President's Corner

Dan Stewart, SFAS President

The calendar says winter, but the weather says spring. I'm pretty sure the birds don't care about the calendar, but I don't know how much the weather -verses day length and sun angle - controls their behavior. The weather is confusing me, and I get to come inside to a pretty constant environment every day. I wonder if it's confusing the birds.

I walk around the neighborhood within a couple of miles of my house on a regular basis and I can tell you I've been seeing some bird species I haven't seen in several years. Specifically Varied Thrush (Ixoreus naevius). It's been six years since I've seen one and that one might have been my first one ever. In the last month or so I've seen fifteen or twenty around my neighborhood and I understand that they are common throughout the foothills this year. Rudy Darling, my source for all things bird distribution wise, tells me that they can be regularly found in the foothills and higher elevations every winter, but that in fact, this year there are LOTS of them. I don't know if that constitutes an official irruption, but in my book it's a very unusual year for Varied Thrushes.

Pine Siskin (Carduelis pinus) is another species that seems to be present in larger numbers than usual, in my neighborhood at least. I recall seeing them occasionally, but this year there are more of them than usual.

Cliff Swallow (Petrochelidon pyrrhonota) is another species exhibiting unusual behavior. Cliff Swallows show up every year and nest on the buildings at Nevada Union High School. Some years there are lots of them – hundreds maybe. Some years only a few dozen. The fact that they showed up isn't unusual, but the fact that we saw them on the Bird Walk for Beginners on February 15 is unusual. Rudy tells me that's about a month ahead of schedule for the foothills and I think it's more like six weeks ahead of schedule for my neighborhood.

I've noticed these few unusual things. I wonder what people who pay close attention to natural cycles of weather/temperature related things have noticed. We know the average temperature worldwide is going up. Are the Thrushes and Siskins and Swallows telling us something about how humans have been treating the planet for the last few hundred years? One of Sierra Foothills Audubon Society’s jobs is to pay attention to what's happening in the natural environment and to educate the public about what we see – both the usual and the unusual.

Look around. Pay attention. See what you see in your neighborhood. The natural world may be trying to tell us something. We should listen.
Grass Valley Christmas Bird Count

Rudy Darling, Compiler

43 intrepid birders of all stripes turned out on January 3 to count birds of all streaks and bars for the 22nd annual Grass Valley CBC. The weather was nippy and many of the smaller ponds were covered with a layer of ice. This year we found 112 species, one shy of our historical high, but well above the average of 102. No species new to the GV CBC were found.

I’m sure it’s no surprise to many of our members that there have been record numbers of Varied Thrushes in Northern California. Our CBC results documented that locally with a tally of 83 birds, nearly triple our previous high of 29.

Unusual raptors reported include one each of Peregrine Falcon, Prairie Falcon, Merlin, Bald Eagle, and Golden Eagle. Dale Rubach’s group found a sapsucker that turned out to be a Red-naped x Red-breasted Sapsucker hybrid.

For only the second time, Green-winged Teal was observed and Canvasback for only the fourth time. Interestingly, there was a historical low number of Mallards. Perhaps the ice cover of the smaller ponds preferred by Mallards was the explanation. There was also a new low for numbers of Pied-billed Grebes, and no Common Gallinules (Moorhen) were found for only the second time since 2006. Eurasian Collared-Doves are here to stay. They first appeared on the 2011 CBC and have been holding steady ever since.

We tied our previous high of 3 Northern Pygmy-Owls. Steller’s Jays have been reported this year in large numbers at lower elevations than usual. This was reflected in our second highest tally of 190 birds. On the flip side, we recorded record low numbers of Red-winged Blackbirds and House Finches. Cedar Waxwings were also on the low end of historical numbers. Once again, the most common species was Canada Goose (1,613). Dark-eyed Junco was a distant second (693).

Thanks to area leaders Steve and Diane Rose, Wayne Woodroof, Rudy Darling, Ted Beedy, Jim Groeser, Christy Sherr, Walt Carnahan, and Willie and Jane Hall for their dedication, and to Jeannie Darling for feeding us after a long day of counting.

Welcome New Members

Kate Brennan


SFAS New & Renewal Memberships Now Payable Online
Go to www.sierrafoothillsaudubon.com

To pay by credit card or PayPal click on “membership” for new and renewals, and for gifts and bequests click on “Our Chapter”
Greenhouse Gas Emission Level Projections
Based on the current rate of increase, averaging about 2 ppm per year, greenhouse gas concentrations are likely to reach 450 ppm by 2041, and 550 ppm by around 2091. The Global Carbon Project reported that carbon emissions are increasing at a quickening pace, one that’s likely to push global temperatures beyond the two-degrees centigrade barrier goal within just three decades. President Obama has pledged that the United States would have an 83% reduction in GHG emissions by 2050.

Climate Change Impact on Global Temperature
NASA Scientists reported 2014 was the hottest year since temperature record keeping began in 1880. Overall, the average global land temperature was nearly 2 degrees Fahrenheit higher in 2014 than the average temperature in the 20th century. Climate Change Impact on Fossil Fuel Use
A paper published in Nature recently finds that huge amounts of the fossil fuels in the Middle East, U.S., China, Russia and elsewhere, including 80% of coal reserves, as well as half of gas and one third of oil reserves, cannot be burned if the world is to keep global temperatures under an agreed-upon 2°C rise safety limit.

Climate Change Impacts on World Rainfall
A 2010 report by the National Research Council said each one degree increase in temperature could mean up to 10 percent less rainfall during the southwest dry season, and a corresponding increase in high latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere. Each degree could also bring up to a 400 percent increase in area burned by wildfire in parts of the western U.S.

Climate Change Impacts on World Sea Levels
Rising sea levels are caused by thermal expansion of seawater, the melting of glaciers and ice sheets on land, and possibly human changes to groundwater storage. Recent projections assessed by the US National Research Council (2010) suggest possible sea level rise over the 21st century of between 22 and 79 in, causing the U.S. to lose 38% to 61% of its existing coastal wetlands. A rise in atmospheric carbon leads to a rise in oceanic carbon increase the acidity of the ocean and make survival harder for planktonic organisms. With the ocean warming, methane gas will also be released, contributing to global warming.

Impacts of Dust on California Rainfall
Twenty or so atmospheric rivers generate a handful of major storms that together supply nearly half of the rain and snow that falls on California.

Climate Change Impact on California fisheries
A study published in the journal Nature predicts that Chinook salmon will likely experience “catastrophic” population losses by 2100 due to warming river temperatures. West Coast salmon are now reduced on average to less than five percent of their pre-Columbian numbers.

Climate Change Impact on California Agriculture
In western Fresno County, which generates more than a fifth of California’s almonds, production has more than doubled since 2005. Almond orchards require about a third more water per acre than grape vineyards. It takes a gallon of water to produce a single almond. Agriculture uses about 80 percent of state developed water, and almond groves suck up nearly 9 percent of that. As the water table drops from over-pumping ground water, the remaining water picks up higher concentrations of minerals from deep in the earth, including arsenic.

Climate Change Impact on Sierra Nevada Water
By 2050, snowpack storage in California is expected to decline by 25% because of a warming climate (Department of Water Resources 2008). Warmer temperatures lead to more precipitation falling as rain and an earlier snowmelt (Kapnick and Hall 2010). Less precipitation falling as snow means less storage and a greater potential for high peak flows followed by droughts. The warming, drying climate will have direct negative effects on supply of water from and storage of water within Sierra Nevada forests.

Proposed Adaptation for Forest Management
California can address the negative impacts of climate change on water yield and storage in the Sierra Nevada through changes to the forest vegetation. Reducing the total amount of evapotranspiration from vegetation could potentially increase the amount of water flowing downstream. Preliminary estimates based on average climate information suggest that in the Sierra Nevada, treatments that would reduce forest cover by 40 percent of maximum levels across a watershed could increase water yields by about 9 percent.

Impacts on Birds
The National Audubon Society’s recent Birds and Climate Change Report stated that 314 North American bird species are threatened by climate change. That means that as the climate continues to intensify, birds could be evicted from their habitats. In fact, ten states could lose their state birds by 2080.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?
Armed with the information in Audubon’s climate study, we can all do our part here by joining campaigns to stop fracking, stop the Keystone pipeline and leave the tar sands oil in the ground, support the switch to renewable energy, drive fuel efficient cars, etc.

www.sierrafoothillsaudubon.com
Bird Walk for Beginners, Traylor Ranch, Penryn
Saturday, March 7, 2015
8:00 a.m.
Leader: Bill Covington (916) 645-0727
Meet at in the parking lot off Humphrey Rd at the south- east corner of Traylor Ranch Nature Reserve and Bird Sanctuary in Penryn. This trip is intended for beginners, but experienced birders are welcome and add to the experience for all. Traylor Ranch affords an opportunity to see the resident species of the lower foothills and valley floor, usually twenty or more different species. We'll spend about two hours and walk a little more than a mile. Come on out, bring your binoculars and help us find some birds. The more eyes and ears, the more birds we'll see.

Sierra College Nevada County Community Education Program
(Kaleidoscope): Whoo's There?
Tuesday, March 10, 2015
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.
Instructor: Rudy Darling
(530) 272-6504 rd Darling@sbbmail.com
If you have any questions contact Rudy.

Owl Prowl
Friday, March 13 and Saturday, March 14, 2015
6:00 - 10:30 p.m. (approx.)
Leader: Rudy Darling
(530) 272-6504 rd Darling@sbbmail.com
Meet at Nevada County Government Center (Rood Center), 950 Maidu Ave. Pre-trip sign-up is required to keep group size manageable. Due to the popularity of this trip, it will be offered on two nights, your choice. Five species of owl are possible on this trip: Great Horned Owl, Western Screech-Owl, N. Saw-whet Owl, Spotted Owl and N. Pygmy Owl. Be forewarned that owlimg can be exciting, or it can be a bust. Owling is mostly listening; we are sometimes treated to a sighting. While there are no guarantees, we usually manage to hear several species and often see one or two of them. Last year we had killer looks at a saw-whet and a screech-owl. DRESS WARMLY! Rain, snow, or excessive wind or fog will cancel the trip. Call if in doubt. The trip is mostly driving and standing at “hot spots”. Quiet children are welcome; no dogs, please. This trip is being held in conjunction with the Sierra College class on “Whoo’s There”, but is also open to SFAS members and the general public.

Bird Walk For Beginners In Grass Valley Sunday, March 15, 2015
8:00 - 10:00 a.m.
Leader: Dan Stewart
(530) 265-4677 dcstew@outlook.com
Meet in the Briar Patch parking lot. A two mile walk through several habitats usually takes about two hours and gives us a chance to see most of the local, common, and resident species. Spring is on the way. Some of the winter residents will be gone and the spring/summer species will start to show up. Sixteen or eighteen different species are usual for this walk and with enough sharp eyes and ears we have seen more than twenty-five species. This activity is geared for beginning bird watchers, but more experienced birders are welcome and helpful to the learning experience for everyone. Whether there are lots of birds, or only a few, it’s a nice morning walk.

Afternoon Beginning Bird Walk
Canyon View Preserve, Auburn
Sunday, March 15, 2015
5:00 - 6:00 p.m.
Leader: Kate Brennan (530) 268-1682
Come experience birds in the late afternoon as the last light of the day hits the tree tops. Have an early dinner and then join me for a one mile walk at Placer Land Trust’s “Canyon View Preserve.” Meet in the Park and Ride at the intersection of Lincoln Way and Bowman Undercross Rd. The trailhead is right across the street overlooking the American River Canyon. Bring binoculars.

Bird Walk For Beginners, Traylor Ranch, Penryn
Saturday, April 4, 2015
8:00 a.m.
Leader: Bill Covington (916) 645-0727
Meet at Bridgeport’s north parking lot (just past the Yuba River highway bridge). Expect to see Red-shouldered Hawk, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Nuttall’s Woodpecker, Bald Eagle, Wrentit, Violet-green Swallow and Oak Titmouse.

Hummingbird Extravaganza
Saturday, April 11, 2015
5:00 - 7:30 p.m.
Leader: Kate Brennan (530) 268-1682
Do you love hummingbirds? Join us for an evening with an amazing number of hummers at a well established migratory rest and refueling stop. We will be driving out Perimeter Rd to a private residence to view hundreds of Anna’s and Black-chinned, dozens of Rufous, and the occasional Calliope Hummingbirds. The best viewing will be just before sunset. Bring binoculars and a lawn chair. Parking is limited so carpooling is recommended. We will leave at 5:00 PM from the Park and Ride lot near the intersection of Wolf Rd and Hwy 49 turn onto Wolf Rd and then into the church parking area. Call Kate to reserve a spot or if you have questions.

Our field trips are free. Carpooling drivers appreciate participants offer to share fuel costs.
FIELD JOURNAL... continued from page 4

Sierra College Nevada County Community Education Program (Kaleidoscope):
Spring Arrivals and Birding by Ear
Tuesday, April 21, 2015, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.
Instructors: Ted Beedy and Rudy Darling
If you have any questions contact Ted Beedy at (530) 274-7232 or tbeedy@comcast.net

Spring Arrivals and Birding by Ear
Saturday, April 25, 2015, 7:30 - 11:00 a.m.
Leaders: Ted Beedy (530) 274-7232 tbeedy@comcast.net and
Rudy Darling (530) 272-6504 rdarling@sbbmail.com
Meet at the Flour Garden next to Safeway in downtown Grass Valley (not at Brunswick), and
we'll carpool to Bridgeport State Park from there. Approximately 25 miles round-trip driving,
easy walking on mostly level ground, as we will spend most of our time standing and listening.
At Bridgeport we will visit several habitat types including riparian, chaparral, oak woodland,
open grassland, and the Yuba River channel. There we will learn how to make sense out of the
cacophony of sounds from the woods and fields around us. Species we are likely to hear include
Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Black-headed Grosbeak, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Hutton's
Vireo, Song Sparrow, and many others. This trip is being held in conjunction with the Sierra College
class on "Spring Arrivals & Birding by Ear", but is also open to SFAS members and the general
public. Call Rudy or Ted in the event of bad weather.

Birding by Ear #2 (Conifer forests)
Saturday, May 2, 2015, 7:00 a.m. - Noon (approx.)
Leader: Rudy Darling (530) 272-6504 rdarling@sbbmail.com
Meet in the parking lot of the Rood Government Center, 950 Maidu Avenue, Nevada City to
carpool. We will visit several habitat types up Hwy 20 from Nevada City. There we will learn how to
make sense out of all those twitters and tweets emanating from those frustrating invisible birds
in the forest. Species we might hear include Hermit Thrush, Mountain Quail, Pacific-slope, Dusky
and Hammond's Flycatchers, Pileated Woodpecker, and Fox Sparrow, as well as the usual common
species. There will be 25 miles of driving and easy walking on level ground. Mostly standing and
listening. Call Rudy in the event of bad weather.

Bridgeport at South Yuba State Park
Saturday, May 2, 2015, 8:00 a.m.
Leaders: Carol & Bruce Malnor cmalnor@Comcast.net and Bob Slyker bg Sly@AOL.com
See April 11 listing for description.

Bird Walk for Beginners at Traylor Ranch, Penryn
Saturday, May 2, 2015, 8:00 a.m.
Leader: Bill Covington (916) 645-0727
Meet in the parking lot off Humphrey Road at the south- east corner of Traylor Ranch Nature
Reserve and Bird Sanctuary in Penryn. See March 7, 2015 listing for trip description.

Beginning Bird Walk at Canyon View Preserve, Auburn
Saturday, May 9, 2015, 8:30 - 10:00 a.m.
Leader: Kate Brennan 530-268-1682
See April 12 listing for description.

Sierra College Nevada County Community Education Program (Kaleidoscope):
Eastern Sierra Birds (Sierra Valley)
Tuesday, May 12, 2015, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.
Instructor: Ted Beedy
If you have any questions contact Ted Beedy at (530) 274-7232 tbeedy@comcast.net;

Eastern Sierra Birds (Sierra Valley)
Saturday, May 16, 2015, 6:30 a.m.
Leaders: Ted Beedy & Dale Rubach 530-274-7232; tbeedy@comcast.net;
Meet in the parking lot of the Rood Government Center, 950 Maidu Ave., Nevada City (just off
Hwy 49). This is an all day trip with some walking on level ground. Sierra Valley is located on the
east slope of the Sierra Nevada. In spring its environs offer suitable habitat for many interesting
species. We will look for migrating waterfowl, Swainson's Hawk, American Bittern, White-faced
Ibis, Virginia Rail, Sora, Wilson's Phalarope, Sandhill Crane, Willet, Wilson's Snake, Yellow-headed
Blackbird, Marsh Wren, Sage Thrasher, Vesper and Brewer's Sparrows. This trip is being held
in conjunction with the Sierra College class on "Eastern Sierra Birds", but is also open to SFAS
members and the general public. Bring a lunch, water, sunscreen, and insect repellent.

Bird Walk For Beginners In Grass Valley
Sunday, May 17, 2015, 8:00 - 10:00 a.m.
Leader: Dan Stewart 530-265-4677 dstew@outlook.com
Meet in the Briar Patch parking lot at 8:00AM. See March 15, 2015 listing for trip description.

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Field Trip to Sierra Valley
By Dale Rubach

On January 17, 2015 seventeen brave souls started the new year by venturing up the hill to the wild and scenic Sierra Valley. At the carpool area in Nevada City the weather was clear and cool, however when we regrouped in Sierraville we were met with whiteout fog, hardly conducive for viewing high flying raptors. So we started the trip in a peaceful place, the Sierraville Cemetery. Everyone was able to get good looks at Mountain Chickadee, Pygmy Nuthatch, White-headed Woodpecker, and Townsend’s Solitaire.

When we moved on the fog had lifted and we enjoyed a gorgeous day, almost too nice considering the lack of snow and general dry conditions. Some of the highlights of the day were: 7 Ferruginous Hawks, 5 Rough-legged Hawks, 30 Red-tailed Hawks, 2 Prairie Falcons, 5 Bald Eagles, a Golden Eagle and a couple of Coyotes. We had a total of 28 species for the day with some folks getting birds they had never seen before.

I think a good time was had by all.

JOIN SFAS AND SIERRA STREAMS INSTITUTE FOR A SCOTCH BROOM PULL 3/7/15

Members of our community will be taking the “Scotch Broom Challenge” at Hirschman’s Pond in Nevada City. Sierra Foothills Audubon will be teaming up with Sierra Streams Institute as sponsors of this event. If you have been wanting to get involved in Audubon or in conservation issues in our community, this is a perfect opportunity – and you can bring the whole family. There are jobs for all ages and abilities – you don’t have to be the one pulling out the Scotch Broom. All you need to bring is water and gloves and a willingness to pitch in and help. You must pre-register before the pull to get the exact time for the event. Contact Kate Brennan, Scotch Broom Pull coordinator for SFAS, 268-1682.

The Scotch Broom Challenge is a series of work days throughout our county organized by the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County and a complete list of removal sites and dates can be found on their website at www.areyoufiresafe.com. Go to their website to learn more about Scotch Broom and to learn how to make your property more fire safe.

To report breeding bird activity in their neighborhoods for the Nevada County Breeding Bird Atlas Project. Breeding activity includes birds using nest boxes such as Western Bluebirds, Wood Ducks, wrens, chickadees and nuthatches. Also included would be birds carrying nesting material, carrying food, feeding young, sightings of recently fledged birds and occupied nests. If you observe this kind of breeding activity anytime between March 1 to August 15, please email Steve Rose at gnateater@gmail.com.