President’s Corner
Rudy Darling, SFAS President

Recently, former SFAS president, Heath Wakelee was cleaning out his garage and came across a huge 21” x 25” tome entitled, “Sierra Foothills Audubon Society / Scrap-Book / From the Beginning.” Now, bear in mind that SFAS was founded in 1978, before most of us had computers (I don’t know if I even had a pocket calculator – I may have been still using the old slide rule ... or simply ignoring math). Communication was done by rotary-dial telephone, newspapers, flyers, posters, mail, and personal contact. The scrapbook is filled with posters, photos, hand or type-written notes, and bird-related articles and cartoons from various publications – things many of us would nowadays glean from websites, listserves, Facebook, etc. Being somewhat of a packrat, I took the scrapbook home. I’m glad I did.

I had always wondered how SFAS got started, and this scrapbook answered that question and several others. It occurred to me that you might like to learn about it as well, so here is the real story of the origins of SFAS (or maybe it’s just “fake news“?). One of the first scrapbook entries is a short typewritten piece titled, “The Origin of the Sierra Foothills Audubon Society.” It reads as follows:

“The origin of the Sierra Foothills Audubon Society can be traced back to the night that Jim Booker (then Jimmy – age 14) attended the Sacramento Audubon Society’s annual banquet (May 21, 1978) with Maurine and Charlie Armour. That night Jim made

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lasting friendships with some of the Sacramento area’s expert birders.

“Jim joined the Sacramento Audubon Society. He soon was convinced that the Auburn area needed its own Audubon Society. His enthusiasm was catching. With much needed and appreciated help from his friends in Sacramento and “continual use” of the telephone by himself and Maurine Armour, the Sierra Foothills Audubon Society began to take shape.”

The first meeting of SFAS was held on Sept. 20, 1979 at Jim Booker’s house. Twelve people attended. Meetings were held monthly and by July 1980 thirty people attended and that’s about when SFAS reached 35 paid memberships which qualified us to be chartered as an official local Audubon chapter by National Audubon. The charter became official on January 1, 1981 and officers were elected. The 1981 board consisted of: president, Jim Booker; vice president, Dean Phillips; treasurer, Ann Jewett; field trips, John Chostman; membership, Merle Favrot; publicity, Benny and Minnie Martinez; newsletter, Lita Taylor. In 1982 the positions of historian (Ed Weiss) and Scope (Bennie and Minnie Martinez) were added. Tom Rycraft took over field trips and Ray Favrot took over publicity.

I find this fascinating when comparing the board committees and officers to our current-day board. First, there is no secretary, but there is a historian (the scrapbook keeper?). Second, the pillars of our current mission, education and conservation, were not official committees. And what is scope? Today we have around 1,000 members, a board of 10 (including the 4 officers), 5 standing committees, several special committees, a webmaster, a database manager, a Phoebe editor, and a Facebook editor.

The first field trip by this fledgling group was in September 1979. Today we still have an ambitious field trip schedule. They also started an Auburn Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in 1979, finding 96 species. Today this CBC is still going and averages around 120 species. Since then the Grass Valley CBC was added in 1994, and former SFAS board member, Ed Pandolfini, started the Lincoln CBC in 2002. The first SFAS Bird-A-Thon fundraiser was held in 1983. This is still an SFAS tradition.

Perhaps you have noticed the signs as you enter Auburn that say, “Welcome to Auburn, a Bird Sanctuary.” I had always wondered how those came to be there. Well, that was another product of the enthusiasm of this early group of SFAS founders. There is a picture of a Black Phoebe logo on the sign in a photo in the scrapbook, but I cannot find a mention of when the Black Phoebe was adopted as the club’s logo. Perhaps someone can fill me in on that.

Welcome New Members

Auburn: Vera Beekley

Browns Valley: Linda Haefke

Dutch Flat: James B. Paul

Grass Valley: Carol Mathis, James & Yvonne Moore

Rocklin: Deborah Page, James Wilson

Tahoe Vista: Bradford Bodeau

Weimar: Linda McKinney

Yuba City: Alfred Montna, Gayle Christiansen

Well, now you know some of the early history of this august club (even though it’s January). I would love to hear any tales of the early years. Just send them to me at rdarling@sbbmail.com. I’m particularly interested in the Phoebe logo; and whatever happened to Jim Booker? I’d like to thank him.
SFAS Officers, Board and Committee Chairs

Officers:
Rudy Darling, President
rdaring@sbbmail.com (530) 272-6504
William Hall, Vice President
yardcard@usamedia.tv
Judy Netherwood, Secretary
walksfar7@gmail.com
Don Rivenes, Treasurer
rivenes@sbcglobal.net (530) 477-7502

Elected At Large Board Members
Patti DeLuca (2)
drpatti27@gmail.com
Jim Groeser (2)
redtailh@gmail.com
Dan Stewart (2)
dcsstew@hotmail.com
Theresa Thomas (2)
randthomas@sbcglobal.net
Heath Wakelee (2)
hwakelee@gmail.com
Dale Rubach (1)
rugby7676-birds@yahoo.com
Jane Hall (1)
yardcard@usamedia.tv

Nominating Committee Chair:
Appointed each year

Standing Committee Chairs:
Don Rivenes, Conservation Chair (Nevada City)
rivenes@sbcglobal.net (530) 477-7502
Jim Groeser, Education Chair (Nevada City)
redtailh@gmail.com
Patti DeLuca, Membership Chair
drpatti27@gmail.com
Dale Rubach, Field Trip Chair
rugby7676-birds@yahoo.com
William Hall, Program Chair
yardcard@usamedia.tv

Special Committee Chairs:
Theresa Thomas, Program Chair
randthomas@sbcglobal.net
Heath Wakelee, Scholarship Chair
hwakelee@gmail.com
Jane Hall, Publicity/Hospitality
yardcard@usamedia.tv

Other Positions:
Kate Brennan, Database Manager
woodswoman55@goskywest.com

Excerpt from article by Matt Weiser Nov. 6, 2017

Why Hydroelectric Utilities Are Endangered by Soaring Solar and Wind

A California phenomenon called the ‘duck curve’ successfully predicted an electricity surplus as solar and wind energy flooded the grid. This may be bad news for Western hydroelectric dams that are unable to adapt.

The success of solar and wind energy in California is having a surprising side effect: It may be undercutting revenue for hydroelectric dams, the longtime stalwart of “green” energy in the West.

Four years ago, officials at the California Independent System Operator (ISO), which manages electricity demand across the state, identified a phenomenon called the “duck curve.” The curve – shaped like the profile of a duck – predicted that within a few years growing wind and solar generation would create a surplus of electricity during midday.

That surplus, in turn, would create a condition in which traditional power producers, including hydro, might have to be idled.

The prediction not only proved to be true, but the power imbalance has grown even faster than expected. As a result, there were long periods this year in which market pricing for electricity in California actually turned negative. That means producers had to pay the market to take their energy.

The situation is good for energy consumers, who benefit from lower prices. It’s also good for the planet, because it means solar and wind energy have at last become major contributors to the grid.

But it’s a different story for the hydropower industry, especially during springtime. That’s when reservoirs are full with storm runoff and dam operators must release water as snowmelt builds. Normally, they would do so through hydroelectric turbines to generate electricity. But negative pricing could force some to release water by other means, without producing revenue from electricity generation.

The repercussions of hydropower closures can be complicated. In most cases, decommissioning and removing hydropower dams is good for rivers, reviving natural river flows and restoring upstream access to spawning fish.

Dave Steindorf, special projects director at American Whitewater, a river advocacy nonprofit, believes conditions in the energy market have created a new incentive to remove some hydroelectric dams.

“In the middle of the day, if you subtract out wind and solar, the generation need for other resources goes to near zero,” said Steindorf, also chairman of the Hydro Reform Coalition, a collection of environmental groups. “That’s what we want to see. We need to see solar replacing other energy sources.
Field Journal

For field trip updates, changes or cancellations check http://sierrafoothillsaudubon.org/
Our field trips are free. Carpooling drivers appreciate participants offering to share fuel costs

Bird Walk for Beginners - Traylor Ranch, Penryn

Saturday, January 6, 2018
8:00-10:00 AM
Leader: Bill Covington
916-645-0727

Meet at 8:00 AM in the parking lot off Humphrey Rd. at the southeast corner of Traylor Ranch Nature Reserve and Bird Sanctuary in Penryn. Note: the address for the Reserve is 5050 English Colony Road 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. Here’s the Placer Co. web site for Traylor Ranch http://www.placer.ca.gov/departments/facility/parks/parks-content/parks/traylor-ranch-nature-reserve.

Sierra Valley

Thursday, January 11, 2018
7:00 AM to ?
Leader: Dale Rubach
530-272-3698
rubgy7676birds@yahoo.com

Sierra Valley is a unique and exciting area. It is located on the east slope of the Sierra Nevada mountains encircled by the towns of Sierraville, Loyalton and Portola. In winter it is the home to many raptors including: Red-tailed Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon, and both species of Eagles. It is also home for many passerine species like; White-headed Woodpecker, Townsend’s Solitaire, Pygmy Nuthatch and Mountain Chickadee. We will carpool from the Nevada County Government Center (Rood Center) at 950 Maidu Ave, Nevada City. A four wheel drive vehicle is recommended for this trip. We will bird mainly from cars with one or two short walks on level ground. Inclement weather will cancel. Call or e-mail to reserve a spot. If weather looks questionable please call the evening before for an update. Bring drink, food and warm clothes. This is an all day trip.

Bird Walk at South Yuba River State Park at Bridgeport

Saturday, January 13, 2018
8:00—10:00 AM
Leaders: Bob Slyker
530-205-9011
bgsly@aol.com
Carol and Bruce Malnor
(530-432-2724)
cmalnor@comcast.net

Meet at Bridgeport’s north parking lot (just across the highway bridge) on Pleasant Valley Road. Easy walking on a wooded trail and along Kentucky Creek and the Yuba River. Dress warmly. Please contact Bob or Carol if the weather is questionable.

We will see species common to an oak woodland/riparian habitat, such as California Quail, Lark Sparrow, Black Phoebe, Bewick’s Wren, and Acorn Woodpecker. There’s a possibility of seeing Bald Eagle and American Dipper.

Sutter National Wildlife Refuge and Roads around Colusa

Thursday, January 18, 2018
8:00—?
Leader: Dale Rubach
530-272-3698
rubgy7676birds@yahoo.com

Meet at the park and ride at Pleasant Valley Road and Hwy 20 at 8:00 AM to carpool. For those people down the hill call me to arrange a meeting place. Sutter NWR is just outside Yuba City and is often overlooked by birders but can offer large numbers of geese and waterfowl with easy viewing. We will also visit wetlands around Colusa. Expect to see waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds and songbirds. This trip is birding mostly by car. Bring food, drink, insect repellent, and dress for the weather. Call or e-mail to reserve a spot. Trip will go rain or shine with exceptions for major storms. Call me the night before if weather is questionable. This is an all day trip.

Bird Walk For Beginners In Grass Valley

Sunday, January 21, 2018
8:00 - 10:00 AM
Leader: Dan Stewart
530-265-4677
dcstew@outlook.com

This walk is designed for beginners, but more skilled birders are helpful and welcome. We’ll talk about binoculars, how and where to find birds, what to look for when you find one. We meet at 8:00AM in the parking lot of the Briar Patch Market on Sierra College Drive in Grass Valley. We walk for a little less than two miles and it usually takes about two hours. Fifteen to twenty different species are almost guaranteed, especially with enough sharp eyes and ears. It’s a nice walk up over the hill at Sierra College and back to the Briar Patch. Come on out and help us find and identify some birds.

Ilano Seco Wildlife Management Area

Saturday, January 27, 2018
8:00 AM -12:30 PM
Leader: Jim Groeser
530-432-6596

Meet for carpooling at Pleasant Valley Rd.\ Rte 20 Park and Ride (Lake Wildwood turn off). Mostly viewing from observation platform next to parking
area at Ilano Seco. Also optional 1/2 mile trail between huge ponds. Expect the winter swans, geese, ducks and shore birds, etc., plus possible cranes enroute. Site is 12 miles SW of Chico. Back about 12:30 PM. Call to reserve a spot and the night before if weather is questionable.

**Bird Walk for Beginners - Traylor Ranch, Penryn**

**Saturday February 3, 2018**
**8:00-10:00AM**
**Leader: Bill Covington**  
916-645-0727

Meet at 8:00 AM in the parking lot off Humphrey Rd. at the south-east corner of Traylor Ranch Nature Reserve and Bird Sanctuary in Penryn. Note: the address for the Reserve is 5050 English Colony Road in Penryn. See January 6, 2018 listing for trip description.

**Marysville for Tundra Swans & Snow Geese**

**Wednesday February 7, 2018**
**9:30AM- 11:30AM**
**Leader: Heath Wakelee**  
916-870-5253
hwakelee@gmail.com

Meet at 9:30 AM in the McDonalds parking lot located at 316 E Street in Marysville. We will drive the golden triangle looking for and seeing many Tundra Swans and other great species of birds that winter in the Sacramento Valley. Many geese, ducks and some shorebirds should add to the enjoyment. No need to walk on this trip so it is perfect for anyone with mobility issues. Call Heath the night before if weather is questionable.

**Bridgeport at South Yuba State Park**

**Saturday, February 10, 2018**
**8:00 AM**
**Leaders: Bob Slyker**  
530-205-9011  
bgsly@aol.com
**Carol & Bruce Malnor**  
530.432-2724

Meet at Bridgeport’s north parking lot (just across the highway bridge) on Pleasant Valley Road. This trip involves easy walking on an open trail and along the river. We may see Golden-crowned Sparrows, Northern Rough-winged Swallows, American Dipper, Bewick’s Wren, Song Sparrow, Western Bluebirds and other oak woodland/riparian species. Please contact Bob or Carol if weather is questionable.

**Bird Walk For Beginners In Grass Valley**

**Sunday February 18, 2018**
**8:00 -10:00 AM**
**Leader: Dan Stewart**  
530-265-4677

dcstew@outlook.com

Meet in the Briar Patch parking lot at 8:00 AM. See January 21, 2018 listing for trip description.

**Bird Walk for Beginners - Traylor Ranch, Penryn**

**Saturday March 3, 2018**
**8:00-10:00AM**
**Leader: Bill Covington**  
916-645-0727

Meet at 8:00 AM in the parking lot off Humphrey Rd. at the south-east corner of Traylor Ranch Nature Reserve and Bird Sanctuary in Penryn. Note: the address for the Reserve is 5050 English Colony Road in Penryn. See January 6, 2018 listing for trip description.

**Little Brown Birds**

**Saturday, March 17, 2018**
**8:00 AM - 12:00 AM**
**Leader: Rudy Darling**  
530-272-6504
rdarling@sbbmail.com

This field trip is held in conjunction with the Little Brown Birds class through Sierra College Continuing Education, but is sponsored by SFAS and is open to the public as well. Meet at the park-and-ride by the traffic light on Hwy 20 at Pleasant Valley Rd./ Penn Valley Drive. We will carpool to one or more locations to look at any bird that crosses our path. Emphasis will be on the clues experienced birders use to identify little brown birds. Easy walking on mostly level ground. Please contact Rudy if weather is questionable.

**Bird Walk For Beginners In Grass Valley**

**Sunday March 18, 2018**
**8:00 -10:00 AM**
**Leader: Dan Stewart**  
530-265-4677

dcstew@outlook.com

Meet in the Briar Patch parking lot at 8:00 AM. See January 21, 2018 listing for trip description.
The Big Year book will be discussed as a part of the Nevada County Library’s “Pushing the Limits” series. SFAS president, Rudy Darling will participate as the community birding big year resource. The public is welcome, but program coordinator, Jill Davidson, requests that you sign up ahead so she knows how many snacks to provide, chairs to set up, etc. You can register at the Madelyn Helling Library (530-265-7050) or online at https://www.mynevadacounty.com/296/Events. Books can be borrowed from the library. The discussion will be held in the library’s community room (where SFAS meetings are held) on Friday, Jan. 19 from 10:00 – 12:00.

Inspired by Carol Malnor, past president of SFAS, Ted Beedy (co-author of Birds of the Sierra Nevada: Their Natural History, Status, and Distribution) and Rudy Darling have been offering birding classes through Sierra College community education at the Grass Valley campus (Kaleidoscope, http://www.sccommed.org/) for the past four years in conjunction with SFAS field trips. This spring the following are being offered:

1) **Meet the Birds of the Sierra**, Ted, Feb. 6 – “You will be entertained and informed by this introductory presentation about the natural history of birds in the Sierra Nevada. Topics include an introduction to birds and where they’re found, habitat associations, recent population trends, bird vocalizations, and the origins of bird names. This class is appropriate for all levels of birders—beginners to experienced.”

2) **LBB’s (Little Brown Birds)**, Rudy, March 13 – “LBB’s (Little Brown Birds) also known as LBJ’s (Little Brown Jobs) can be the bane of beginning birders. This class will teach you how experienced birders use clues of location, habitat, season, plumage, shape, behavior, and song to tell them apart. Emphasis will be on birds occurring in Nevada County. A field trip sponsored by Sierra Foothills Audubon (sierrafoothillsaudubon.org) will be held the following week-end if you wish to put what you learn into practice.”

3) **Spring Migrants: Where Do They Go?**, Ted, April 10 – “With the arrival of spring, many of our most colorful birds arrive in the Sierra from the Neotropics including a host of warblers, grosbeaks, tanagers, and orioles. This class will focus on field identification of these “avian butterflies” and how to tell them apart, including the females, which aren’t as colorful. This class will also cover the wintering range and habitats of these birds when they go south of our region. Local habits and habitats of these birds will also be covered, as they are useful clues to accurate field identification, as well as their typical songs and calls that may blend confusingly during the dawn chorus.”

4) **Birding Hot Spots: Western Nevada County**, Ted and Rudy, April 24 – “While birds are everywhere, one can increase one’s chances of finding new and interesting species by knowing where to look. This course will give a tour of many of the publicly-accessible birding spots used by local birders west of the Sierra Crest in Nevada County. This lecture will be illustrated by the presenters’ photos of the sites as well as typical and specialty birds to be found there. A field trip sponsored by the Sierra Foothills Audubon Society Audubon (sierrafoothillsaudubon.org) to view some of the sites will be announced at the class.”

5) **Birding Hot Spots: Eastern Nevada County**, Ted and Rudy, May 15 – “While birds are everywhere, one can increase one’s chances of finding new and interesting species by knowing where to look. This course will give a tour of many of the publicly-accessible birding spots used by local birders east of the Sierra Crest. This lecture will be illustrated by the presenters’ photos of the sites as well as typical and specialty birds to be found there. Field trips to view some of the sites will be announced at the class.”
Clyde Loutan, a principal for renewable energy integration at the California ISO, is considered the “father” of the duck curve. He first identified the oversupply problem and developed the forecasts that led to the duck curve. Today, he and others at the ISO are working on a number of solutions to address the problem.

These include energy storage, such as massive batteries to store power at homes and businesses when there’s a surplus on the grid; proliferation of electric vehicles, which are essentially rolling batteries; and even encouraging consumers to use more power during midday when there’s an oversupply.

“In the spring months, when the snow starts melting, there’s only so much you can do because we have a lot of run-of-the-river hydro. Either you harvest that energy or you lose it,” Loutan said. “The bigger hydros, eventually we’re going to want them to operate a little differently. They’re going to have to align with the challenges we see.

Drought presents another challenge, Loutan said. Even big reservoirs can’t help meet energy demand if they have no water to move through their turbines.

Another threat is climate change. Some predictions show that in the decades to come, more of California’s mountain precipitation will fall as rain and less as snow. This means more runoff in spring, when hydroelectric dams are already less able to respond to the duck curve; and less runoff in summer, when energy demand is highest.

“There is a pretty big shift going on out there in power generation,” Steindorf said. “These utilities are going to have to look hard at how much they want to spend maintaining a hydroelectric project they know is really not economically viable.”
Great Backyard Bird Count

By Rudy Darling

This year the Great Backyard Bird Count will again be held on President’s Day weekend, February 16-19, 2017. Submit a list of birds seen in your backyard or other favorite birding location(s) for any or all of the four days to help Audubon and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology obtain a snapshot of bird distribution during that time period. For more information about how to participate, visit http://gbbc.birdcount.org/.