

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

July 21 FIELD TRIP
Hayward Shoreline-Frank's Dump

July 27-28 FIELD TRIP
Sierra Weekend- Carson Pass

Aug 3 FIELD TRIP
Hayward Shoreline- Grant Ave

Sept 3 GENERAL MEETING Via Zoom

Sept 7 MEMBERSHIP
APPRECIATION PICNIC
Shadow Cliffs, Pleasanton

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday September 7, 2024 Noon

The Sara Mathews & Helen Sowers

MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION PICNIC

Shadow Cliffs Regional Park Pleasanton Lago del Sol Picnic Area

In recognition and appreciation of the support of our members, you and your family are invited to a catered (no charge) luncheon.

Membership Meetings

No General Meetings in July and August

Next meeting - Tuesday, September 3, 2024 via Zoom

Look for details for the September program in our next issue.

Your current zoom link will continue to work.

Field Trips



Hayward Shoreline, Frank's Dump Sunday, July 21, 12:30 -3 pm Leaders: Juli Chamberlin, and Bob Toleno birding@toleno.com

Join Bob and Juli for a 2 1/2 mile round-trip walk on flat paved and gravel paths to Frank's Dump, possibly the best high tide roost in the East Bay. July is an excellent month to view migrating shorebirds, and we can expect to see Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones, Short-billed Dowitchers, phalaropes, and Snowy Plovers. July is a great month for "peeps", and we hope to see thousands of Western Sandpipers, possibly a Semipalmated Sandpiper, or maybe even a real rarity like the Red-necked Stint found a few years ago. Afternoon light should give us excellent conditions for viewing shorebirds, mostly still in breeding plumage. Pre-registration is not required, and all are welcome.

Take I-880 to West Winton Avenue in Hayward and go west towards the bay to reach the park.

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Field Trips continued

High Sierra - Carson Pass Area
Sat & Sun, July 27-28, 8:30am - 4:00pm
Leaders: Bob Toleno & Juli Chamberlin
RSVP required - limited to 12 participants birding@toleno.com

Join us in the beautiful High Sierra for some montane birding. We'll be looking for all the special birds of the high mountains, some resident species, and some neotropical migrants, including: Black-backed Woodpecker, Pine Grosbeak, Calliope Hummingbird, Sooty Grouse, Williamson's Sapsucker, Graycrowned Rosy-Finch, and Clark's Nutcracker. We plan to visit several lakes, streams, and wet meadows along the way. Flowers should be great this year with all of the snow we have had this past winter. Please note, some moderate hiking will be involved at high elevation, but nothing too intense.

We'll meet each morning at 8:30 in front of the Kirkwood General Store (or a bit earlier if you want to buy coffee or snacks; the store opens at 8).

Hayward Shoreline - Grant Ave
Saturday, August 3, 8:30am - 11am
Leaders: Kathy Robertson and Rich Nicolson
rsn711@yahoo.com

Meet at the Grant Avenue staging area in San Lorenzo for a walk along the canal to the shoreline and south to reach Oro Loma Marsh. We expect to see shorebirds such as Red Knots, Short-billed Dowitchers, Ruddy Turnstones, and Black-bellied Plovers as well as gulls and terns and maybe a resident Osprey.

For those who wish to camp in the area, Caples Lake, Woods Lake, and Silver Lake Campgrounds are all nearby. These are first-come-first-served sites, so the earlier the better. The leaders will be staying in Kirkwood, where there are hotel rooms and apartments. Other options for non-campers can be found at Caples Lake Resort, Sorenson's Lodge in Hope Valley, Kay's Resort near Silver Lake, and Kit Carson Lodge. South Lake Tahoe is only 16 miles away, thus a route from Hwy 50 to 88 via 89 is quite easy.

Directions: From Hwy 88, turn onto Kirkwood Meadows Dr. The store is 1.5 miles from the highway, on the right side just after the road curves



April Field Trip participants to Sabercat Creek, Fremont

Directions: From I-880 south take the Washington Avenue exit. Turn right on Washington and right on Grant Avenue. From I-880 north take the Hesperian Blvd. exit. Make a sharp left onto Hesperian and a right on Grant Avenue. In both cases continue west on Grant Avenue to the parking lot near the end of the road.



Thank you to the following for joining, renewing and donating! We appreciate your valued support

New Members/Renewals

Juan M Benjumea Karalee Brune Sharon Culp George Doering Amy Evans Doris Green Mike Hall Jean Hansen Jennifer Henry
Julia Holland
Ruth Ann Hunt
Bruce & Judy Jund
Victoria Krysiak
Pat Macsata
Laurie Matthews
Loretta Matty

Jennifer Moran Michael O'Brien Amy Law Pannu Terry Preston Stephen Rentmeesters Michael Shannon Terry Spraggins Suzanna Townsend



Marilyn Trabert Shirley Wodte Stephen Wright

Donations

Sharon Culp Ruth Ann Hunt Victoria Krysiak Stephen Wright

President's Corner

Every January I write my New Years resolutions for birding. We are at the middle of the year so it is time to check in and see how I am doing.

- 1. Chase one rarity. Done. Spotted the Bell's Vireo at Pacific Commons Linear Park.
- 2. Attend one birding festival. Done, T and I finally made it up to Godwit Days in Arcata. We had a great time. If you are looking for a festival you won't go wrong attending this one.
- 3. Go birding at least 24 times. Complete. Well surpassed this mark for 2024.
- 4. Go on a pelagic trip. Nope and don't see one in the near future.
- 5. Target ten life birds and go get them. No progress here. In lieu of any progress, I made a spreadsheet of the remaining birds I could see in the ABA area and where I was most likely to see them. Whenever we are traveling, I check it to see what to look for. I first used it to unsuccessfully hunt for Louisiana Waterthrush in Arkansas and Mississippi. I will keep trying.
- 6. Learn 20 bird songs. Inch by inch, it is a cinch. Getting better at Warbling Vireo and Purple Finch.
- 7. Get a nemesis bird. Pygmy Nuthatch continues to taunt me.
- 8. Do an international birding trip. On track. We are headed to Australia this Fall.
- 9. Buy a new gadget or guide. Going in the opposite direction. Donated most of my hardcopy field guides.
- 10. Volunteer for one Citizen Science project. Going strong with bird banding, Snowy Plover and shorebird monitoring and USFWS Breeding Bird census routes. If you aren't

I am sure my field guide is wrong and this is what a Pygmy Nuthatch really looks like

involved in Citizen Science, please look into it. It adds so much to your birding experience.

- 11. Adopt a birding hot spot and get to know it. Other than my front porch. Working on getting better at Sycamore Grove in Livermore, Shadow Cliffs in Pleasanton and Big Break up in Oakley.
- 12. Write one letter or attend one meeting promoting bird conservation. The Newark Shoreline keeps all of us busy here. Another issue that I track is the mouse eradication project on the Farallons. There is always another issue that needs attention.

Doing OK. Need to add a life bird and get Pygmy Nuthatch. May have to break down and head over to the Presidio in San Francisco, where they seem to be falling out of the trees.

Hope you are making progress on you own resolutions. Happy Birding.

- Bill Hoppes



A few OAS board members enjoying the celebration of the 3 Calhoun Sisters' Ranch Audubon Certification of being Bird-Friendly Habitat, May 22, 2024, Livermore

BIRDING OBSERVATIONS

Summer 2024

By Vicki Robinson

Yeah, it's summer here in Northern California. Our winter birds are gone leaving only a few ducks in our lakes and ponds. Our backyard birds-California Towhees, Northern Mockingbirds, Bushtits, Bewick's Wrens, House Finches and Mourning Doves are busy feeding their chicks or teaching the fledglings where to find food. Occasionally a Brown-headed Cowbird will lay its eggs in the nest of another species, causing the poor, smaller bird to feed its offspring.







Also you will probably have **House Sparrows**, that are not

native but have taken over in many places. What was once a pet bird, the **Scaly-breasted Munia**, has been seen in many parks and even backyards. The largest nesting population right now is at Lake Elizabeth, Fremont.







Great-tailed Grackles, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings, White-tailed Kites, Grasshopper Sparrows, Rufous-crowned Sparrows, and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers can be found at Pacific Commons Linear Park, Mill Creek, Lake Elizabeth, and Mission Peak, among other locations.

A continuing Western Screech Owl is once again nesting in a tree hole off of Mill Creek road. Barn Owls have been seen in boxes at Lake Elizabeth and other places with man-made homes.

Terns are returning to nest and feed their babies, including **Least**, **Elegant**, **Caspian**, and **Forster's Terns** which are at the Hayward Shoreline and other safe areas. A **Black Tern** has also been seen flying around.

Swainson's Thrushes, which look very similar to our **Hermit Thrushes**, but have a bolder, buffy eye ring and a distinctive upward-spiraling flutelike song, are here for the summer.



The rarest bird so far this season has been a **Bell's Vireo** at Pacific at Commons Linear Park in Fremont. A new bird for Alameda County! Also seen there have been a **Cassin's Kingbird**, **Western Kingbird**, **Prairie Falcon**, and **Hooded** and **Bullock's Orioles**.

Another uncommon bird, a **Yellow-breasted Chat,** has been heard and sometimes seen at Lake Elizabeth, as well as at a few other places, including Del Valle. Easy to hear but hard to see. (all photos by V. Robinson)



Conservation

East County Conservation Report

Judge Rejects Suit Against North Livermore Cemetery

An Alameda County Superior Court judge rejected a lawsuit that aimed to overturn the Alameda County Board of Supervisors' approval of Monte Vista Memorial Gardens — a 47-acre cemetery and funeral facility project outside the urban growth boundary on the city's northern border. Friends of Livermore (FOL), in its suit, contended that the cemetery clearly violated provisions of Measure D and the East County Area Plan (ECAP). In his ruling, Judge Michael Markman stated that the litigants had "not identified a fundamental, mandatory and clear ECAP policy violated by the resolution at issue, nor has

(FOL) established that the Board of Supervisors failed to consider the applicable considered policies and the extent to which the project conformed with those policies." This is becoming a common response by the courts. They are very reticent to overrule decisions of elected bodies and defer to their judgement. Thus, in this case, Measure D means whatever the Board of Supervisors decides it means. This view reinforces the need to make our case to the regulatory body who approves it, as the courts are unlikely to overrule their judgement. (B. Hoppes)

West County Conservation Report

State Budget Impacts for Habitat Conservation

California Audubon put out a social media blast asking folks to contact their legislators to request that funding for Habitat Conservation Plans be protected. Bay Nature Magazine reported June 20, 2024 that \$45 million identified for the Habitat Conservation Fund has been moved to the General Fund. For over three

decades since the passage of Proposition 117, the Habitat Conservation Fund has been a source of funding for acquisition, conservation, and restoration of habitats within the State. Environmental groups across the State are pressing for the funding to be reinstated in the final version of the budget.

South Bay Connect

There is a proposal to move the Capitol Corridor passenger rail from the Niles Subdivision tracks to the Coast Subdivision tracks that would eliminate a stop in Hayward and at the Fremont Centerville Station (which would still be served by ACE). The proposal includes the addition of another track within the existing right-of-way. Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) are due by 5pm July 15th. Two virtual workshops were held to accept public comments in June. During the first there were no comments in support of the proposed project.

Ardenwood neighborhood residents were extremely concerned about increases in noise and vibration caused by the addition of 14 train trips per day, with a new Ardenwood Station proposed at Hwy 84 and Ardenwood Blvd.

The environmental group concerns expressed included:

• Environmental groups received no notification of workshops that were held prior to the release of

the DIER and were told during the June meetings that even questions of clarification would not be answered during the virtual meetings.

- The continued concern that in an effort to increase passenger rail efficiencies that freight rail would be shifted to the Niles and Oakland subdivisions, leading to the potential for increased rail through Niles Canyon.
- Concerns about sea level rise, groundwater rise and storm surge on vulnerable portions of the tracks and the comment made during the first June virtual presentation, that the plans for climate change resilience were based upon intermediate to high sea level rise projections for 2050. (C. High)

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)

Conservation (cont'd)

Farallon Islands Wildlife Research is in Trouble

What it means for marine science A \$300,000 cut in federal funding hits nonprofit Point Blue Conservation Science, which monitors "California's Galapagos"

After 56 years of continuous presence on the Farallon Islands, Point Blue's research and monitoring program on the islands is in jeopardy. The islands are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge and a significant portion of the funding that supports Point Blue's program on the islands historically has come from the Service. Now, citing budgetary constraints at the regional and federal level, the Service has notified Point Blue that it will no longer be able to provide funding to continue the critical work on the Farallon Islands.

https://www.pointblue.org/our-work/oceans/support-our-national-wildlife-refuges/

Please click on this link to see more information on the devasting cut in funding and what you can do.

Protecting the San Lorenzo Creek Watershed



Since the end of May, the City of Hayward has been repairing a storm-water pipe on A Street—beginning at Fourth Street—and the outfall structure at the creek bank. The old outfall structure was getting washed away, and the pipe near the outfall structure had collapsed. Native vegetation, including a mature coast live oak tree, was removed.

This site is located across the street from Ruby Meadow, near the border of Hayward and Castro Valley. The site is a riparian oak woodland and wildlife corridor located along San Lorenzo Creek. Several bird species and other wildlife depend on the corridor for food, shelter, protection, and nesting. Protection of creeks is needed and not followed by government agencies, even though zoning laws and general plans outline creek protections.

Historically, concerned citizens and environmental

organizations (e.g., Friends of San Lorenzo Creek and Ohlone Audubon Society) have repeatedly asked the City of Hayward and Alameda County governments to not allow development or removal of trees in the riparian areas. Over eighty trees and their root systems were removed at the site in the Hayward jurisdiction six years ago. The creek has since flooded, and last year the creek bank collapsed along that entire portion of A Street. Tree root systems help prevent erosion, reduce pollution, and stabilize the soil, helping with flood control.

The Regional Water Board reported that one oak tree was undermined by erosion or needed excavation and needed to be removed. The Board was requiring three replacement coast live oaks, along with a monitoring plan to ensure they survive. Unfortunately, it can take 75 years for a coast live oak to reach maturity and these replacements often do not get monitored, let alone happen at all. (M. Selva)

From Friends of San Leandro Creek:

Sue Levenson, the Watershed Awareness Coordinator, is retiring after 12 years, but she is not going far! She will be moving over to the Board Treasurer spot. We offer our congratulations to Sue for a job well done, including cleaning tons of trash from the creek, restoring a large swath of creekside riparian area at Chabot Park, speaking at many events, and being instrumental in educating thousands of local students with hands-on experiments in and around the creek.

The group is very fortunate as having Ann Graham, as her replacement. Ann is a Bay Area native, and San Leandro resident with a background in biology. She has 15 years' experience as a Naturalist at the Hayward Shoreline Interpretive Center. Ann spent much of that time providing environmental education in the form of scientific field trips to the marsh area and the Bay. She is an expert birder; has worked banding birds at the Manomet Center for Conservation Science in Cape Cod, the Institute for Bird Populations in North Carolina, Ventana Wildlife Society Bird Banding Lab in Big Sur, and Ann was a wildlife biology intern for the Student Conservation Association on the Channel Islands in San Clemente, Ca. Welcome Ann!

A Gull, a Plan

by Bill Hoppes

This is an article I have been planning and struggling to write for a couple of years. I am always looking for bird identification problems that are (1) fairly easy to learn, and (2) will absolutely amaze your birding friends when you pull it off. Aging gulls seems to be the perfect fit. Identifying gulls frustrates everyone; most people don't even try to ID immature gulls. If I could teach you how to identify all the age classes of a species of gull, it would so amaze your friends that they wouldn't believe you anyway. But you would know and could walk away with a self-satisfied smile. Unfortunately, until just recently, this proved very hard. On the recent Ohlone field trip to Point Reyes, field trip leader Bob Toleno pointed out several age classes of Western Gull in a freshwater pond, and I could see a path forward for you to learn to ID all four age classes of Western Gull and truly amaze yourself and your birding friends.

The Western Gull is my favorite gull. It is a year-round resident along the West Coast, from southern Washington to Baja. The largest Western Gull colony is on the Farallon Islands, located about 26 mi (40 km) west of San Francisco. An estimated 30,000 Western Gulls live in the San Francisco Bay Area, a third of its worldwide population. In addition to the Farallons, breeding colonies occur on the Channel Islands, Ano Nuevo Island, and Alcatraz. The Western Gull rarely ventures more than 100 miles inland, almost never very far from the ocean; it is almost an exclusively marine gull. So if you are birding in Lodi, you are unlikely to see one. If you are birding at Ocean Beach, they are all over the place. You are likely to see them throughout the Bay Area.

You know the adult Western Gull, one of our largest gulls, with a clear white head, heavy yellow bill with a red dot on the lower mandible, dark eye, and beautiful slate gray mantle. So let's start. First, there are all kinds of hybrid issues with west coast gulls. I am not dealing with those. Also, there are large gulls such as the Glaucous and Glaucous-winged Gulls that are less common but also occur on the West Coast. I am not dealing with those either. I am dealing with field guide grade birds. I don't expect you to be able to ID every immature Western Gull but to use the tips here to be able to confidently ID the majority of Western Gull age classes you encounter. Another thing you need to do is forget the calendar. Most gulls hatch and fledge in the spring and summer, and they molt in cycles, usually once every twelve months. So a cycle could spread over two calendar years. So just think in terms of first cycle, second cycle, third cycle, and fourth cycle, and you will be much less confused.

The bird below on the left is a first cycle Western Gull. It has the gray-brown plumage of an immature gull. However, we need to be sure we are looking at a Western Gull. The other common, similarly-sized gull in our area is the Herring Gull. Herring Gulls breed to the north of us, in Washington and Oregon, however, after breeding they disperse up and down the West Coast. The bird on the right is a first cycle Herring Gull. At first, they look very similar, but with practice we can tell them apart. Bill size and shape is the best way to separate first cycle Western and Herring Gulls. The bill on the Western is heavier, with a bulbous shape, unlike the rather slim and straight bill on the Herring Gull.

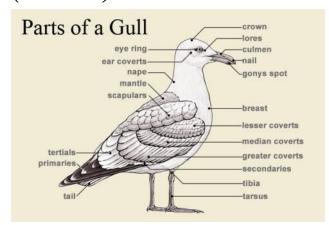




First cycle Western Gull on the left and first cycle Herring Gull on the right. You can see the heavier, bulbous shape of the Western.

(Continued on page 8)

(Gulls continued)



Let's look at this in more detail. To the left is a diagram of the "parts of a gull". We are going to focus on the "gonys spot" on the bill. In the Western Gull, this spot is pronounced, leading to the appearance of a much more powerful, jagged bill than on the Herring Gull, which lacks such a prominent spot.

Below, to the left, are closeups of the heads of a Western (top) and Herring Gull (bottom). If you look closely, you will see the more prominent gonys spot on the Western Gull. This takes some practice when looking at adult gulls so that you can recognize it in first cycle birds. So, grey- brown plumage with a significant gonys spot on the bill, we have a first cycle Western Gull. Things get easier from here.



Western Gull on top with its prominent gonys spot compared to the more slender bill of the Herring Gull on the bottom.

Below is a second cycle Western Gull. Here we are starting to get something that looks like a Western Gull. We have the dark eye, the formidable bill, and the beginnings of the dark slate grey mantle. You shouldn't have problems IDing these second cycle birds.





Second cycle Western Gull.
You can see the dark eye,
formidable bill and the
beginnings of the dark
grey mantle.

Finally, below are third cycle and fourth cycle (adult) Western Gulls. Can you spot the difference? I will wait and give you a few minutes.





Western Gull on the left lacks windows on the primaries, it is a third cycle gull. The bird on the right has windows, thus it is a fully adult fourth cycle Western Gull.

(Continued on page 9)

(Gulls continued)

Okay, look at the primaries. The bird on the left (previous page) is the third cycle gull, and the one on the right is the fourth cycle gull. Do you see the white spots on the primaries of the fourth cycle gull that are missing on the third cycle gull? These white spots are called "windows". So third and fourth cycle birds are easy. Look for the windows on the primaries. If they are present you have a fully adult, fourth cycle bird. If they are missing and the bird otherwise looks like an adult, you have a third cycle bird. Third cycle birds are actually the rarest. Every year there are tons of first cycle birds; as birds move to the second and third cycles, mortality continuously reduces numbers. Since gulls are long lived birds, the population of fourth cycle birds gets added to year after year, so they greatly outnumber second and, especially, third cycle birds.

So does this seem doable?

You see a large, brown and gray gull. Check the bill and the gonys spot. If it is pronounced, on a large bill, you have a first cycle Western. Keep the gonys spot in mind, and if you see a brownish-white, scraggly gull with the beginnings of that slate-grey mantle, you have a second cycle bird. Now you see what looks like an adult Western Gull. Do you see windows on the primaries? If no, it's a third cycle gull; if they are there, you have a fully adult, fourth cycle gull.

This isn't going to be easy, but next time you see all those Western Gulls out there, give it a try and see if you can ID them.



Native Plant Resource Teams (NPRT) Tri-Valley Native Plant Event

Location: Alden Lane Date: July 13 Time: 10am-1pm

We're thrilled to announce the kick-off event for the Tri-Valley Native Plant Resource Team! Whether you're just starting to explore native plants or are a seasoned enthusiast, this event is perfect for you.

Join us to discover the wide variety of plants native to the Tri-Valley region, learn from experts about their importance and care, and even purchase some for your own garden.

Refreshments will be served, providing a great opportunity to mingle and share your passion for local plants.



We look forward to seeing you there and celebrating our shared love for native plants!

From our friends at the Ventana Wildlife Society:



Artwork by Jessica French

Ventana Discovery Center

Explore the Discovery Center's new exhibit that highlights the diverse wildlife and rich habitats that make up the majestic Big Sur coastline. See the artwork of Jessica French.

The Discovery Center is located at Andrew Molera State Park in Big Sur. Open May 25th - Sept 2nd Sat & Sun 10:00AM - 4:00PM Including Labor Day 9/2/24

PLEASE CONSIDER AN ELECTRONIC KITE CALL!

We are urging members to switch over to an electronically issued *Kite Call* (but you don't have to!). The benefits are a cost savings to our chapter, in both printing costs and postage. Other benefits include getting it quicker and it is much more colorful!!!!!! See all of these beautiful photos in color! Also, note that links are live!

GO GREEN!

Send your request to pagpeg@aol.com

IS IT TIME TO RENEW?

Look at your mailing label - it will tell you. A "RENEW?" indicates that this is your last *Kite Call*! A **cmp** means you are chapter membership paid; a **nnmp** means you are a national member only and a "JOIN LOCAL?" on your label indicates that you have joined the National Audubon Society, but alas, **not** your local **Ohlone chapter**.

We would love to have you join us. If you receive your Kite Call electronically, look for a reminder in your email box. To renew or join us please send a \$25 check to: Pat Gordon, Membership Chair, 1922 Hillsdale Street, Hayward, CA 94541 or thru PayPal on our website www.ohloneaudubon.org

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Yes, I want to Join Ohlone Audubon Society!



Please sign me up today

Name: ______Address: _____

Phone: _____email: _____

I prefer to receive the Kite Call by e-mail [] (Recommended) Please send me e-mail updates and action alerts [].

Ohlone Audubon does not share our mailing list or your personal information with others.

National Audubon Society membership dues are separate from those of Ohlone Audubon Society.