



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

- Apr 2 GENERAL MEETING**
Via Zoom
- Apr 3 FIELD TRIP**
Sabercat Trail, Fremont
- Apr 13 FIELD TRIP**
Rails—Bay Point
- Apr 20 FIELD TRIP**
Pine Canyon
- Apr 24 FIELD TRIP**
Sunol Reg Wilderness
- May 4 FIELD TRIP**
Birding by Ear—Garin RP
- May 7 GENERAL MEETING**
Via Zoom
- May 8 FIELD TRIP**
Mitchell Canyon
- May 16 FIELD TRIP**
Niles Hot Spots
- May 31 ELECTION DEADLINE**



ZOOM MEETING INSTRUCTIONS:

Welcome! You are invited to join a meeting: Ohlone Audubon Membership Meetings. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email about joining the meeting.

[https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIsf-iupj4iGNwWOZRGoiFQxSQ-ANIL8dNP#/registration](https://us06web.zoom.us/join/https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIsf-iupj4iGNwWOZRGoiFQxSQ-ANIL8dNP#/registration)

Membership Meetings

April Meeting

Journey to Photograph All 50 State Birds with David Yeamans

Date: April 2, 2024 at 7:30 pm Via Zoom ([pre-register here](#))

Dave Yeamans, author, narrates his photo and bird sound program, taking the audience around the USA to photograph every state bird in its own state. Enjoy this 45-minute plunge into his nine-year project. There are beautiful birds, amazing scenery, and a few stories. Questions and answers follow for as long as we want. (*see full description previous issue*)

May Meeting



Step into the World of Owls with an Overview and Research of the Owl Research Institute (ORI)!

with Denver Holt

Date: May 7, 2024 at 7:30 pm via Zoom
([pre-register here](#))

Join owl expert Denver Holt for an insightful overview of ORI's extensive projects, and immerse yourself in his philosophies on the majestic Snowy Owls, the elusive Long-eared Owls, the captivating Short-eared Owls, the regal Great Gray Owl, mysterious Boreal Owls, the adorable Saw-whet Owls, the diminutive Pygmy Owls, and so much more! Step into the world of these remarkable creatures with Denver and ORI. To learn more, visit our website at www.owlinstitute.org and become a part of the journey to protect and conserve these magnificent birds. (*continued on page 2*)

May Program continued

Founded by Denver Holt in 1987, the Owl Research Institute (ORI) stands as one of the most active owl research groups in the world. Their organization is reinvigorating the essence of 'boots on the ground' field research. For over 35 years, ORI has been dedicated to the pursuit of in-depth and lasting studies that illuminate the enigmatic world of owls and their intricate ecology. While many wildlife biologists have gradually shifted away from fieldwork, ORI continues their determined exploration of owl habitats throughout the entire year.

ORI maintains eight major research studies, some of which have 30 to 37 years of data. Simultaneously,

their younger projects, still in their infancy, offer 5 to 10 years of invaluable observations. This long-term research and monitoring allows us to decipher the rhythms of local and area-wide owl and raptor population fluctuation, empowering us to drive meaningful conservation efforts and make informed management decisions.

Denver Holt is a widely published author who has been featured in many articles from National Geographic to the New York Times, as well as in many television programs. He has educated and entertained people from all walks of life and enjoys guiding, meeting new people, and expanding his knowledge of wildlife and the natural world.

Field Trips



Sabercat Creek
Wednesday, April 3, 9:00 AM - noon
Leader: Bill Hoppes
hoppes1949@gmail.com

Sabercat Creek trail follows a stream in Fremont with excellent riparian woodland, in addition to many ornamentals. There are also grassy hillsides with sites for perching birds. We have a good chance to see both Allen's and Anna's Hummingbirds and have a five woodpecker day. Since we will be in the middle of spring migration, we should see great birds. We will start the trip from Old Mission Park, where parking is plentiful and restrooms available. After a couple of blocks of street walking, we will access the trail at its Pine Street entrance. Sabercat Creek has seen extensive excavations for fossils, so there are many interpretive signs and even an online audio tour if you would rather listen to it than the birds. The trail is mostly level and paved the entire way. Total length is 3.2 miles but since it is an out-and-back, you can turn around whenever you wish.

Directions: Old Mission Park is at 1000 Pine Street in Fremont. Heading south on I-680, take the first Mission Blvd exit. Turn left on Mission and then left on Pine. The park will be at the intersection of Pine and Ibero Way. From I-880, take the Auto Mall Parkway/Durham Road exit. Head east on Durham Road, then left on Paseo Padre Parkway. Make a right on Camino del Campo and then left on Ibero Way to the park.

Secretive Marsh Birds Sunrise Saunter -
Bay Point Regional Shoreline
Saturday, April 13, 5:30 AM – 8:30 AM
Leader: David Riensche
driensche@ebparks.org

Reservations required by 4/10/2024
driensche@ebparks.org

This pre-dawn adventure we will focus on finding California Black Rail, Sora, Virginia Rail, and American Bittern. During our stroll along the one-mile, flat Harrier Trail, we will explore its namesake bird, while enjoying views of kites, shrikes, shorebirds, and wonderful waterfowl. We will use "Doc Quack's" special access code to visit this newly restored marshland, so you must be there by 5:30 am as all access gates will be locked at 05:45. Dress in layers and bring light rain gear as needed. This is a wheelchair-accessible field trip. Pre-registration is required, and all are welcome. Rain cancels the field trip.

Directions: From Highway 4 in Bay Point, exit at the Bay Point/San Marco Boulevard exit and go north onto Willow Pass Road, towards the river. After about one-half mile, turn left onto Port Chicago Highway. Proceed for about 1.25 miles and take McAvoy Road to the trail staging area on the left.

(FIELD TRIPS continued on page 3)

Field Trips continued

Pine Canyon, Walnut Creek
Saturday, April 20, 8:30 AM - noon
Leaders: Rich Nicholson and Bob Dunn
rsn711@yahoo.com

Enjoy a nice walk through oak woodlands in the Diablo foothills. Paved trails and moderate hills will give us a chance to see birds such as Cassin's Vireo, Rock and Canyon Wrens, and possibly nesting Peregrine Falcons. Scopes can be useful in certain areas, but they are not necessary. If time permits, we will visit the nearby Borges Ranch. Meet at the Diablo Foothills Staging Area parking lot (1700 Castle Rock Rd.) at 8:30 am.

Directions: Take 680/24 to Ygnacio Valley Rd. Turn right onto Ygnacio and then turn right again at Walnut Ave. (NOT Walnut Blvd.). Follow Walnut Ave. to the turn circle and bear right onto Castle Rock Rd. Drive past the horse stables to Diablo Foothills parking area, 1700 Castle Rock Rd.

Sunol Regional Wilderness
Wednesday April 24, 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM
Leader: Vicki Robinson
vickirobinson@comcast.net

Join us for a chance to enjoy spring at one of our great regional parks, Sunol Regional Wilderness. We hope to find nesting activity near the foot bridge and visitors' center. Migration will be in full swing, so we'll also be on the lookout for migrants, like vireos, flycatchers, and warblers. Our route will depend on recent sightings. In any case, plan for moderate hiking. Meet at the first parking lot on the left after entering the park.

Directions: Take the Calaveras Rd./SR-84 exit from I-680 and drive southeast about five miles to Geary Road; turn left (east) on Geary and continue to the park (watch for Wild Turkeys and Yellow-billed Magpies along the road!) Pre-registration is not required, and all are welcome. Heavy rain cancels. Parking fee \$5 payable at the kiosk; free to East Bay Parks annual pass holders.



"Songs of Spring" or
Birding by ear and other gadgets –
Garin Regional Park, Hayward.



Saturday, May 4, 2024, 7:30 – 10:00 am
Leader: David "Doc Quack"
Rienschefieldtrips@ohloneaudubon.org

Come explore by ear and other gadgets the willow and sycamore lined creek-side supporting an amazing array of insects, which in turn provides food for foraging and nesting Neotropical songbirds, such as Tree Swallows, Swainson's Thrush, Black-headed Grosbeak, Bullock's Oriole, Wilson's Warbler, and much more. Research has revealed that this rural setting provides habitat for nearly 150 bird species of which more than 65 are breeding birds.

Directions/address: From Hwy 880 in Hayward, take the Industrial Parkway exit and travel east to Mission Boulevard. Make a right onto Mission Boulevard and travel one block to Garin Ave and then make a left onto Garin Ave. The park entrance is approximately 1 mile uphill. Garin Regional Park: 1320 Garin Avenue, Hayward, CA 94544.

Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park
Wednesday, May 8, 8:30 AM – noon
Leaders: Rich Nicholson and Bob Dunn
rsn711@yahoo.com

Enjoy an easy to moderate walk on a dirt road for a two- to three-mile round trip. Migration will be in full swing, so we'll be looking for flycatchers, thrushes, vireos, and warblers, in addition to the resident woodpeckers and raptors. Scopes can be useful, but they are not necessary. Lunch is optional as we recap the list after the walk.

Directions: Take SR-24 east or 680-north to Walnut Creek; exit at Ygnacio Valley Rd. Proceed east 8.5 miles to Clayton Rd; turn right. Drive one mile to Mitchell Canyon Rd.; turn right. At the end of the road, enter the park after paying the \$6 entry fee. Meet at the parking lot. Restrooms are available.

(FIELD TRIPS continued on page 4)



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

Field Trips continued

Niles Hotspots
Thursday, May 16, 9:00am - noon
Leader: Kathy Robertson
katbirdca@aol.com

We will visit several birding spots in the Niles area, along the Alameda Creek channel and adjacent riparian areas, in the hopes of seeing spring migrants and nesting birds, including orioles, warblers, and waterfowl. Pre-registration is not required, and all are welcome. Heavy rain cancels. Meet at Niles Community Park.

Directions: To reach the park from I-880, take Decoto Rd. northeast about 2 miles. Turn right on Alvarado-Niles Blvd. and stay on it for about 2.5 miles (it becomes Niles Blvd.) Turn right on H Street. The park is at the end of H Street. From I-680, take Niles Canyon Rd. (Hwy 84) southwest to Fremont. Cross Mission Blvd. to reach Niles Blvd., and bear right on Niles Blvd. to go through the main part of Niles. Turn left on H Street. The park is at the end of H Street. From Mission Blvd. north or south, turn onto Niles Blvd. and follow directions above.

President's Corner

I am a user of eBird and, when I was filling out my list from a recent outing, I saw a bird I did not recognize – the Short-billed Gull. This was a bird I had never heard of. It couldn't be some kind of rarity. I looked up Short-billed Gull and learned it was a bird I already knew, the Mew Gull. When and by whom had the name changed? The "Mew" gull breeds in colonies along coastal areas and inland wetlands, mainly in Alaska and Northwest Canada. Most birds winter along the Pacific Coast down to the Sacramento Valley, and less frequently to Baja California. In our area, they are here in small numbers throughout the winter. I have seen them frequently at the Berkeley Marina and Point Pinole.

Well, you just have to keep up with things. In the 2021 AOS Checklist supplement, the Mew Gull was split into two species – Short-billed Gull (*Larus brachyrhynchus*) and Common Gull (*Larus canus*). The North American population, our bird, is now known as the Short-billed Gull. Eurasian populations are now classified as a separate species, the Common Gull. I liked the name Mew Gull; could they have come up with two more boring names for the new species? The name "Short-billed Gull" was chosen for *L. brachyrhynchus* by the AOS due to the usage of Mew Gull in recent literature to denote all subspecies of this group and the fact that Short-billed Gull was historically used for our birds when they were treated as a distinct species in the first through third editions of the AOS checklist. In these editions of the checklist, the name Mew Gull was specifically reserved for the Old World subspecies. So Short-billed Gull it is, and Mew Gull, a great name, is lost for good.



Two new species, Common Gull (upper) and Short-billed Gull (lower).

Good News. If you can't attend our membership meetings via Zoom, there is another option to listen to our meetings. For quite a while, video recordings of the meetings have been available on the Ohlone website. Now, there is another way to access the meetings – we are making a podcast available. To access a recording of the meetings, go to your podcast app and search for Ohlone Audubon, and there we are.

Lastly, Sandhill Cranes are one of my favorite birds. Normally, they are considered birds of the west and midwest. In recent years, they have spread into the New England and Mid-Atlantic states. In the past few years, an estimated 30 nests have been found in New England, New York, and Pennsylvania. Here's hoping the good news continues.

-Bill Hoppes

BIRDING OBSERVATIONS

March 2024

By Vicki Robinson

A **Snow Goose** has been seen at Lake Elizabeth, and **Cackling Geese** with the many **Canada Geese** are in the fields. **Greater White-fronted Geese** are still being seen at a few places.



Wood Duck pair

Wood Ducks and **Hooded Mergansers** were seen during our field trip to Shadow Cliffs, along with two **Great Horned Owls**.

An **American Bittern** has been seen at Coyote Hills, and **Ring-necked Pheasants** can be spotted hiding in the weeds near water.

Swallows are returning and setting up in nesting boxes and tree holes. **Tree Swallows** in large numbers, and **Violet-green**, **Northern Rough-winged** and **Barn** are moving in.



Ring-necked Pheasant

Western and **Clark's Grebes** are at Quarry Lakes and are doing their courtship behavior, which includes rushing, where the birds walk on water.

Ospreys have been seen at Coyote Hills but are rare at Quarry Lakes and Shadow Cliff so far.



Rushing Western Grebes

Allen's Hummingbirds have been showing up at local feeders, and our local **Anna's** have been seen in nests and feeding babies. A few **Rufous** have also been spotted.



Violet-green Swallow

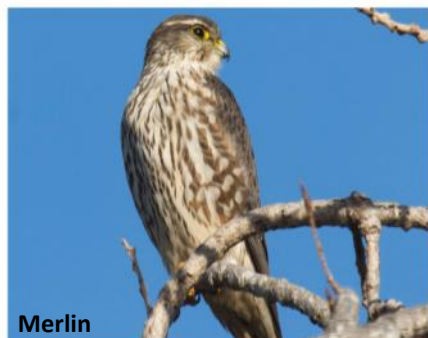
Varied Thrushes at Sunol, Sabercat Creek, and Redwood Park have been seen, mixing with large numbers of **American Robins**.

Merlins have been seen at Coyote Hills, Ardenwood, and Lake Elizabeth.

Along with the numerous **White-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Sparrows**, you can occasionally find a **White-throated Sparrow**. A **Swamp Sparrow** has again been seen at Lake Elizabeth, near the lake in brushy areas, along with **Lincoln's Sparrows**, **Song Sparrows** and **Common Yellowthroats**. *(All incredible photos by V. Robinson)*



Varied Thrush



Merlin



White-throated Sparrow



Swamp Sparrow

Conservation

One of the most important efforts to protect the future of San Francisco Bay is underway in Newark now, as conservation and climate resilience organizations advocate for the permanent protection of the Newark Area 4 Baylands - over 500 acres of wetlands and uplands that scientists say are a critical conservation priority to support the long-term resilience of San Francisco Bay to climate change, and that have long been identified as a priority addition to the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

However the Newark Area 4 Baylands remain under extreme development threat. For years we've fought a proposal to build as many as 469 housing units on Area 4 from one group of developers. Now, Area 4 is facing a new threat: a second development proposal, that would add more than 200 additional housing units to the site, re-zoning land intended to be a future park and developing it instead.

Take Action and Write the Newark City Council: Preserve and Restore Newark's Baylands - Don't Pave Them Over! <https://savenewarkwetlands.org/>

Newark Area 4 is one of San Francisco Bay's climate resilience hotspots, a rare opportunity where we can protect and restore Bay wetlands, as well as preserve space for wetlands to move inland as sea levels rise. It's such an important opportunity that over 40 prominent San Francisco Bay scientists recently wrote a joint letter calling for the protection of these lands.

While this latest development proposal, named the "Mowry Village" project, would redevelop a current auto scrap yard, which on its face may sound like a good idea, the "Pick-n-Pull" site is on the baylands, surrounded on three sides by wetlands and open space, and has been planned – and zoned - for future parks. By developing this site, the City of Newark is giving away future parkland, and also putting more residents in a flood zone at risk of sea level rise. Instead, the City of Newark should prioritize supporting the clean-up and restoration of the Pick-n-Pull site for future park space as planned, as part of the overall climate resilience and conservation vision for Newark Area 4, and prioritize climate-smart development within the core of the city.

Take Action and Write the Newark City Council: Say No to the Proposed "Mowry Village" Development! Instead, Preserve and Restore Newark's Baylands to Support the Climate Resilience of San Francisco Bay and the Newark Community.



Newark - Mowry Village Project Update - It appears that the FEIR is still anticipated to be released in May or June with a 10 day comment period and then it will go before the Planning Commission. A second volunteer training was held in mid March. You can still help by petitioning or sign the petition. You do not need to be a Newark resident, as this affects all of us!

The Save Newark Wetlands activist group is a group of Newark and area residents working together to protect the Newark Area 4 baylands from development. They meet monthly, the first Monday of the month on Zoom. This calendar invite will be updated with the Zoom link and agenda each month. For questions, please contact cccrrefuge@gmail.com

SAVE Tesla Park

Protecting the Tesla Park

Tesla Update

(Carin High)

California State Parks has held stakeholder meetings regarding the classification of Tesla. Jean King will be representing OAS while Carin High will be representing the Committee to Complete the Refuge. (CCCR). The purpose of the meetings was to receive comments from the Environmental and Cultural Resources stakeholder groups regarding the classification of Tesla. Of course we will reiterated that the only appropriate classification for the 3100 acres is a State Reserve. We will continue to provide information to California State Parks regarding the incredible biodiversity that exists within Tesla ("Hismet Warep Horsetka" - sacred earth in harmony).

East County Conservation Report

City of Livermore Requests \$3.7 Million to Protect Open Space

The City of Livermore recently submitted four grant proposals, totaling \$3.7 million, to the Altamont Landfill Open Space Committee (ALOSC) to help the city buy 271 acres of land. The parcels include the Hartford Hills property, 82 acres immediately west of the Springtown neighborhood; 125 acres at 18 Greenville Road; 32 acres at the "Cross Property" along I-580; and 32 acres, known as Garaventa Hills, west of Laughlin Road. None of the proposals were approved at the most recent ALOSC meeting, pending further study. (Bill Hoppes)

Conservation continued


Lights Out for Birds

Did you know that by turning off lights at night, bird deaths can be reduced by 80 percent? There are many ways local residents as well as building owners and tenants can participate in protecting birds by simply turning off porch lights, backyard lights, and bright indoor lights.

Ask your city or unincorporated area of Alameda County government to participate. Here is a link for more information on the Lights Out for Birds program:

<https://goldengatebirdalliance.org/conservation/make-the-city-safe-for-wildlife/learn-about-lights-out-san-francisco/#:~:text=Lights%20Out%20is%20a%20voluntary,November%2030%20for%20fall%20migration>

(Marlina Selva)



SF Environment
FACTSHEET

Lights Out for Birds

Bay Area, Fall 2014

Turn out lights, draw blinds, or use task lighting at night to save birds' lives during fall migration.

Lights Out for Birds
Over 200 species of birds pass through the Bay Area during fall migration, which runs from August 15th through November 30th. Many birds navigate at night by the stars and can be confused by urban lights. Drawn off course by brightly-lit buildings, they often die from window collisions or circle buildings until exhausted.

A study by the Field Museum in Chicago found that turning off the lights at one downtown high-rise reduced migratory bird deaths there by 80 percent.


Lights Out for People
Turning off building lights at night is good for people and the planet as well as birds. By saving electricity, it cuts the cost of doing business, and by reducing energy use, it could help moderate climate change.



What You Can Do

- Turn off building lights from dusk until dawn, especially between August 15th and November 30th.
- This includes internal lighting, external decorative lights and lobby or atrium lights. (Security lights should be left on as needed for safety.)
- Install timers and motion detectors to minimize use of lights at night. PG&E offers rebates of \$5 to \$50 for each new occupancy sensor you install, and rebates of \$15 for each indoor timer.
- Working at night? Draw the blinds or use task lighting.
- Add the name of your business to the list of companies participating in Lights Out for Birds. This will help us promote and track the impact of Lights Out.
- **Spread the word!** Post flyers in your building and let people know about Lights Out in employee newsletters and social media.

For more information, please see:
www.goldengateadubon.org/lightsout/

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Peregrine Falcon
© Photo courtesy David Assmann

Christmas Bird Count Summary—2023

(Bob Toleno)

On December 17, 2023, **87 field observers** and **12 feeder watchers** participated in the annual Hayward-Fremont Christmas Bird Count. A total of **178 species** were detected on the day of the count, just three species shy of our highest number ever. The weather was cloudy, but not too cold, and counting was interrupted for about an hour around midday by a short-but-intense rainstorm.

The most exciting birds of the day were also brand new birds for our count: a **BAR-TAILED GODWIT** was found at Eden Landing by Pat Gordon and Conrad Fay, an **EASTERN PHOEBE** was found on Palomares Road by Anne Krysiak, and an **AMERICAN REDSTART** was found by Debbie and Tadd Ottman. Other notable species for this CBC included a Barrow's Goldeneye, two Black Rails, a Red-throated Loon, a Barn Swallow, and a Western Tanager. Thanks to all the birders who participated!

**POP QUIZ ANSWERS: 1. Red-tailed Hawk 2. Ferruginous Hawk 3. Swainson's Hawk
4. Rough-legged Hawk Did you get them all?**

7

thank you!

Renewals

*Julie & Walt Ballard
Bob Battagin
Thomas Browne
Deborah Brusco
Carol Castro
Julie Gils
Maggie Clark
Linda C. Dalton
Greta de Groat
Dan Egolf
David Furst*

*Liza Garza
Jim Hargrove
Cherie Holcomb
William & Tanya Hoppes
Helen Keating
Carol McCabe
Gary & Merna Morse
Ross Mitchell
Hans Mortensen
Nancy Mueller
Prasanna Narayana*

*Kathleen Reid
Tamara Reus
Deanna Rose
Jerry & Judy Steenhoven
Ricki Stoelting
Susan Towle
Harvey S. Trop
Martin Vitz
Carol Weicker
Joyce Wilson*

Donations

*Julie & Walt Ballard
Bob Battagin
Thomas Browne
Carol Castro
Maggie Clark
Thomas Colby
Linda C. Dalton
Dan Egolf*

*Maureen Fry
Lisa Garza
Julie Gils
Georgeann Hardy
Jim Hargrove
William & Tanya Hoppes
Helen Keating
Gary & Merna Morse*

*Hans Mortensen
Tamara Reus
Deanna Rose
Anne Rouse
Jerry & Judy Steenhoven
Harvey S. Trop
Martin Vitz
Joyce Wilson*



Nominations 2024-2025

In accordance with the Bylaws of our organization, the slate of officers nominated for the upcoming year must be presented to the membership, followed by the election of officers to occur at the May monthly meeting. In view of the current situation, the slate of Officers for the Board of Directors 2024-2025 FY is listed below and members will be asked to vote “virtually” or by mail. Other board positions are appointed by the President.

Please send your vote (yea or nay) electronically via this link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfPKvM78diVj2fEwz5WuSmX5c_8liOgKnMQ0-_xGCJtNY2Oig/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0

or via our Facebook page or via mail to 1922 Hillsdale St, Hayward, CA 94541. Write-ins are also accepted. Please vote by **May 31, 2024**. Thank you.

Slate of Officers for FY 2024-2025

***President: Bill Hoppes
Vice President: Marty Morrow
Treasurer: Gail Ryujin
Recording Secretary: Kathy Robertson
Corresponding Secretary: Jackie Bertillion
Director at Large (2026) Dr. Marlina Selva***

***I accept the above slate of Officers
Yea ___ Nay ___ Write in: _____***



***2024 is the 20th Annual Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour
and Green Home Features Showcase!
May 4 & May 5 2024 10am-5pm***

Click here for more info: **[In-person Garden Tour](https://www.bringingbackthenatives.net/view-gardens)**
<https://www.bringingbackthenatives.net/view-gardens>

Special note: Our own Carol (Pollinator Trail) and Jeff Garberson's Livermore home is on the tour this year!



**SAVE THE DATE: Butterfly and Birds Festival
Sunday, June 2nd, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Coyote Hills!**

The Other Hawks

by Bill Hoppes

When we first start birding, there is one hawk that we learn right away. Once we learn to tell a buteo from a vulture, we learn to recognize that bright rusty tail and the belly band that identifies the Red-tailed Hawk. As we become more experienced, we learn to ID a hawk that frequents wooded areas and streams; that banded tail gives the Red-shouldered Hawk away. We may then move on to accipiters, falcons, and eagles. But first, we need to return to the buteos, as there are three others that are often seen in our area that we need to be able to ID: the Swainson's, Ferruginous, and Rough-legged Hawks. Now, as we review these hawks, I am going to keep it simple. All three species have various "morphs" that are usually darker in color than most other individuals. I am not going to cover these morphs, but will stick to the birds you are most likely to see. Again, I am not interested in you being able to identify all individuals, but only be confident that you have seen an individual.

Swainson's Hawk

This is the one you are most likely to see. Swainson's are very long-distance migrants, traveling from their breeding range in the great plains of the US and Canada to their wintering grounds in Argentina and Brazil. We see them most frequently here during their migration in March. The grasslands north of Livermore and Big Break Regional Shoreline are excellent spots to try and find them. As long-distance migrants, they have longer, more slender wings than the other buteos and are slightly smaller in body size compared to Red-tails. After you have seen several hundred of them, this difference is easier to spot. They lack the red tail and belly band of the Red-tail. So, we see a soaring hawk during March that we are pretty sure isn't a Red-tail. How can we be sure it is a Swainson's? First, Swainson's fly with a slightly dihedral wing. We have discussed dihedral wings before. There are four birds in our area where this is an important ID mark: Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Short-eared Owl, and Swainson's Hawk. At this point, you should have no trouble telling a buteo like a Swainson's from a Turkey Vulture or a Short-eared Owl. Northern Harriers are less likely to soar up high like a Swainson's, and Swainson's lack the white rump patch of the harrier. However, there is one more good field mark that works for me.



Swainson's left and Red-tail on the right. Leading light and trailing dark on the Swainson's, leading dark and trailing light on the Red-Tail

Look at the above two images. The Swainson's Hawk is on the left and the Red-tail on the right. Do you notice something? The leading edge of the Red-tail wing is dark, the leading edge of the Swainson's is light. This mark works well for me. In these images, you can see other field marks: the longer, more tapered wings of the Swainson's and the terminal band on the tail. Long, tapered wings with light leading edge, dihedral flight, with a terminal band on the tail during Spring, you can tick off Swainson's Hawk.

(continued on page 10)

(continued from page 9)

Ferruginous Hawk

Where Swainson's Hawk is most frequently seen during spring migration, the Ferruginous Hawk is primarily seen in winter in our area. Ferruginous are found in prairies, deserts, and open range of the West. It is the largest North American hawk, as its species name, *Buteo regalis*, implies. There aren't a lot of sightings in our area; looking at eBird, there are 1-2 per month. They can show up anywhere. I have seen them on Patterson Pass in Livermore, at Pacific Commons in Fremont, and at Pescadero in San Mateo. So beginning with our default Red-tail. How do we know a Ferruginous isn't a Red-tail? My first impression when seeing a Ferruginous in flight, is "White!" Compared to the other hawks in our area, the Ferruginous is very light in color. Remember, for all these hawks there are dark morphs that I am not considering here.

Below is a good look at a Ferruginous in flight. Note no belly band; note the overall white color. Also, note that, even in this bird, the wing is "leading dark, trailing white". The tail is overall white, but can have a slight rusty wash, but not as distinct as in a Red-tail. There are birds with increasing patterns of dark checking, but the overall impression remains of a white bird. So lack of a belly band and white tail tells us it isn't a Red-tail. Leading dark, trailing white on the wing, plus the lack of other ID marks for Swainson's, tells us it isn't a Swainson's. There are other field marks that are harder to see. It has rich, rusty (ferruginous) shoulders and thighs that can appear to form a rusty "V" in flight. The dark feathers at the wrist of the wing are described by some observers as a "comma", but that has never worked for me.

Focus on the overall white color and the marks that tell you it can't be this and it can't be that and you will have largest North American hawk down.



(Left) Ferruginous Hawk in flight, note the overall white color, light colored tail and lack of a belly band.
(Right) Perched bird showing off its ferruginous shoulder patches.

Rough-legged Hawk

This is another hawk that shows up in winter. It is found throughout the northern hemisphere. In Eurasia, it is called the Rough-legged Buzzard. The Rough-legged Hawk breeds in tundra and taiga habitats of North America and Eurasia. Rough-legged Hawks occurring in North America migrate to southern Canada and into the central United States for the winter, while Eurasian individuals migrate to southern Europe and Asia. It is the only member of its diverse genus found in both of the Northern continents and has a complete circumpolar distribution. During the winter months, the preferred habitats include marshes, prairies, and agricultural regions where rodent prey is most abundant.

In our area, Rough-legged Hawks are about as abundant as Ferruginous. One or two are reported each month. Most sightings occur in Marin County, Point Reyes, and around San Pablo Bay. In our immediate area, they are most frequently seen on Patterson Pass Road and along the Altamont.

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(continued from page 10)

There are several distinct field marks for the Rough-legged Hawk, some of which are shared with other species but, in combination, identify this one. First is a dark terminal band on the tail. Second, and this is sometimes hard to see, there is white at the base of the tail. Third, there are very dark patches at the wrists of the wing and finally, especially in younger birds, there are very dark feathers on the lower belly, much lower and darker than on Red-tails. In my early birding days, these were described as “trousers”.



This Rough-legged Hawk shows one end of a wide variety in plumage. In the bird on the left, note the dark on the lower belly and the dark “wrist” patches. In the bird on the right, note the white rump patch.

Hold on, we aren’t done yet. You don’t always see these hawks in the air; they are often perched on a fence post or in a tree. Now we are going to have a pop quiz. Below are pictures of perched individuals of each of the hawks in this article. Use the ID clues in the article or your field guide to identify each one.

Answers are at the bottom of page 7.



1



2



3



4

From Golden Gate Bird Alliance

Bay Birding Challenge (competitive Big Day on Sat. 4/ 27)

In past years, we've organized one SF and one East Bay team to go head-to-head in this Big Day event. But this year, we're opening the competition up to anyone birding in SF, Alameda, or Contra Costa counties. People can form a team with their friends and compete to find the most species and/or raise the most money from friends and family. More info on the Bay Birding Challenge is at goldengatebirdalliance.org/baybirdingchallenge



Birdathon Adventure Auction

We've held online auctions before but this year we're taking the prizes to a new level— nine "bed and bird" packages that include accommodations in a prime birding area plus a private guided birding trip. Destinations include Southern Arizona, New York's Central Park, the Colorado Rockies, Portland, Mendocino, Monterey Peninsula, Bodega Bay, and an overnight birding "staycation" in San Francisco. Plus other prizes such as optics, bird-friendly landscape design, bird art, and a private birding-by-ear lesson. More info on the auction at goldengatebirdalliance.org/birdathon/auction

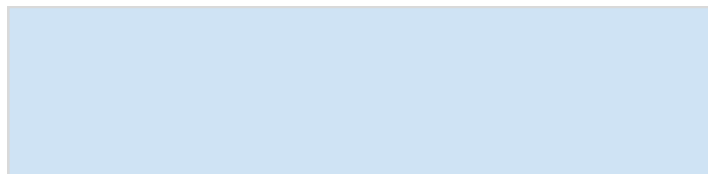
Field Trips

In addition to the Bay Birding Challenge and Adventure Auction, we're leading over 30 unique fee-based Birdathon field trips this spring, including trips to the Sutter Buttes, Pinnacles National Park, Birds & Wine in Livermore, and a behind-the-scenes Oakland Zoo tour. Links to the list of trips are at goldengatebirdalliance.org/birdathon/. The fees support our conservation and youth education programs. Your members are warmly welcome to join us on these trips.

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