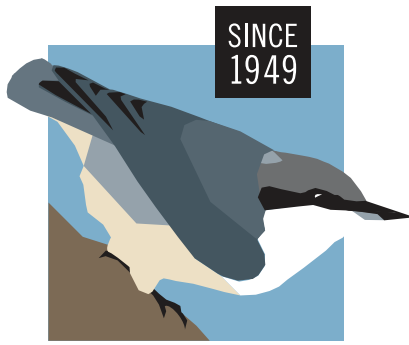




SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY

*Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society, San Mateo County
Founded 1949*

*Volume 71, No. 1
January - March 2020*

Biking and Birding on the 5th Annual Big Ride

by Chris O'Connell and Chris Hayward

A fantastic group of biking birders turned out on October 13th for our annual Big Easy Ride, which is done in conjunction with the Big Sit. Starting at Gazos Creek Beach with a seawatch, we cycled up Gazos Creek Road, then along Cloverdale Road into the town of Pescadero, and finally out to the coast at Pescadero State Beach where we eventually meet up with our Big Sit colleagues. We tallied 109 species this year. Although there were no big rarities, we did have a few notable sightings.

Both the Big Sit and Big Easy Ride are fund raisers for Sequoia Audubon (it's not too late to give – check out our website for more info). This was the 9th Annual Big Sit for Sequoia and our 5th annual Big Ride, which was the brainchild of Rob Furrow. Since Rob moved out of the bay area, the field trip has been co-led the last two years by Chris O'Connell and Chris Hayward. We've rechristened it the Big Easy Ride, to emphasize its low intensity. We cover 11 pretty flat miles in about 7 hours.

16 cyclists participated this year, easily our largest group so far. The youngest rider was only 6 years old, and Lucien managed to hang in there with us all day! Several other young birders came out, which is always good to see. We had some “celebirdies” in the group. It was an honor to have Jeff Gordon, President of the American Birding Association, join us for the whole day. And we had maybe the most famous bike birder of all: Dorian Anderson. Dorian rode his bike across the USA and then some in 2014 during his big green year. (Read all about it at <http://bikingforbirds.blogspot.com>.)

Such a large group presented a logistical challenge. How will we keep everyone together all day? Is this going to be manageable? But the roads we cruise are very low-trafficked, and with an especially cohesive yet freely roaming group, it went very smoothly. It was the hive mind was at work, and made for a very pleasant, relaxed day in the field for everyone.

We began to coalesce at Gazos Creek Beach just past dawn. We scanned the gull flock on the beach and looked for birds on the ocean. Sparrows and the like were around the parking lot. At one point, a scare went into the flock and we observed a

(continued on page 7)



Monthly Meetings

2nd Thursdays 7:00 pm
San Mateo Garden Center
605 Parkside Way, San Mateo

January 9

Sequoia Scholarship Recipients

February 13

Backyard Birds - GBBC
Multiple Speakers

March 12

Chile to South Africa
Joe Morlan

Upcoming Field Trips

January

Wed. 1st Coyote Hills Park
Sat. 11th Bedwell Bayfront
Sun. 19th Central Valley

February

Sat. 1st San Benito Raptors
Wed. 5th Pillar Point Harbor
Sat. 8th Bedwell Bayfront
Fri. 14th Windy Hill OSP
Sat. 15th Burleigh Murray
Sun. 16th Coyote Point Park
Mon. 17th Pillar Point Bluff
Sat. 22nd Coyote Point Park
Sat. 29th Foster City Shell Bar

March

Wed. 4th Pillar Point Bluff
Thurs. 5th La Honda Creek OSP
Sat. 7th Bedwell Bayfront
Sat. 21st Burleigh Murray



Jeff Gordon, President of the American Birding Association, spoke at Sequoia's October meeting. The ABA celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2019, just as we at Sequoia Audubon commemorated our 70th Anniversary. Jeff spoke about the importance of community and people when it comes to birding. It's not just about the birds, he observed.



Sequoia's 70th Birthday Cake

Ginny Marshall, long-time member of the Board of Directors and past Vice-President who stepped aside earlier this year, was honored for her service to the organization. But you can still find Ginny leading one of her regular walks at Burleigh Murray this year. (Photos by Donna Pomeroy.)



Ginny Marshall (L) accepts honors from Jennifer Rycenga

Coming...



Correction: The main article about Camp Colorado in the last issue was written by Cedrik von Briel and not his younger brother Dominik. Sorry about the mixup.



Sequoia Field Trips

Coyote Hills Regional Park - Patterson Pass Road, Fremont

Wednesday, January 1, 9:00 am – Noon

Coyote Hills Regional Park in Fremont has a great mix of habitats from freshwater marsh to baylands. We will look for waterbirds and land birds along the boardwalks and easy trails. Meet at the parking area near the Visitor Center and greet the New Year with a fun and easy bird walk. **Directions:** From I-880, take Highway 84 west, exit at Paseo Padre Parkway, turn right, and drive north about one mile. Turn left on Patterson Ranch Road and proceed to Visitor Center. There is a \$5 fee per vehicle. **Heavy rain cancels. Leader:** Donna Pomeroy.

Contact: dpom@comcast.net.

Beginner / Refresher Bird Walk, Bedwell Bayfront Park

Saturday, January 11, 10:00 am - Noon

All are welcome to join Friends of Bedwell Bayfront Park and Sequoia Audubon Society for a one to two-hour beginner/refresher bird walk. We should see wintering ducks and shorebirds, perhaps egrets, a raptor (hawk) or two, and some LBBs (little brown birds). Bring binoculars if you have them: if not, we'll share ours with you. If you are an educator who is bringing your class - or sending students on their own - we're very happy to have you! We do ask that you let us know in advance so we can ensure we have adequate leadership to enrich your students' experience. **Directions:** Meet at the parking lot by restrooms at Bedwell Bayfront Park, 1600 Marsh Road, Menlo Park. **Heavy rain cancels.** Leader varies each month. **For more information:** Chris MacIntosh.

Contact: chrismac@alumni.upenn.edu or phone 650-839-1523.

Central Valley Trip - Cosumnes River Preserve, Sacramento County

Sunday, January 19, 8:00 am - 3:00 pm

We will meet in the main preserve parking lot and walk the 1.5 mile boardwalk loop. This is a great spot to check out the wintering waterfowl, including a variety of duck species, Greater White-fronted Geese, and Sandhill Cranes, Dowitchers, Wilson's Snipe and yellowlegs should be present, and there are always some passerines and raptors. Spotting scopes are helpful if you have them. Then we'll take the walking trail to the river looking for smaller passerines. This is a great trip for beginning to experienced birders. Since we'll be going through mid-day bring a lunch and water. Bathrooms are available at the visitor center and boardwalk parking lots. **Directions:** From San Mateo take CA-84 to 880 N, then take the 580 east to the 205 to I-5 north to Twin Cities Road, Exit #498; go left (east) to the stop sign at Franklin Blvd; turn right (south) on Franklin and, driving through the Preserve, watch for the Visitor Center parking lot on your left. Further directions and maps are available at www.cosumnes.org **Heavy rain cancels. Leader:** Clifford Hawley. **Contact:** yellowhammerCA@gmail.com, 916-300-2495.

Raptors of San Benito County - Reservations Required

Saturday, February 1, 8:30 am - 3:00 pm

Let's explore the backroads of San Benito County in search of Golden Eagles, Ferruginous Hawks, Prairie Falcons (and whatever else we might find). Bring lunch, liquids and a scope if you have one. Meet at the Catholic Church in Tres Pinos. **Directions:** From San Mateo, take Hwy 101 south to Hwy 25; follow Hwy 25 through Hollister to the small town of Tres Pinos. The large Catholic Church is on the right side of the road. Park in the section of the lot farthest from the church. Take advantage of bathroom facilities in Hollister before you drive to Tres Pinos. Contact leader for carpooling info. **Heavy rain cancels. Reservations Required. Contact** Leslie Flint at: lflint@earthlink.net.

Pillar Point Harbor

Wednesday, February 5, 9:00 am - Noon

Pillar Point is a hot spot for birding year-round. We should find a variety of resident birds and wintering shorebirds. Most of the walking will be on fairly level dirt trails, but if time permits, we may hike up onto the bluff top for a better view out to sea. Scopes will be useful here, so if you have one, bring it along. A primitive restroom is available at the parking lot. **Directions:** The harbor is located just west of Coast Highway One, 18 miles south of San Francisco and 4 miles north of Half Moon Bay. From Coast Highway One, turn west at the stoplight at Capistrano

Check our website and Facebook page for updates and new listings.

Road and continue along the north side of the harbor to Prospect Way. Turn left onto Prospect, then a brief jog right on Broadway, to 29an immediate left on Harvard Avenue. Proceed through the boat yards to the end of Harvard Avenue, then turn right onto West Point Avenue, which curves around a marshy area and heads uphill to an Air Force Radar Facility. Meet at the “West Shoreline Access”, popularly known as the parking lot to Mavericks, just below the radar station. **Heavy rain cancels.** **Leader:** Donna Pomeroy. **Contact:** dpom@comcast.net.

Beginner / Refresher Bird Walk, Bedwell Bayfront Park

Saturday, February 8, 10:00 am - Noon

See January 11 entry for details.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT!

Windy Hill Open Space Preserve

Friday, February 14, 8:00 am – Noon

Join leader Casey Girard on this Great Backyard Bird Count walk in Windy Hill OSP. This fantastic park has a good selection of winter visitors, including the possibility of seeing Wood Ducks, White-breasted Nuthatch, and other oak specialties. **Heavy rain cancels.** **Directions:** Meet at 8 am at the Portola Valley trailhead. **Leader:** Casey Girard. **Contact:** casey.girard@gmail.com.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT!

Burleigh Murray Ranch State Park

Saturday, February 15, 8:00 am – Noon

Join us for a leisurely 3-4 hour walk in this bird-rich gem on our coast. The trail is a one-mile former ranch road leading to a historic barn. Plan layers for cool temps, morning fog and sunshine. **Heavy rain cancels.** **Directions:** We will meet at the lower parking lot to the Johnston House, located on Higgins-Canyon Road in Half Moon Bay. Higgins-Canyon Road begins just off of Highway 1, going east where Main Street ends. The Johnston House is the big white 1850s farmhouse on the hill. We will caravan to Burleigh Murray, which is 1½ miles up Higgins-Canyon Road from here. **Leader:** Ginny Marshall. **Contact:** ginnybirder@gmail.com.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT!

Coyote Point County Park

Sunday, February 16, 8:00 am - 11:00 am

We will meet at the parking lot by the yacht club for a leisurely stroll around Coyote Point Park looking at the abundant shorebirds and winter residents. With such a variety of habitats at Coyote Point, we should be able to see quite a number of species. Scopes can be useful here. If you have one, bring it along. There is an admission charge to the park of \$6 or free for seniors. **Directions:** Exit Peninsula Ave. from Hwy 101 and follow the signs to the park. **Heavy rain cancels.** **Leader:** Leslie Flint. **Contact:** lflint@earthlink.net.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT!

Pillar Point Bluff

Monday, February 17, 8:00 am - 11:00 am

This small County Park has only been open since 2011. It has sweeping views of both the agricultural land and the ocean, with an uncrowded trail system. There is a nice mix of birds here including breeding California Thrashers. Dress in layers and bring sunscreen and water. There is a restroom in the parking lot. The trail is moderately easy with a short, but steep descent at the end of the loop. **Directions:** Meet at the Pillar Point Bluff parking lot on Airport Street, across from the Half Moon Bay airport on the west side. **Heavy rain cancels.** **Leader:** Donna Pomeroy. **Contact:** dpom@comcast.net.

Coyote Point Park

Saturday, February 22, 2020, 8:00 am – 11:00 am

You want birds? Coyote Point Park has tons! We'll meet in the parking lot near the yacht club and explore a

Check our website and Facebook page for updates and new listings.

number of habitats for ducks, shorebirds, gulls, raptors, sparrows, and other winter residents. We should find between 60 and 70 species during our 3-hour walk, and we'll discuss field marks and life histories of all the birds we encounter. Your fearless leader will have a spotting scope, but bring your own if you have one. Open to all ages. We will walk about 7 miles. Just joking! It'll be more like 1 mile. The \$6/vehicle entry/parking fee is waived for seniors - yay! **Directions:** Southbound, exit 101 at Poplar Avenue. Right on Humboldt, Right onto Peninsula. Cross over 101 into park. If Northbound, exit 101 at Peninsula Avenue and follow signs to park. **Leader:** Dorian Anderson. **Contact:** thespeckledhatchback@gmail.com. **Heavy rain cancels.**

Foster City Shell Bar

Saturday, February 29th, 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

We will start at the Foster City Shellbar and continue north towards the San Mateo Bridge. We should see a range of shorebirds, ducks, and gulls. A scope would be great to have, I will bring one for us to share as well. We will walk slowly taking in any birds along the way. Light rain ok, but heavy rain cancels. **Directions:** Park and meet across the street from Sweet Basil Thai Cuisine at 1473 Beach Park Boulevard in Foster City. **Leader:** Casey Girard. **Contact:** casey.girard@gmail.com for more information. RSVP not required.

Pillar Point Bluff

Wednesday, March 4, 9:00 am - Noon

This small county park has only been open since 2011. It has sweeping views of both the agricultural land and the ocean, with an uncrowded trail system. There is a nice mix of birds here including breeding California Thrashers. Dress in layers and bring sunscreen and water. There is a restroom in the parking lot. The trail is moderately easy with a short, but steep descent at the end of the loop. **Directions:** Meet at the Pillar Point Bluff parking lot on Airport Street, across from the Half Moon Bay airport on the west side. **Heavy rain cancels. Leader:** Donna Pomeroy. **Contact:** dpom@comcast.net.

La Honda Creek OSP (Lower)

Thursday, March 5, 8:30 am – 12:30 pm

La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve (lower section) is one of the newest preserves in San Mateo County, but it has quickly become established as a favorite among the birders who go there regularly. Join leader Joshua Stacy for this leisurely 4-mile round-trip hike. We will be searching the skies for migrating raptors, the grasslands for wintering residents, and the woodland along the hiking trail for beginning migrating passerines. Bring your camera for extraordinary views, too! We will meet at the parking lot at the end of Sears Ranch Road in La Honda. Visit the park map if you are unfamiliar with this area, at https://www.openspace.org/sites/default/files/map_LH.pdf. **Leader:** Joshua Stacy. **Contact:** Joshua.g.stacy@gmail.com.

Beginner / Refresher Bird Walk, Bedwell Bayfront Park

Saturday, March 7, 10:00 am - Noon

See January 11 entry for details.

Burleigh Murray Ranch State Park

Saturday, March 21, 8:00 am – Noon

See February 15 entry for details.



Red-breasted Nuthatch at El Corte Madera Creek OSP in August.
There's been an irruption of them this winter.

Photo by Donna Pomeroy.

MEETING PROGRAMS

605 Parkside Way, San Mateo

January 9, 7 pm

Sequoia Youth Scholarship Recipients Discuss Camp Colorado

Meet the Future! Young Birders of Sequoia Audubon speak about Camp Colorado. To celebrate our 70th anniversary in 2019, Sequoia Audubon initiated a scholarship program, sending four young, local birders to attend the American Birding Association's renowned Camp Colorado. We originally planned to award two scholarships, but could not deny the four worthy applicants. Tonight these students – Aeon Lem, Abbigail Nix, Cedrik von Briel and Dominik von Briel will report back on their experience, and discuss what keeps them birding.



February 13, 7 pm

Best Backyard Birds Ever! – Panel and Audience Discussion

February 14-17, 2020 will be the 23rd annual Great Backyard Bird Count. This event encourages you to look for birds everywhere, but especially close to where you live. Here in San Mateo County, we have many extraordinary backyard birding enthusiasts – and we've had our share of remarkable rarities at feeders. This meeting will feature a panel of lucky San Mateo County birders who've experienced rarities in their literal Backyards, plus hints on how to have a great Great Backyard Bird Count weekend, and on how to attract birds (and other wildlife) to your backyard.



March 12, 7 pm

Cape to Cape Birding Adventure with Joe Morlan

Joe will describe the birds and wildlife encountered while on a three-week cruise from Chile to South Africa in March 2018. Joe's adventures on the ship "Silver Cloud" took him to some of the remotest islands on Earth including the Falklands, South Georgia and Tristan de Cunha. These outposts host numerous penguins, petrels and albatrosses including at least one mysterious species that has not yet been described. Among the island endemics, we will be treated to the endangered Striated Caracara, South Georgia Pipit, and the little known Moseley's Rockhopper Penguin. Join us for what promises to be an entertaining and informative presentation.



Joe Morlan has taught field ornithology at City College of San Francisco since 1978. He is the coauthor of "Birds of San Francisco and the Bay Area" and "Birds of Northern California." He has served as Chair of the California Bird Records Committee and was the recipient of the 2010 ABA Ludlow Griscom Award for contributions to regional ornithology.

Peregrine Falcon very high over head coming from the East. After lingering awhile to allow time for the sun to warm things up, we hopped on our bikes and rolled over to Gazos Creek Road. Gazos Creek Road is an excellent riparian habitat and in past years we've seen Blackpoll Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Black-throated Gray Warbler and a late Pacific-slope Flycatcher. But we wouldn't see any of those birds this year. A Hermit Warbler was nice consolation, though. There was also numerous Red-breasted Nuthatches yapping away, which was not unexpected as they've been relatively widespread this fall.

We continued onto Cloverdale Road, facing our only hills of the day. While a little steep in spots, the climbs were also very short, and thus no deterrent whatsoever. A Red-breasted Sapsucker was a nice find on this section of the route, and nearby Cedrik von Briel found our second Hermit Warbler of the day. Jeff Gordon deftly spotted a Western Tanager in some willows far from the road. It is safe to say this species would have otherwise been missed. Jeff also located a White-throated Sparrow later along Pescadero Road.

At the end of Cloverdale Road, we turned right onto Pescadero Road and then looped back into the town center via North Road. Arcangeli's Market provides a fine stop for lunch, with restrooms and picnic tables in the back. Their scones are rather excellent, too.

After lunch, we cruised down Pescadero Creek Road to Pescadero Marsh at Water Lane. On our 1st ride four years ago, we ran into a flock of at least 30 warblers here, mostly Yellow-rumped but also a Prairie Warbler and a Chestnut-sided Warbler! But this year, we had just one Orange-crowned Warbler. Every year is different and we got quite lucky in 2015.

Finally, we made it to our final destination of the tour: Pescadero State Beach. Here we found some shorebirds, most notably a Wandering Tattler, which is not unexpected but is elusive, and a Red Knot, which was very unexpected on the coast. Some South Bay birders were there and gave us the tip on the distant Red Knot to the north.

At this point, we went our separate ways, and some of us headed up to our friends at the Big Sit up on the hill overlooking the marsh. The Big Sit had 90 species overall, and 17 participants through the day. Highlights include Red-breasted Nuthatch, Cackling Goose, Canada Goose, Black Scoter, Western Meadowlark, House Wren, and more.

Thanks to all who joined us on the Big Easy Ride. The weather was stunning and several "lifers" were seen among our group. Also, a big thanks to Malia DeFelice for doing all the eBird checklists. Here's looking forward to another Big Ride in 2020!



Naomi Goodman, Dorian Anderson and Malia DeFelice do not approve this message.

Photos by Chris O'Connell



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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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We're looking for Volunteers! Get Involved! Take Action!

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Does your daily coffee support bird habitat or contribute to the demise of Neotropical landscapes? If it doesn't have the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center (SMBC) Bird Friendly certification seal your money does not support farming practices that support resident and migratory birds. During our monthly public meetings Sequoia proudly serves Certified Bird Friendly coffee, 100% organic and shade grown from *Birds and Beans, The Good Coffee* (<https://www.birdsandbeans.com>) and generously donated for each monthly meeting by Susan Rowinski.



Sequoia Audubon Society Membership Form

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

Yes, I am interested in volunteering _____

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