



The Phoebe

Newsletter of the Sierra Foothills Audubon Society

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President's Corner

□ Rudy Darling, SFAS President

I love puzzles. I do crosswords, cryptograms, Sudoku, cryptic crosswords, math puzzles – you name it, I've done it. Well, maybe I might draw the line at the traditional Christmas jigsaw puzzle. When you come right down to it, birding is another form of puzzle solving. Let's see, a little brown bird (LBB) – what makes it different from the other LBB's? There's a new sound; I wonder what it is. This is the next of the pleasures of birding from the film, *Birders: The Central Park Effect*, I would like to explore – the joy of puzzle solving.

Prior to 1934, unraveling the puzzles of bird identification was pretty much limited to professional ornithologists. Optics were minimal at best, and nowhere close to even the cheapest of today's binoculars. Identification

What changed in 1934? Roger Tory Peterson published his field guide to the birds of eastern North America. It was a game changer. It contained plates of his paintings of birds of eastern North America with arrows to point out identifying characteristics. It brought the joy of field identification of birds to the average Joe.

materials were generally scholarly works designed for the study of birds in the hand at museums. Bird study was done primarily by shooting the bird, stuffing it

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Nevada County Conservation Report

□ Don Rivenes, Conservation Chair Nevada County

2016-2020 National Audubon Strategic Plan

National Audubon Society recently released its 2016-2020 National Audubon Strategic Plan. Here are some questions and answers that explain the goals of the Plan.

Q: What does Audubon aim to achieve through the 2016- 2020 strategic plan?

A: Audubon creates a brighter future for birds by caring for the places they need throughout the Western Hemisphere. This plan aims to realize Audubon's full potential as the most effective conservation network in America by channeling the strengths of our unparalleled network, building on sound science, growing durable public will, and investing in coordinating our conservation work across the Americas.

Q: What are the four pillars of the strategic plan?

A: The plan's four key pillars describe how we work to mobilize people to care for birds and the places they need and, ultimately, to ensure a better future for all. We:

- Drive conservation impact at scale.
- Expand the body of bird knowledge through science.
- Build durable public will.
- Connect and lead the most effective conservation network in America.

Q: What are Audubon's five strategic conservation priorities?

A: We follow a tight framework of strategic conservation priorities that allows us to most effectively collaborate and coordinate our conservation efforts across flyways and the hemisphere:

- Coasts: Audubon, along with our partners, works to preserve breeding, stopover, and wintering sites for shorebirds throughout the Western Hemisphere.



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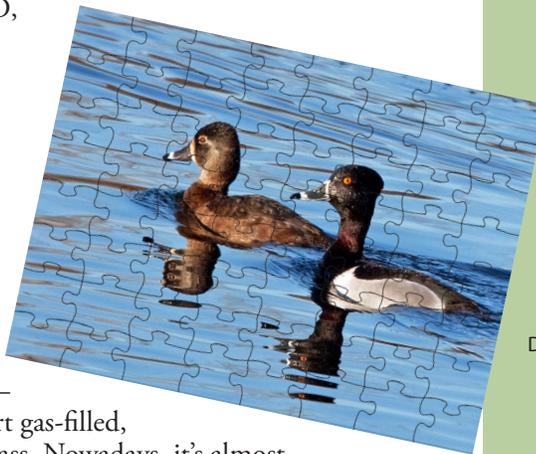
and putting it into trays in drawers in a museum with others of the same species so they could be studied and compared. Certainly, people could learn to identify birds in the wild, but only with a great deal of effort. This was complicated by the proliferation of local names for many of the species.

What changed in 1934? Roger Tory Peterson published his field guide to the birds of eastern North America. It was a game changer. It contained plates of his paintings of birds of eastern North America with arrows to point out identifying characteristics. It brought the joy of field identification of birds to the average Joe. It is the guide I started out with, a 1961 edition I received for my 15th birthday. Since then many new guides have appeared, each containing new ideas that made identification easier – inclusion of all the birds found in North America, range maps and descriptions on the same page as the drawings or photos, depictions of variations in plumage, new understandings of what characteristics could be used to tell species apart. With the advent of computers, bird guides were designed for display on monitors, and more recently on smartphones. Websites for bird ID popped up with the increase in popularity of the internet. Recordings of birds songs came out, first on vinyl, then tape, CD, MP3, the internet and smart phone apps. Now there are even websites and apps that allow one to input a bird's characteristics or song and will suggest likely species. (Where were they when I was learning to ID birds? I was still using a slide rule back then. "What's a slide rule?" you ask. Hint: It's not, "always slide down feet first.")

Along with this ability to identify birds in the field came the demand for better optics – center focus, lighter weight, waterproof, inert gas-filled, light-transmitting coatings, better-quality glass. Nowadays, it's almost like having the bird in your hand. Now, if they would only sit in the open and stay still...

Once one has figured out most ID puzzles, there are further puzzles that amateur birders can help unravel. In their excellent book on Sierra Birds (Beedy, E.C. and E.R. Pandolfino. 2013. *Birds of the Sierra Nevada: Their Natural History, Status, and Distribution*. Illustrated by Keith Hansen. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.) the authors have a whole section devoted to remaining puzzles about Sierra Birds. They write, "As much as we know about Sierra birds, there is even more we do not know. Unanswered questions abound, and many of these questions offer opportunities for amateur naturalists to make significant contributions." Some of these puzzles include: Current breeding ranges of Harlequin Duck, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Mergansers, American Pipits, and Gray-crowned Rosy Finches in the Sierra; what happened to breeding Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Swainson's Thrushes in the Sierra; where do Williamson's Sapsuckers and Pine Grosbeaks spend the winter; are rapidly increasing populations of Eurasian Collared-Doves and Great-tailed Grackles having an impact on other birds; and many more questions. Some of these puzzles are being worked on by professionals, such as Will Richardson's Swainson's Thrush study that has been supported in part by Sierra Foothills Audubon. But, as the authors suggest, "We urge all visitors to the Sierra to take careful notes and record all their observations using eBird (<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/>)."

So, next time someone asks me why I like birding, I might just answer, "Because I like solving puzzles."



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Strategic Plan... continued from page 1

- Working Lands: Millions of acres across the hemisphere support bird-friendly agriculture and provide important breeding grounds for hundreds of species of birds. Audubon works with landowners to create sustainable land-management practices.
- Water: Some of the most critical wintering and migratory stopover habitats for shorebirds are in peril due to water allocation and quality issues. Audubon works to ensure that these wetlands will get the water they need to sustain wildlife.
- Climate: Audubon works to protect the 314 North American bird species threatened by climate change. We care for the places birds need now and will need in a climate-changed future. And we advocate for clear actions to help mitigate climate change.
- Bird-Friendly Communities: Through the Audubon network, we will improve landscapes across the U.S. by supporting local initiatives in communities everywhere.

Q: How do we choose the priority bird species to focus on?

A: We identify priority bird species by using two criteria: identifying the birds that most need our help, and understanding which birds share habitat with other species that will also benefit from our efforts.

Q: What has happened to Important Bird Areas (IBAs)?

A: Rather than being a separate conservation strategy, each of our five conservation priorities are guided and informed by our Important Bird Areas (IBAs) program, which shows us the places most critical for birds and ensures that we focus on the highest-impact conservation opportunities per dollar invested. (IBAs are determined based on the types and numbers of birds found in a given place, as well as the resilience or vulnerability of those places.)

Q: What differentiates Audubon from other conservation groups?

A: Audubon's legacy and its network set us apart from all other U.S.-based conservation NGOs. Our wingspan enables us to reach from the halls of Congress to people's backyards. Through our chapters, nature centers, state, regional, and national offices, volunteers, and U.S. and international partners we can engage people across the U.S. and beyond. Because birds can't vote, people must be the solution.

Q: How will we measure our results?

A: This plan holds Audubon's leadership across the network accountable for achieving objectives with specific metrics. We will assess our achievements based on bird populations, acreage affected, actions taken, and number of people engaged. We are committed to a culture of accountability and transparency based on best-of-class metrics. We will not engage in activities that, though well intentioned, do not clearly move the dial for the environment.

Q: Why do birds matter?

A: Where birds thrive, people prosper. We care deeply about birds because birds and people share the same needs: clean air, clean water, and healthy places to live.

Kid's Corner

This month, the *Phoebe* editorial staff is starting a new feature called the Children's Corner. It is our hope that you or another adult in your household will sit down with a youngster (child, grandchild, etc.) and work these bird-related puzzles. The birding community needs to get young people inspired about birds and nature so they can carry on Audubon's work preserving and protecting birds and their habitats.

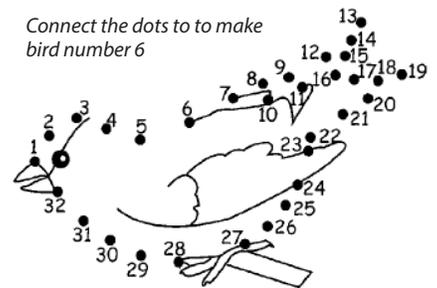
Speaking of the children in our lives, don't forget the [Children's Renaissance Festival coming up on July 15 at Pioneer Park in Nevada City](#). SFAS will have a booth there and children we will be talking with children to see if they can tell us what birds they have in their yards; in addition, they will get to paint a wooden bird (pencil holder) or a bird mask to take home. We are looking for adult volunteers for this event. If you are interested in helping out and want more details, please call Patti Deluca at (530) 305-1999.

Kids Challenge:

Can you fill in the letters (vowels) to name these birds?

1. R_b_n
2. Bl__b_rd
3. H_mm_ingb_rd
4. W__dp_ck_r
5. M__d_wl_rk
6. G_ldf_nch

Connect the dots to make bird number 6



What is a bird and what makes a bird a bird?

Birds are warm-blooded vertebrates. They have three characteristics which distinguish them from other animals: feathers, hard-shelled eggs and hollow bones. WARM-BLOODED Like mammals, birds are warm-blooded. This means their body temperature stays the same no matter how hot or cold it is outside.





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The mission of the Sierra Foothills Audubon Society is to educate ourselves and others to the variety and the beauty of our natural environment and to protect our wildlife and natural places

Field Journal

Bird Walk For Beginners In Grass Valley Sunday, July 17, 2016

8:00 - 10:00 AM

Leader: Dan Stewart

530-265-4677 dcstew@outlook.com

Meet in the Briar Patch parking lot at 8:00 a.m. 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. 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.

Bird Walk for Beginners, Traylor Ranch, Penryn Saturday, August 6, 2016

8:00-10:00AM

Leader: Allen Bertke

530-903-4440 berke@pacbell.net

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot off Humphrey Rd at the southeast corner of Traylor Ranch Nature Reserve and Bird Sanctuary in Penryn. See July 2, 2016 listing for trip description.

Bird Walk For Beginners In Grass Valley Sunday, August 21, 2016

8:00 - 10:00 AM

Leader: Dan Stewart

530-265-4677 dcstew@outlook.com

Meet in the Briar Patch parking lot at 8:00 a.m. 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. 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.

***Our field trips are free.
Carpooling drivers appreciate
participants offering to share
fuel costs.***

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

Become a SFAS Member



Two levels of membership are available: SFAS Chapter Membership is \$20 annually and includes a subscription to The Phoebe newsletter and an invitation to the many chapter activities. Send a check payable to Sierra Foothills Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1937, Grass Valley, CA 95945.

An introductory membership to the National Audubon Society is \$20 and includes SFAS Chapter Membership, subscriptions to the bi-monthly NAS Audubon Magazine and Phoebe newsletter from SFAS. Send a check payable to NAS Membership Department, P.O. Box 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250. Please write C1ZC460Z in the memo section of your check. For more information contact Dan Stewart at (530) 265-4677.