden perch. Suddenly an explosion of wings shoots from the copse and we are treated to the powerful *swoosh* of black and white feathers and a body culminating with the distinct red crest of the Pileated Woodpecker, *Dryocopus pileatus*. The genus, *Dryocopus*, is from the Greek and means "tree-cutter," while the species name, *pileatus*, is Latin and refers to the bird's cap or crest. Stan Harris (aka "Doc") mentions that the Pileated Woodpecker always reminded him of his blacksmith father, whose solution to any problem was to "just get a bigger hammer!" Since the demise of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, this species totes around the biggest

hammer in our North American woods. In his *Northwestern California Birds*, Doc goes on to note that these huge birds thinly populate their range in our area. This is likely due to the fact that the parents require roughly 100 acres of conifers or mixed deciduous forest to feed in while raising their young. So, while they are not rare, they are always a pleasure to find on any outing.

Their chisel-shaped bills are excellent at boring the large, apple-size holes they excavate, either in search of food or in the production of their penthouse apartment, which the family will inhabit during breeding. Both sexes share nest and feeding duty, caring for the three to four youngsters. The male will have done the most work in excavating, but the female will help towards the end to add the homey touches.

The *carpintero*, as these birds are called in Mexico, usually require dead trees for their nest holes. The trees are commonly infested with boring worms, beetle larvae, termites, and many species of ants, providing nearby dining for the family. After the Pileated family has moved on, the nest holes are then used by several other inhabitants (Wood Ducks, small owls, other woodpeckers, squirrels, and chipmunks, to name a few).

After early nineteenth century land clearing in the eastern US had diminished this species, we can celebrate a substantial rebound in their population. They are now considered nonthreatened and appear to be thriving alongside humans. Unfortunately for us, these birds are not as common here on the coast as they were just twenty years



"Tree-cutter" *Dryocopus pileatus*

ago. Perhaps they have moved to nearby forests with better nesting trees, and we will have to wait until our stands age and entice them back.

My favorite local sighting came the first year after moving to Sunnybrae. I was walking up to our rental when I was startled as this huge bird plummeted from a low branch of an apple tree in which it was feeding ten feet away. The bird came swooping directly at me attempting to gain altitude. My heart rate was up considerably as the wind from the wings re-fluffed my coif.

## Did You Know?

From the Catbird Committee

### Ground Gleaners & Box Nesters

Some neighborhood breeding birds are more susceptible to being killed by cats than others. Researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology investigated bird behaviors that contribute to the probability of cat-caused mortality. They found that species that feed on the ground or breed in nest boxes were three times more likely to be captured by cats. Not long ago, I witnessed a neighbor's cat trying to climb to a nest box full of young Chestnut-backed Chickadees in my backyard. Also in my yard are two popular local ground feeders: White-crowned Sparrow and American Robin. If you love these birds and their nestlings, please keep your cat under control or indoors at all times this summer, and ask your neighbors to do so as well.

KID'S CORNER

# WOWZA WILDLIFE!

By Leslie Scopes Anderson

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

**Brown Pelicans** live mainly near salt water and can be found along our coasts and sometimes in Klopp Lake at the Arcata Marsh. They spend summer & fall in No. California.

FUN FACTS:

**Brown Pelicans** are water birds that are brown only as juveniles. They feed in deep water by plunge-diving, which stuns small fish that they quickly scoop up – before a marauding gull steals them!