



SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society, San Mateo County

*Volume 73, No. 3
August - September 2022*

SAS Conservation update

Menlo Park: Flood County Park - The county revised the placement of sports fields. The Board of Supervisors accepted the updated landscape plan. Not all trees will be preserved, but more than in the previous version.

See <https://floodpark.org/save-trees/>

East Palo Alto: Ravenswood Business District / 4 Corners. We continue to follow and attend community meetings on this very large and important development.

Burlingame: 777 Airport Blvd – We were updated on the proposed 13-story office/research & development building located on the site of the Red Roof Inn, adjacent to Burlingame Lagoon. The plan is to raise the building and the Bay Trail in response to sea level rise. While the developers are planning to use fritted glass (bird safe) where the building faces the water, and to have interior light/shading devices controlled by sensors and timers, we are still concerned about night lighting there and will be following this closely. Additionally, the current plan encroaches on the 100' buffer required by Burlingame's Sea Level Rise Ordinance.

Also in Burlingame: 1200-1340 Bayshore Hwy – a 5-building, 1.5 million square foot office/life science development directly on the Bay and on both sides of Easton Creek is planned. We will advocate for bird-safe glass and lighting here, too.

Redwood City: Harbor View Project includes lighted soccer field near Redwood Creek/Steinberger Slough.

Redwood Shores: the Redwood Life proposal was submitted to Redwood City: city to decide by August 4 if proposal is complete. Public comments welcome.

<https://www.redwoodcity.org/city-hall/current-projects/development-projects?id=113>

Help support our mission of conservation, education, and advocacy, get involved by emailing conservation@sequoia-audubon.org.

- Chris MacIntosh, Conservation Committee

Monthly Meeting

2nd Thursdays at 7:00pm

San Mateo Garden Center

605 Parkside Way, San Mateo

September 8 - Live & In-Person

San Mateo County Raptor Palooza

Alvaro Jaramillo

*Field Trips for September
are being finalized, check
sequoia-audubon.org.*

SEPTEMBER 8 MEETING PROGRAM

San Mateo County Raptor Palooza – Alvaro Jaramillo

Live and In-Person at the San Mateo Garden Center.

Join us for outdoor refreshments and an engaging presentation by San Mateo County's acclaimed biologist

The daytime raptors — hawks, eagles, falcons and relatives — are much revered and loved as a group by birders. San Mateo County is a superb place to raptor watch, particularly in the fall and winter when numbers here can be eye opening. This is a great place to look at and enjoy a large diversity of diurnal raptors, and this is good as there is so much to ponder. There are the issues of identification, color morphs, migration, habitat, and their ecology. We also have some of the poster children for conservation success stories in the Peregrine Falcon, the Bald Eagle, and, slowly but surely, the California Condor. On the other hand, some like the American Kestrel may perhaps be on a long-term decline? There is so much to talk about, and Alvaro will sample a bit from each of these topics. Not strictly a talk on identification, but an appreciation of our local raptors, with many images and stories of raptors and raptor watching both here and abroad as we put our raptors in a more global context.

Alvaro Jaramillo, the owner of birding tour company Alvaro's Adventures, was born in Chile but began birding in Toronto, where he lived as a youth. He was trained in ecology and evolution with a particular interest in bird behavior. Research forays and backpacking trips introduced Alvaro to the riches of the Neotropics, where he has traveled extensively. He is the author of the Birds of Chile, an authoritative yet portable field guide to Chile's birds. Alvaro writes the Identify Yourself column in Bird Watcher's Digest magazine. Alvaro recently wrote part of the sparrow chapter for the Handbook of Birds of the World and the new ABA Field Guide Birds of California. He organizes and leads international birding tours and has a full schedule of pelagic trips in central California. The Linnaean Society of New York recently granted him the Eisenmann Medal; this is awarded occasionally for excellence in ornithology and encouragement of the amateur. Alvaro lives with his family in Half Moon Bay, California.



American Kestrel



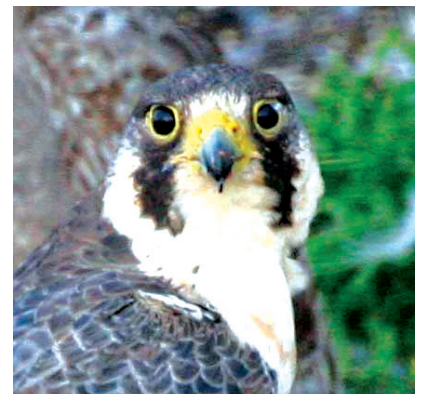
Ferruginous Hawk



Red-tailed Hawk



White-tailed Kite



Peregrine Falcon

Cavity Nesters Recovery Program, Monitors and Coordinators

Editor's Note: We've recently made some changes to Sequoia Audubon Society's Cavity Nesters Recovery Program. Unfortunately, Beverly Cronin needed to step down as coordinator. Since our county is so large, we decided to have three regional coordinators. One in the northern part of the county, one south (with Hwy. 92 being the divider), and one coastside. This should be more manageable, easier on the coordinator(s), and hopefully enable us to expand the program. There are some exciting opportunities ahead!

We're introducing Sequoia members Ronnie Eaton as the new northern coordinator and Christin New as the southern. Here's how you can help! We must find a coast-side coordinator soon to prepare for the next nesting season. Additionally, any experience level with monitoring nest boxes is welcome – we have excellent resources to support our volunteers, from nest box monitors and box builders to regional coordinators. Questions or interests, contact cnrp@sequoia-audubon.org. While monitoring, Ronnie had an unusual experience that she's sharing with us that I think you may find interesting. ♥

Oh No! Mites in a Nestbox!

Sooner or later, I knew it might happen - dreaded mites in a nestbox! Over the past few years, I'd read about this and other problems that one might find during a nestbox check and to be prepared if I encountered any issues. There is, fortunately, a lot of good information out there about any number of concerns, even black bears! Well, that hasn't been a problem for us yet, but there is one trail where my monitoring partner Marsha and I have to step over mountain lion scat!

During a recent check of a Tree Swallow (TRES) nestbox, we were horrified to see THOUSANDS of minute-sized mites swarming all over the top of the nestbox and my hands! They were reacting to the motion of the nestbox as we took it down to check the nestlings. Of course, far worse than what we saw outside was what we feared the nestlings were suffering inside the nestbox. The nestlings were about ten days old and, fortunately, looked fine. However, one nestling was standing up on the rim of the nest in the back of the nestbox fussing loudly. We weren't sure if it was from our having opened the nestbox or from the mites, but regardless, it was apparent something had to be done to minimize the number of mites in the nestbox if these nestlings were to fledge successfully. We had no tools with us or enough specific information to be able to deal with the mites that day, so we had to close up the nestbox and leave things as they were. I had homework to do once I returned home.

In my subsequent research, I learned that mites are common on TRES (check out treeswallows.com) and less likely on Western Bluebird. I'm not sure if this is because TRES are inherently more susceptible to mites or if they carry them to the nestbox via the feathers they collect for the nest. I was surprised to read that mites often are not as harmful as one thinks and that birds have developed ways to tolerate them. However, large numbers of mites can weaken the birds as they take their blood meals from the nestlings. Additionally, nestlings that survive the mites to fledge may be weakened by blood loss and won't survive to adulthood.

I had read that 're-nesting' is a common practice to deal with infestations of nests from mites and other parasites, such as botflies. Re-nesting means replacing an infested nest with a clean one, either an old nest you have saved that you know is free of parasites or a new one that you fashion from the same materials as the one you need to replace. I decided to check with one of our local experts, Lee Pauser with Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, to see if he had experience with mites in a nestbox and recommended the re-nesting process. Lee is always tremendously helpful and a true 'font' of information. He had indeed experienced problems with mites and has done re-nesting. However, he also recommended the option of just treating the existing nest and young with food-grade Diatomaceous Earth (DE), a treatment I had come across during research. I was greatly relieved to know that someone in our area had 'real-life' experience with this process, so I gathered what I needed to clean up our TRES nestbox. I decided that since the mite infestation was so significant, I would re-nest and treat it with food-grade DE.

While you can easily buy food-grade DE online, I didn't want to wait that long, so I found food-grade DE at a local health food store. I brought a new, clean nestbox and a new plastic liner for the nest (made from a berry container or suet container, punched with lots of holes for drainage). A large, deep plastic tub to put the nest/liner and nestlings in, a cover for the tub to calm the nestlings, towels, alcohol, and bags for the old nest/liner and nestbox, painter's tape to cover the nestbox opening, and the container of DE with a hand duster.

Okay, now for the clean-out! I had to put aside my trepidation about the nestlings' reaction and focus on the process. I removed the infested nestbox, placed it on the ground, and positioned the tub nearby. I opened the nestbox and gently pulled out the liner/nest with the five young TRES, placing my other hand gently over the nestlings as I transferred the nest/liner to the tub, removed them from the nest, and laid the towel over the top of the tub to keep them quiet. I moved the infested nestbox and nest/liner some distance away, placed them into a plastic bag, and wiped my hands with alcohol. Then I gathered dried grass strands about 5-8 inches long and fashioned a new nest by wrapping the grass around my hands, laying it in the clean liner, and compressing it as I went until I had a good, deep rim. Finally, I placed several clean chicken feathers into the nest around the cup. I got those by sacrificing one of my cat's feather toys (!) and set the new nest/liner into the nestbox. I used the duster to apply some DE to the bottom of the nest and into the sides to deal with mites that would come off the nestlings. To help the nestlings settle in the clean nestbox, I put blue painter's tape very lightly over the nestbox opening to keep it dark and prevent them from getting out. This type of tape is not very sticky and would not harm the young if they did try to get out the opening. A rag or sock can also be used to stuff into the opening.

Now to the nestlings! One by one, I gently picked up a nestling from the tub and cupped it in my hand, lightly dusted it on the back, tummy, tail, and under the wings with DE, then opened the clean nestbox and laid them one by one gently into the nest, closing the nestbox after each transfer. They were all amazingly cooperative, except for one, who took great exception to the entire process and fluttered around the tub screaming bloody murder!! Sheesh! I believe it was the same nestling that protested when we opened the nestbox and found the mites! Finally, all nestlings were positioned in the clean nestbox and allowed to sit quietly for 5 minutes before I gently removed the tape over the entrance hole and lifted the nestbox back into the tree. I gathered up all the materials and returned to the golf cart parked a little bit away, where I could observe the nestbox and wait for the parents to return. After a few minutes, the parents began to circle near the nestbox and eventually landed on the opening. After a couple of visits, a parent entered the nestbox. Before leaving, I waited until both parents returned with food, which only took about ten minutes.

Phew! So, know that you, too, can survive finding a nestbox infested with mites!! We are fortunate to have experienced nestbox monitors such as Lee Pauser and others who gladly share their knowledge and help anyone who needs it. It took this experience to show me that while reading is helpful to learn about potential problems, there is nothing quite like the 'real thing' to get you up to snuff on what you need to have on hand to deal with them in the field! I am now putting together a 'mite kit' I'll carry in case we come across other nestboxes infested with mites. – Ronnie Eaton

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Secretary: Susan Stratton
Treasurer: Julie Dull

At Large: Doug Brown, Beverly Cronin, Marshall Dinowitz, John Epperson, Nelle Lyons, Chris MacIntosh, Doug Pomeroy

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MISSION STATEMENT

Sequoia Audubon Society protects native birds and other wildlife and their ecosystems in San Mateo County by engaging people of all ages in conservation, education, advocacy and enjoyment.

Sequoia Audubon Society

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Seeking Newsletter Contributions – Articles and Photography!

Do you enjoy reading articles by “just regular birders”? How about writing a short article for this newsletter? Sequoia’s newsletter is *for* you, so why not *by* you? You don’t have to be an expert birder. If you can write about how you got into birding/ what enthralled you about it/a good day out/rarities conservation, and other areas of interest, please email Davena at office@sequoia-audubon.org. High quality resolution photos, from San Mateo County, are especially appreciated.



Conservation Through Federal Duck Stamps

Buying Federal Duck Stamps is the simplest way to participate in wildlife and habitat conservation. We’re encouraging members to buy the stamp through the American Birding Association. <https://www.aba.org/store/2022-2023-duck-stamp>

Sequoia Audubon Society Membership

Senior or Student membership	\$15.00
Individual membership	\$20.00
Family membership	\$25.00
Supporter	\$100.00
Donation to SAS	\$_____
	Total \$_____

Yes, I am interested in volunteering _____

Newsletter Preference:

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4 SAS Newsletter August - September 2022

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Check out our Online Birding Guide:

www.birding.sequoia-audubon.org

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