Audubon will soon be starting the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season, which takes place between December 14 and January 5 every year. There are several counts in the SFAS area – Auburn (Dec. 19), Grass Valley (Jan. 2), Lincoln (Dec. 29), and Marysville (TBA). For dates and contacts for any count in the country, go on-line to Audubon’s CBC website, www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count. For California, dates and contacts can be found at www.natureali.org. I bring this up in the President’s Corner because it ties in nicely with one of the “Seven Pleasures of Birdwatching” as discussed in the movie, Birders: The Central Park Effect. In this issue, I would like to explore the “Joy of Scientific Discovery.”

Not all of us are trained scientists, but it is a part of the human psyche to be curious about the world around us. If one’s curiosity leads to an interest in birds, there are many opportunities to make discoveries, both on a personal level and to help further the cause of science.

On the personal level, for example, anyone who has a bird feeder has had the opportunity to discover the various techniques that species use to obtain the food. Sparrows and finches come in flocks, and if one gets startled and takes off, the whole gang departs in a whirlwind.

Our December meeting will have two 30-40 minute programs.

Christina Sher will discuss how mixed intensity fires benefit birds, with a special focus on the Black-backed Woodpecker, Spotted Owl and our chaparral dependent species.

Ann Westling will represent Wildlife Rehab and Rescue that is active in Nevada county. They work to save injured and orphaned wildlife from six counties of the California foothills and the valley below. For over 25 years they have provided highly trained rehab personnel dedicated to serving all wildlife in our cities, riparian communities, oak woodlands, Ponderosa pine forests and grasslands.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), in collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), is working to identify sources of raptor mortality at state, regional, and national scales. This information will be used to better understand impacts to raptors and will help to inform future conservation and management actions.

The CDFW Wildlife Investigations Laboratory (WIL) has obtained the required federal permit to salvage and necropsy eagle carcasses, in coordination with CDFW and USFWS law enforcement. After necropsy and testing, the remains are sent to the National Eagle Center, where they are examined by experts to determine the cause of death.
Audubon Education Committee Report

Rita Birdsong

“What is that bird that sounds like it’s saying cheeseburger?” asked one of the women in the Colfax Garden Club. So Dan Stewart played the song of the Mountain Chickadee. First “Aah!” response of the morning. Another was a group “Aah!” upon hearing the California Quail’s “Chicago, Chicago.” Next was a shocked intake of breath when they learned from Rita Birdsong that Poison Oak is a good plant to keep around for the birds (if it’s not right next to your doorway). The garden club had asked SFAS to their September meeting for help in identifying some common garden birds and for recommendations on plants that would attract them. Well, what a coincidence that SFAS member Kelly Weintraub and Master Gardener Lynn Lorenson had recently put together a power point on that exact topic and that we were allowed to use it! Were we – and the garden club - lucky or what!

Two weeks later found your Education Committee (including Jim Groesser, Patricia Clark, Dan Stewart, Kelly Weintraub, & Rita Birdsong) at the Nevada County Fairgrounds for the 1st Annual Farm Day. This event was organized by Nevada County Ag in the Classroom and Nevada County Resource Conservation District (with which we are a partner organization) to help children understand the importance of agriculture in their lives. Over 700 students from local elementary schools took part. When groups came to our area they had a brief lesson on how birds help farmers by eating insects and grubs that may harm crops, then played a ‘feed the bug to the baby bird’ game. Did you know that the Black Phoebe’s favorite food is wasps?

On October 10, at the Redbud Chapter of the California Native Plant Society’s fall plant sale, SFAS staffed a table with a display entitled “Planting for the Birds.” Kate Brennan, Jim Groesser, Kelly Weintraub, & Rita Birdsong were there giving information on which birds are attracted to our native flora. And, once again, we participated in the annual Bridgeport Festival on October 25th, providing suet feeders for the children. Look for our booth at the Swan Festival in Marysville on November 14 and 15.

Welcome New Members

Kate Brennan

Auburn Thomas Rae, Mildred Wright / Cedar Ridge Patricia Poggi / Colfax Carol Leibrand, Anton L. Pieper / Grass Valley Gordy Shaffer, Laurie Fitzgerald, Judy Foster, Kristin Smith / Homewood John Finnick / Lincoln Robert Blakeley, Sheila Bridges, Barbara Lund, Jean & Doug Nessle / Nevada City Brad Oliver / Newcastle Christian Kiefer / Rocklin Casey Rogers, Doug & Rhonda Robins / Rough & Ready Allen Bertke
The 2015 California legislation session provided good wins on renewable energy and climate adaptation, but setbacks on major bills mean that we’ll be back next year to finish the job.

Given the research showing the potentially devastating effects of climate change on California birds, the 2015 California legislative session offered a great deal of hope, as well as a real opportunity for Audubon California and its supporters to get involved in decisions that mattered. Thousands upon thousands of bird enthusiasts spoke out demanding action on climate change -- and that was truly inspiring. While we didn’t get every bill passed that birds need, we built a lot of momentum that we can take into next year’s session.

The legislative climate proposals introduced this session were ambitious. Lawmakers sought to substantially reduce our use of petroleum, expand our use of alternative energy, increase energy conservation measures, close the last remaining loopholes allowing offshore oil drilling, set up a special council to coordinate the state’s climate adaptation, make it state policy to protect wildlife corridors, and a lot more.

The flagship bills of the 2015 legislative season were SB 32 and SB 350, which would have expanded California’s already progressive climate laws and set ambitious goals to reduce our reliance on polluting fuels. Not surprising, these bills faced staunch opposition from the oil industry, resulting in SB 32 being held back for further work in the 2016 season, and removing the requirement to reduce fuels from SB 350.

Governor Jerry Brown has signed SB 350 and is committed to redoubling efforts to reduce California’s reliance on polluting fossil fuels either with new legislation or through executive actions. The sections calling for 50% of California’s energy to come from renewables by 2030 and increases in clean energy building -- remained intact.

AB32 was California’s landmark climate legislation in 2006 that required the Air Resources Board to formulate a plan that would bring greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 down to where they had been in 1990. The state is on target to meet that goal, and SB 32 would tighten the noose on greenhouse gases by extending the climate pollution reduction target to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050, and requiring emissions to drop by 40% from 1990 levels by the year 2030.

According to analysis, “the California Air Resources Board has determined (this goal) to be not only technologically feasible, but scientifically necessary to stave off the costliest effects of climate change.”

Audubon California was greatly pleased that two other bills that move the state forward on climate change adaptation were sent to the Governor’s desk. Assembly Bill 498, which we co-sponsored, will make it state policy to protect wildlife corridors that birds and other wildlife will need to survive in a changed environment. Already, we are seeing an increased awareness of the importance of wildlife corridors among legislators and agency personnel, including a new provision to use transportation funds to protect and create wildlife corridors adjacent to highway projects. Assembly Bill 1482, which we also co-sponsored, will greatly improve the coordination of and accountability for climate adaptation efforts across all state agencies.
Field Journal

For field trip updates, changes or cancellations visit sierrafoothillsaudubon.com

Bird Walk for Beginners - Traylor Ranch Saturday, November 7, 2015
8:00 a.m.
Leader: Bill Covington (916) 645-0727
Meet 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.

Sandhill Cranes in the Sacramento Valley Saturday, November 14, 2015
Noon to 7:00 p.m.
Leader: Kate Brennan (530) 268-1682
Join SFAS for a tour of the ponds of Cosumnes River Preserve and a drive to Woodbridge Ecological Reserve to watch the cranes flying in to roost for the night in shallow ponds. Meet to carpool to the Park and Ride at the corner of Hwy 49 and Wolf Rd (in the Crossroads Church parking lot); we’ll be leaving the Park and Ride at noon; or meet us at the Cosumnes River Preserve Visitor Center at 1:30 p.m. Cosumnes River Preserve is south of Elk Grove off I-5 at the Twin Cities Rd exit. For a map see www.cosumnes.org. Dress for cold weather, bring lunch or snacks, binoculars, scopes. Rain cancels. Space is limited. Please call to reserve a spot.

Bird Walk For Beginners In Grass Valley Sunday, November 15, 2015
8:00 -10:00 a.m.
Leader: Dan Stewart (530) 265-4677 dcslew@outlook.com
sun sets over the Buttes. Bring a lunch & something to drink, and wear warm clothes and bring a raincoat if the weather is wet and cold—the trip is on, rain or shine. Meet at the Flour Garden next to Safeway in downtown Grass Valley (not at Brunswick!) and we’ll carpool from there. We should get back to Grass Valley by about 5:00 p.m. Estimated driving time is 1.5 hours each way.

Beginning Bird Walk: Auburn Regional Park Saturday, November 7, 2015
8:30-10:00 a.m.
Leader: Kate Brennan (530) 268-1682
Join me for a leisurely walk at Auburn Regional Park. Meet in the parking lot off Dry Creek Picnic area off Dry Creek Rd. This trip is intended for beginning birders, but it’s just a great opportunity to get out in the crisp fall weather and take a hike. If you’ve thus far been someone who watches birds, we’ll try and inspire you to become a “birder.” Bring binoculars. Rain cancels.

Beginning Bird Walk: Auburn Regional Park Wednesday, December 16
8:30-10:00 a.m.
Leader: Kate Brennan (530) 268-1682
Join me for a leisurely walk at Auburn Regional Park. Meet in the parking lot at the Dry Creek Picnic area off Dry Creek Rd. This trip is intended for beginning birders, but it’s just a great opportunity to get out in the crisp fall weather and take a hike. If you’ve thus far been someone who watches birds, we’ll try and inspire you to become a “birder.” Bring binoculars. Rain cancels.

Bird Walk For Beginners In Grass Valley Sunday, December 20, 2015
8:00 -10:00 a.m.
Leader: Dan Stewart (530) 265-4677 dcslew@outlook.com
Meet in the Briar Patch parking lot. See November 15, 2015 listing for trip description.

Bird Walk For Beginners: Traylor Ranch Saturday, January 22, 2016
8:00 a.m.
Leader: Bill Covington (916) 645-0727
Meet in the parking lot off Humphrey Rd at the south-east corner of Traylor Ranch Nature Reserve and Bird Sanctuary in Penryn. See November 7, 2015 listing for trip description.

Bird Walk For Beginners - Traylor Ranch Saturday, December 5, 2015
8:00 a.m.
Leader: Bill Covington (916) 645-0727
Meet in the parking lot off Humphrey Rd at the south-east corner of Traylor Ranch Nature Reserve and Bird Sanctuary in Penryn. See November 7, 2015 listing for trip description.

Bird Walk For Beginners In Grass Valley Saturday, December 12, 2015
8:00 a.m.
Leader: Bob Slyker bgslv@aol.com
Meet at Bridgeport's north parking lot just past the Yuba River highway bridge. Expect to see Wren, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Fox Sparrow, Black Phoebe, and Common Merganser.

Bird Walk for Beginners: Traylor Ranch Saturday, December 12, 2015
8:30 a.m.
Leader: Jim Groeser (530) 432-6596 redtailh@gmail.com
We will caravan from the Pleasant Valley Rd. and Hwy 20 Park and Ride 16 miles to Woodruff Lane at the north. We will caravan from the Pleasant Valley Rd. and Hwy 20 Park and Ride 16 miles to Woodruff Lane and head across the valley to Colusa NWR where we should see more than 100,000 geese and ducks, and myriad other waterfowl, as well as a host of raptors. We’ll then drive around the Sutter Buttes to look for wintering raptors, songbirds, and Sandhill Cranes. We’ll return home again through District 10 as the sun sets over the Buttes. Bring a lunch & something to drink, and wear warm clothes and bring a raincoat if the weather is wet and cold—the trip is on, rain or shine. Meet at the Flour Garden next to Safeway in downtown Grass Valley (not at Brunswick!) and we’ll carpool from there. We should get back to Grass Valley by about 5:00 p.m. Estimated driving time is 1.5 hours each way.

Beginning Bird Walk: Auburn Regional Park Wednesday, December 16
8:30-10:00 a.m.
Leader: Kate Brennan (530) 268-1682
Join me for a leisurely walk at Auburn Regional Park. Meet in the parking lot at the Dry Creek Picnic area off Dry Creek Rd. This trip is intended for beginning birders, but it’s just a great opportunity to get out in the crisp fall weather and take a hike. If you’ve thus far been someone who watches birds, we’ll try and inspire you to become a “birder.” Bring binoculars. Rain cancels.

Bird Walk For Beginners In Grass Valley Sunday, December 20, 2015
8:00 -10:00 a.m.
Leader: Dan Stewart (530) 265-4677 dcslew@outlook.com
Meet in the Briar Patch parking lot. See November 15, 2015 listing for trip description.

Bird Walk For Beginners: Traylor Ranch Saturday, January 22, 2016
8:00 a.m.
Leader: Bill Covington (916) 645-0727
Meet in the parking lot off Humphrey Rd at the south-east corner of Traylor Ranch Nature Reserve and Bird Sanctuary in Penryn. See November 7, 2015 listing for trip description.

Bird Walk For Beginners In Grass Valley Saturday, January 9, 2016
8:00 a.m.
Leader: Bob Slyker bgslv@aol.com
Meet at Bridgeport’s north parking lot just past the Yuba River highway bridge. Wear warm clothing. Expect to see Western Bluebird, California Quail, Bald Eagle, Lark Sparrow, Bewick’s Wren and Downy Woodpecker.

Sierra Valley
Saturday, January 9, 2016
7:30 a.m. to ?
Leader: Dale Rubach (530) 272-3698 rugby7676-birds@yahoo.com
The 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. 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. 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 For Beginners In Grass Valley Sunday, January 17, 2016
8:00 -10:00 a.m.
Leader: Dan Stewart (530) 265-4677 dcslew@outlook.com
Meet in the Briar Patch parking lot. See November 15, 2015 listing for trip description.
Raptor Carcasses... Continued from page 1

Repository. In addition to evaluating eagles, the WIL is also conducting disease and contaminant surveillance in non-eagle raptors and is accepting carcasses from across the state.

Priority species are Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Merlin, Northern Harrier, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, Prairie Falcon, Swainson’s Hawk, Borrowing Owl, California Spotted Owl, Northern Spotted Owl, Great Gray Owl, Short-eared Owl, Long-eared Owl, and Turkey Vulture. Secondary species are American Kestrel, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper’s Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Barn Owl, Barred Owl, Great Horned Owl, and Western Screech-owl.

Forms are available to aid in data collection and lab submission of eagle and other raptor carcasses. Ideally, carcasses should be dead less than 24-48 hours and have no signs of scavenging or insect infestation. Carcasses should be labeled with date and location and collected into a plastic bag (use care not to break or bend feathers); under most conditions, carcasses can be frozen until submission. More detailed instructions, as well as information regarding packaging and shipping will be provided when WIL is notified of a recovered carcass.

Help in this effort is much needed and appreciated. To request forms or for more information contact Krysta Rogers at (916)358-1662 / Krysta.Rogers@wildlife.ca.gov or Carie Battistone at (916) 445-3615 / Carie.Battistone@wildlife.ca.gov

President’s Corner... Continued from page 1

of wings. Chickadees, nuthatches and titmice use a solo hit-and-run approach, preferring to devour their booty at a distance. Jays bully their way into the feeder, forcing smaller species to flee to the surrounding shrubbery until those big thugs are gone. Hummingbirds spend more time chasing each other than actually drinking the sugar water.

If you would like to work with birds up close, you can volunteer with one of the local wildlife rehabilitation organizations and become a surrogate parent. It is a great way to learn about bird behavior, diet, vocalizations, growth, feather patterns, etc., and they are always looking for volunteers.

There are many opportunities to experience the joy of scientific discovery and to put one’s knowledge to scientific use by volunteering to do “citizen science.” The CBC is one such activity. The data we citizen scientists collect is entered into a national database stretching back for decades that researchers can use for studies of all types. Another database of bird sightings is eBird (ebird.org). This is an online program in which birders can enter their bird sightings, look at other sightings, find hot spots, watch migration in action, and much more. In February, the Great Backyard Bird Count (gbbc.birdcount.org) takes place. Citizen observers enter what birds they observe in their backyard or other favorite location for each of four days over the President’s Day week-end. The data gives a nation-wide snapshot of where birds are at that point in time and is added to the eBird database as well. Several of our SFAS members help locally with the similar bird “point counts” for Sierra Streams Institute. There are many opportunities for citizen scientists with them and with SYRCL and other local organizations, not just involving birds, but water chemistry, macroinvertebrate collection and identification, vegetation restoration, etc.

Another great citizen science project that could use volunteers is going on locally – the Nevada County Breeding Bird Atlas. Steve and Diane Rose are heading up this effort to take a five-year snapshot of where birds are breeding in the county (see the article in the last Phoebe).

So, if you want to expand the pleasure you get from birdwatching into the joy of scientific discovery, I encourage you to help out with one of these citizen science projects. At the very least, keep your feeder full, the sugar water fresh, and your eyes and mind open.
Bluebird Trails Report for 2015
by Kate Brennan

This past breeding season saw a mixed bag of successes and failures as is usually the case in monitoring Western Bluebirds and other cavity dwelling birds who utilize our human-made nest boxes. Both Placer and Nevada Counties have a very dedicated core of individuals committed to doing the weekly monitoring of nest boxes, counting eggs and hatchlings, and then observing all the nestboxes until it’s apparent that the hatchlings have flown the nest or become fledglings. This year I am reporting for both Placer and Nevada County.

We have two trails reporting results in Placer County, the Taylor Ranch trail and the Auburn Ravine Park trail in Lincoln. Monitoring is occurring on 5 trails in Nevada County: the Dog Bar Rd trail, Alan Thiesen trail in Alta Sierra, Burton Homestead in Nevada City, Lake of the Pines Wastewater Treatment Plant, and the Jones Bar Rd trail, along with some individual home owners who monitor boxes on their own property.

We get quite different numbers for the various species, and this is largely dependent upon habitat. When the habitat changes, either naturally or through the actions of people, the most productive species in an area may change as well. For instance, on the Taylor Ranch trail in Placer County, over the past 10 years monitors have witnessed an increase in the number of Tree Swallows and a decrease in Western Bluebirds in response to changing vegetation along the trail. A dramatic increase in the number of fledglings occurred on the LOP Wastewater Treatment Plant this year as a result of removing nest boxes from trees and placing them on metal poles with baffles attached to the poles. Last year, we had almost 100% predation on this trail, and this year, the LOP trail reported 29 fledgling Bluebirds, 37 Tree Swallows, and 14 Oak Titmice.

The program will be expanding the number of trails we monitor in 2016. We are currently working on installing new boxes around the North Star House property in Grass Valley for a trail there, and we hope to renew an old trail of nest boxes that exists at the Woolman School off Jones Bar Rd and begin monitoring there again.

Thank you to all of our monitors for their commitment to this citizen science project. For more information about participating in the program contact me at woodswoman55@goskywest.com.

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**Western Bluebird**
*Sialia mexicana*

Here are the total number of fledglings reported by our monitors for the various species observed for 2015:

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<th>Species</th>
<th>Nev Co</th>
<th>Pla Co</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Oak Titmouse</td>
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