Every Saturday: Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary. These are our famous, rain-or-shine, docent-led field trips at the Marsh. Bring your binoculars and have a great morning birding! Meet in the parking lot at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake) in Arcata at 8:30 a.m. Trips end around 11 a.m. August 4: Max Brodie; August 11: Jude Power; August 18: Cindy Moyer; August 25: Carol Wilson.

For some of our more far-reaching trips we would like to suggest donating gas money to drivers on field trips. A good rule of thumb is $5 per ½ hour drive time to cover gas. For some of our more far-reaching trips we would like to suggest donating gas money to drivers on field trips.

Saturday, August 11: Willow Creek. Meet at Studio 299 (75 The Terrace, Willow Creek) starting at 9 a.m. We will depart promptly at 9:30 for our destination; carpooling available. Walks generally run 2-3 hours. All ages, abilities and interest levels welcome! Contact Birgitte Elbek (707-267-4140) for more information.

Sunday, August 12: Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. This is a wonderful 2- to 3-hour trip for people wanting to learn the birds of the Humboldt Bay area. It takes a leisurely pace with emphasis on enjoying the birds! Beginners are more than welcome. Meet at the Refuge Visitor Center at 9 a.m. Call Jude Power (707-822-3613) for more information.

Saturday, August 18: Twilight Walk. This evening experience is especially for young people (or young at heart)! Come out to watch the light fade and wildlife get ready for night. Meet on 2nd St. next to Target in Eureka at 7:30 p.m. Dress warmly. Walk ends at 8:30 p.m. Contact Alexa DeJoannis (202-288-5174).

Eureka Waterfront walks are on vacation until September. See September 16.

Saturday, August 25: Blue Lake. Meet at the parking pull-out just south of the Mad River bridge on Hatchery Rd. at 9 a.m. We’ll bird in the riparian cottonwoods and then drive to the hatchery. Contact Alexa DeJoannis at 202-288-5174.

Friday, August 31: Twilight Walk. This evening experience is especially for young people (or young at heart)! Come out to watch the light fade and wildlife get ready for night. Meet at the parking lot at the end of South I St. at the Arcata Marsh at 7 p.m. Dress warmly. Walk ends at 8 p.m. Contact Alexa DeJoannis (202-288-5174).

Saturday, September 8: Willow Creek. See August 11.


September 16: Eureka Waterfront. Meet at 9 a.m. at the foot of W. Del Norte St., where we will scope for birds off the public dock until everyone assembles. We will then drive to the Hikshari Trail at Truesdale Street and bird along the trail to the Elk River Wildlife Sanctuary. Contact Ralph Bucher (707-499-1247; thebook@reninet.com).

Saturday, September 22: Twilight Walk. This evening experience is especially for young people (or young at heart)! Come out to watch the light fade and wildlife get ready for night. Meet at 2nd St. next to Target parking lot in Eureka at 6:30 p.m. Dress warmly. Walk ends at 8 p.m. Contact Alexa DeJoannis (202-288-5174).

Saturday, September 29: Blue Lake. See August 25.

SUMMER PICNIC: SUNDAY, SEPT 9

Come Visit With Friends at Our Summer Picnic!
All are welcome at Sequoia Park Picnic Area 3550 W St. in Eureka September 9, 3-6 p.m. please bring a dish to share; lemonade provided
Consider bringing reusable utensils for your party.

Share your best birding story of the summer! We’d love to see you, neighbor!
Contact board@rras.org for more info

SEPTMBER PROGRAM: FRIDAY, SEPT 14

Traditional Ecological Knowledge Research in Wildlife Conservation

Long before European scientists set foot in North America, Indigenous Peoples had already been gathering information about their environment for millennia. Only recently has the western scientific community begun to acknowledge the value and legitimacy of this Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). While TEK is increasingly being incorporated into the field of wildlife conservation, understanding of what TEK is and whether it is science remains controversial.

Dr. Seafha Ramos will discuss her work meshing TEK and wildlife conservation, and talk about how wildlife biologists can develop culturally sensitive approaches to their research. Dr. Ramos is Yurok (tribal member) and Karuk, and a Research Associate and Lecturer in the Wildlife Department at Humboldt State University. She is also a participant in the Yurok Tribe’s Kee Laa-yo-lue-mehl Teacher Candidate program, intended to continue the revitalization of the Yurok language as a component of TEK.

Doors open at 7 p.m. Come early to share your rare-bird stories! Programs start at 7:30 p.m. at Six Rivers Masonic Lodge, 251 Bayside Road, Arcata. Bring a mug to enjoy shade-grown coffee, and come fragrance-free.
By Alexa DeJoannis

Once again, the clamor of birdsong begins to decline from its spring peak, and I am looking forward to the appearance of migrant birds in our area. There are already a variety of shorebirds in our local wetlands, and according to past sightings (another handy purpose for eBird), we’ll be seeing many migrating songbirds dropping in on our thicket from the end of summer through the fall.

I’d like to invite nature-lovers of all stripes to our picnic social at Sequoia Park picnic area (3550 W St in Eureka) on September 9 from 3-6 p.m. A large organization like RRAS and its sister organizations under the NEC umbrella benefit from frequent meetings among their members. This is a great time to touch base with friends in the community!

Speaking of the community, RRAS plans to invite birders from our neighboring Audubon chapters in Northern California for a birding weekend this fall. Perhaps some members would be interested in hosting visitors from other fields at their homes. If so, please contact the Board of Directors at board@rras.org, and watch for the trip announcement in the next issue.

Keeping in Touch with the Local Birding Community

By Elias Elias

In 2018, we now have more ways than ever before to share bird news. Long gone are the phone-tree days. Today, we have phone, email, and web-based (internet) sites like eBird.org and facebook.com. In this overview, I will give a brief synopsis of the best ways to direct messages to your fellow birding friends on this side of the redwood curtain and beyond. If you want to keep up with the bird news, it is probably best to cast your net as wide as possible and check them all.

The premier way is our birders’ voicemail system. It is sometimes called the Northwest California Bird Alert or, by many, simply the “Bird Box.” For those of us who birdwatch with a phone at hand, this mode of reporting is probably the preferred option because an unlimited number of folks can be notified in an instant with a simple call. All this can be done with barely taking your eyes off the bird. The way it works is an observer leaves a message at 707-822-5666. Upon hanging up, the answering machine emails the audio file to a Google Groups Listserv. The list server then emails that audio file to all subscribers. If you have an iPhone, you can set your phone to ding by designating the sender’s email address as a VIP. You can then listen to the audio message without calling the alert. If you are hyper-concerned with getting messages ASAP, sign up to the Listserv with an iCloud email account and your messages will get pushed to your phone within, like, thirty seconds. If you have a different email provider you must wait for your email app to fetch messages, which may take up to fifteen minutes. Things likely work similarly if you have an Android or Windows phone, but I have no experience with either of them.

The NWCalBirds Listserv (https://groups.io/g/NWCALBIRD) can be equally as quick, but you need to take your eyes off the bird to compose the message. But an added benefit for those with smartphones is that it’s easy to drop a pin to direct people to your location. You can also add a photo for a multimedia experience.

One can subscribe to several flavors of eBird.org alerts, which arrive either hourly or daily. You can get these alerts online or in your email inbox. If you are concerned with “rare” birds, select Humboldt and/or Del Norte Counties. Additionally, you can also get custom-tailored emails called Needs Alerts. eBird.org, in knowing your life and year lists, will only send you notification of your needs either by list server or by calendar year for the states or counties you are concerned about. While not as expeditious as options 1 or 2, it is an excellent way to spread news of birds that are not quite as urgent. You’ll need to create an account on the website to use this feature of eBird.org. but an account opens up a whole universe of communication that will keep you giddy for years. In addition to the hourly or daily alerts mentioned; you can also follow the Recent Visits pages for Humboldt and Del Norte Counties. These pages allow you to see who else is submitting checklists in an area of interest.

I know that there has been a proliferation of Facebook pages to disseminate bird news. If you happen to use Messenger app on your phone or computer, there is a group chat that has been going on for a couple of years (https://www.facebook.com/groups/BirdingCalifornia/). Ask around about it. It’s likely that a friend can invite you to it. Alternatively, get ahold of me at 707-633-8833@gmail.com and I’ll sign you up. This Facebook page goes further afield from NW California, but occasionally there are local birds that appear on it.

[Editor’s note: the RRAS Board of Directors is considering eliminating the Bird Box (mentioned in the second paragraph above), the cost of which is wholly borne by RRAS currently. With the proliferation of web-based communication, the Bird Box has started to appear outdated, and we feel that our money might be better spent elsewhere. If you have an opinion about the Bird Box, we want to hear it. Email board@rras.org.]

Thinking of Joining the National Audubon Society?

If so, please use the coupon below. By sending in your membership on this form, rather than replying to solicitations from National Audubon, $20 is sent directly to RRAS. This is how NAS rewards local chapters for recruiting national members. (Otherwise, the RRAS dues share per new member is only a couple of dollars.) Thank you.

Chapter Membership Application

Yes, I’d like to join.
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

© Alexa DeJoannis

Birding From the Mad River Bridge in Blue Lake

What Duck Is This?

[Answer is on last page.]
Butterflies Galore, from Horse Mountain to Grouse Mountain

By Alexa DeJoannis

For the second year in a row Rob Fowler and I led a July trip to the nearest higher-elevation area along Forest Route 1 (Titlow Hill Road) to look for butterflies and birds. Being mid-summer and with the leisurely (for birders) starting time of 9 a.m., butterflies were the focus more than birds, and we were not disappointed. With a group of 27, we left Arcata for Berry Summit, where we were treated to Washington lilies in bloom, and an abundance of Common Wood-nymph butterflies. We drove south and uphill to the base of Horse Mountain, then along Route 1 to Forest Route 5N10, where we checked out a couple seeps and areas with good blooms of butterfly nectar and larval host plants, including buckwheats, coyote mint, and dogbane. We were rewarded by a diverse abundance of lovely butterflies, including Gorgon Coppers, Nelson’s and Golden Hairstreaks, Mylitta Crescent, Pacific Dotted Blue, California Sister, Lorquin’s Admiral, and various fritillaries. The latter are notoriously hard to identify to species, but with the help of a net and viewing jar, we tentatively identified Hydaspe, Zerene, and Great Basin Fritillaries.

It was a hot day, and we stopped in a shady spot for lunch along Friday Ridge Road, where new butterfly (and plant) species awaited us, including Clodius Parnassians, Variable Checkerspots, Pine Whites flitting high among the conifers, and monument plant (a very tall gentian with greenish flowers). Pete Haggard showed us a very cool Bumblebee Moth, which mimics bumblebees; this mimicry apparently deters some would-be predators, who think it packs a sting! Our last set of stops were on the north slope of Grouse Mountain, where we checked out a seep and a patch of the relatively uncommon Arrowleaf Buckwheat (Eriogonum compositum) that Pete knew about, which is a butterfly magnet when in bloom. Among the treats here were several blues attracted to roadside seeps (Boisduval’s Blue, Anna’s Blue, Silvery Blue, and Acmon/Lupine Blue), various swallowtails, and Variable Checkerspot caterpillars feeding on penstemon. Another treat here was the Disguised Wood-nymph that Tony Kurz found. This recently described species is known from relatively few locations, and this appears to be a new site (it has been found 5-6 miles north). In total, the group recorded 32 species of butterflies!

While butterflies were the main quarry for this trip, Rob and others recorded 22 bird species on their eBird list. Thanks to all the participants for their good spirits in the face of high temperatures and potholes and other road hazards. Rob and I were fortunate to have a wealth of butterfly and bug experts along, who enthusiastically shared their knowledge; they included Pete and Judy Haggard, Tony Kurz, and Laurie Lawrence.

[Editor’s Note: For those readers interested in learning more about the butterflies and moths mentioned in Gary’s account, we found the book Insects of the Pacific Northwest by Peter Haggard and Judy Haggard (yes, the authors were with us!) very helpful.]

The butterfly trip made for an exciting and colorful day. Not only were the butterflies exquisite, but the way the guides put it all together: expertise, whirling-dervish butterfly-catching, ensconcing of butterflies in glass jars so their every dot and hairstreak could be observed, and general good feeling made for a beautiful day at Horse Mountain. Don’t miss it next year!

- Jean Santi
By Ken Burton

[A Trip to Southern California (concluded)]

[Ken’s birding story began in the 2018 April/May issue with the following introduction. Here we continue with the last four of his target birds.]

In February, being between jobs, I took an extended road-trip to the other end of the state. The trip was primarily social in nature, but I had a list of six target birds to see along the way. All six were potential “state” birds: that is, birds I’d never seen or heard in California. Each has its own story, and I thought it might be entertaining and informative to share these stories with you.

I drove to San Diego to try for a Greater Pewee discovered and initially misidentified as a Pacific-slope Flycatcher (even though it’s 45% bigger!) in Balboa Park on December 5. Expert birder Paul Lehman coincidentally found and correctly IDed it two days later; such are the stories: that is, birds I’ve never seen or heard in California south and east. Out-of-range Harris’s Hawks are always problematic, since the species is popular with ATVists and off-road enthusiasts. My last target bird was Neotropic Cormorant, a species that has been expanding its range northward from Mexico and is now established in small numbers in the Imperial Valley and has been recorded as far north as Monterey County. This target differed from my others in that there were numerous locations from which to choose, and I decided to start at the southernmost, a site called the Shanks Road Wetland, part of the Alamo River Wetlands Project near Brawley, where a single bird had been reported recently. The hardest part of this adventure proved to be finding the location. I had been using an app called BirdsEye, which is linked to eBird and Google Maps, to navigate; in this case, it led me somewhat astray because the access road is unmapped and the app took me to the wrong side of the river and then apparently expected me to swim across! [It was while trying to sort this out that I received a call from Gary Bloomfield, who had no idea I was out of town, to inform me of the Black-tailed Gull that Lucas Brug had just found in Crescent City; ironically, I wound up seeing that bird before Gary did!] Eventually I spied the wetland across the river and used my phone to figure out how to get there. Sometimes I try to remember how we did these things in the age before GPS and smartphones. Anyway, once there, I spotted the bird (perched on a snag too far away for decent photos) instantly and my mission came to an abrupt and satisfying end. Six for six, with only one having given me any real trouble and five of them in a single weekend!

Recent Rarities

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What That Duck IS:
Wood Duck, Oxidation Ponds, Arcata Marsh © Alexa DeJoannis, June 26, 2018

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Juvenile Bell’s Sparrow at Saddle Mountain area, © Max Brodie, July 21, 2018

Red-eyed Vireo at Arcata Marsh, © Gary Bloomfield, June 8, 2018, first found by Mark Colwell

Summer Tanager in Arcata, © Ian Gledhill, July 22, 2018

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I wandered around for two hours without success, feeling, not for the first or last time, a bit out of place amongst the strollers, joggers, dog-walkers, and transients, not one of whom even asked what the hell I was doing. (I was the only one doing it.) I did turn up a female Summer Tanager, which was an OK consolation prize, though one that I learned had been found before.

Cutting my losses, I decided to try for bird #4 and return to the park later. #4 was Nazca Booby, a species split recently from Masked Booby and best distinguished by its orange bill, it breeds in Mexico and Ecuador and has been showing up increasingly in California, even as far north as Marin County. There were at least five at once in San Diego Bay last year and two adults were still there in February. Short of procuring a boat, most observers had had to settle for very distant views from Coronado Island, so I knew some serious looking was in store. It took me surprisingly little time to spot the large, white, black-winged birds roosting on a buoy about a mile away with a Western Gull for comparison. Although I was confident they were the Nazcas, I couldn’t make out bill color without collapsing my tripod and hunkering down out of the wind so I could crank up the magnification. This was the only life bird of my trip; coincidentally, my previous lifer was also a booby. I digiscoped some photos and video, but they’re so lousy that I’m not going to subject you to them; you’ll have to look elsewhere if you want to see what a Nazca Booby looks like.

Feeling pretty pleased with myself and with at least an hour of daylight left, I headed back to Balboa Park for another stab at the pewee. The crowds had thinned considerably by then and within five minutes I heard the bird calling in a small tree, sounding quite like a robin. I was fortunate that it was fairly low, since the light level was, too. As dusk fell, I left the bird chirping away in its tree, bringing a very successful day to a close.

The next morning found me searching for an adult Harris’s Hawk on the outskirts of Ramona, a small ranching town northeast of San Diego. This bird had been found on the Escondido Christmas Bird Count in late December. One of the world’s most beautiful raptors (in my opinion), this species breeds from Arizona and Baja California south and east. Out-of-range Harris’s Hawks are always problematic, since the species is popular with falconers, but San Diego County is well within its normal abnormal range and this bird’s wild origin isn’t being questioned. As I was looking for the hawk I kicked up a Clay-colored Sparrow that no one had reported, and while photographing it I heard the telltale scream of the hawk. Really, you haven’t lived until you’ve heard a Harris’s Hawk scream. I looked up in time to see it perched in a nearby tree just before it decided to fly away out of sight. Another birder whom I hadn’t even noticed was there got some really nice photos; I sure didn’t.

My last target bird was Neotropic Cormorant, a species that has been expanding its range northward from Mexico and is now established in small numbers in the Imperial Valley and has been recorded as far north as Monterey County. This target differed from my others in that there were numerous locations from which to choose, and I decided to start at the southernmost, a site called the Shanks Road Wetland, part of the Alamo River Wetlands Project near Brawley, where a single bird had been reported recently. The hardest part of this adventure proved to be finding the location. I had been using an app called BirdsEye, which is linked to eBird and Google Maps, to navigate; in this case, it led me somewhat astray because the access road is unmapped and the app took me to the wrong side of the river and then apparently expected me to swim across! [It was while trying to sort this out that I received a call from Gary Bloomfield, who had no idea I was out of town, to inform me of the Black-tailed Gull that Lucas Brug had just found in Crescent City; ironically, I wound up seeing that bird before Gary did!] Eventually I spied the wetland across the river and used my phone to figure out how to get there. Sometimes I try to remember how we did these things in the age before GPS and smartphones. Anyway, once there, I spotted the bird (perched on a snag too far away for decent photos) instantly and my mission came to an abrupt and satisfying end. Six for six, with only one having given me any real trouble and five of them in a single weekend!