



SEQUOIA

AUDUBON SOCIETY

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The Grebes of Clear Lake **By Justine Carson**

Clear Lake, in Lake County, California, is one of the oldest lakes in North America and the largest natural lake totally within California. It is 19 miles long by about 8 miles wide. Its shoreline is heavily developed with residential and commercial properties and it is a popular bass fishing site. Despite the extensive development, Clear Lake attracts large numbers of waterfowl, including a significant population of breeding Western and Clark's grebes.

Late last summer a photographer friend and I spent the morning observing and photographing the nesting grebes at Clear Lake. The platform for our observations was a pontoon boat owned and operated by Faith Rigolosi. Her guiding service, Eyes of the Wild, provides customized boat tours for birders, photographers, and families who just want to enjoy a morning or afternoon on the lake. Though not a trained biologist, Faith is an enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide. She knows the lake well and monitors the progress of nesting pairs so that she can take her clients where there will be mating grebes and parents with chicks.

Both Western and Clark's grebes nest on the lake. The Western grebe is the largest of the North American grebes. They are black and white with long slender necks and red eyes. The Western grebe is black around the eyes and has a straight greenish-yellow bill. The Clark's grebe is slightly smaller and very similar in



Western Grebe with Chick on Parent's Back
Photo by Justine Carson

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Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center

No General Meetings in

July and August

September

Thursday Sept. 11th 7 pm

San Mateo Seabirding

Upcoming Field Trips

July

- Sun. 6th Pescadero Marsh
- Sun. 13th Edgewood County Park
- Sun. 20th Garin Regional Park
& Pescadero Marsh
- Fri. 25th Pillar Point/Princeton
Harbor

August

- Sun. 3rd Pescadero Marsh
- Sun. 10th Edgewood County Park
- Sun. 17th Pescadero Marsh
- Sat. 23rd Enid Pearson
Arastradero Preserve

September

- Wed. 3rd Coyote Point
- Sun. 7th Pescadero Marsh
- Wed. 10th Moss Landing/Elkhorn
Slough
- Sun. 14th Edgewood County Park

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Sequoia Audubon Society

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www.birding.sequoia-audubon.org

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MEETING PROGRAMS

San Mateo Seabirding - A World Class Spot!

Speaker: Alvaro Jaramillo

Thursday, Sept. 11, 7:00pm

There are birds that live on the ocean, but only some get full-fledged membership as "seabirds." Usually this term is restricted to the birds that are offshore, not the ones you can see from the beach. They range from shearwaters, albatrosses, to auklets, puffins, phalaropes and even some ocean going gulls and terns. My aim is to give an introduction to the various seabirds, but also to demystify them. Birds that come to land only when they have to breed are not birds you encounter all that often, and their sea going life is mysterious but we do know something about their lifestyle, what they eat, where they are coming from and where they are going and most importantly why they are in the offshore waters of San Mateo. Just like there are many habitats on land, the ocean also has many different habitats. Even on a single pelagic trip into our waters you go through different zones, each as different as coastal chaparral is from redwood forests, but in the marine sense. Key is that the waters right offshore are amongst the most productive parts of the ocean in the entire world. You may not think of it that way, but it is like having an amazon forest right in our backyard. The abundance and diversity of ocean life, including the birds is only found in a few key spots elsewhere on earth. We are blessed with a great oceanic backyard! Part of this talk will explain some of the important aspects that make our oceans amazing for birds, as well as a few ways to see and understand the different habitats that are out there. The more we know, the more we appreciate things, and I hope I can get you on the way to appreciating what is one of the most important birding areas not only of our county, but our continent - the waters of the California Current.



Sabine's Gull
Photo by Alvaro Jaramillo



FIELD TRIPS

BY GINNY MARSHALL AND MALIA DEFELICE

Pescadero Marsh – State Park Docent Nature Walks

First Sunday of each month is a morning walk starting at 10:00 am till Noon

The Third Sunday of each month is an afternoon walk starting at 1:00 pm till 3:00 pm

Walks in July are on the 6th and 20th

Walks in August are on the 3rd and 17th

Walks in September are on the 7th and 21st

Edgewood County Park

Sunday, July 13 8:00 am - hike will last 3-4 hours

Explore this gem of a park with Susie Hons. Hike through oak woodlands and natural meadows. Look for California Thrasher, Wrentit, Oak Titmouse and Western Bluebird year round. Hike 3-5 miles with some hills. **Directions:** Take 280 to Edgewood Rd. in Woodside. Go east down Edgewood to the park entrance on the right. Meet at the Nature Center. **Contact: Susie Hons** susieturtlewings@mac.com

Garin Regional Park, Hayward

Sunday, July 20 8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Garin is a short drive from the San Mateo Bridge. A number of colorful birds breed here and the birding is relatively easy. We will walk around this flat meadow area and look for Lazuli Bunting, Bullock's Oriole, Black Headed Grosbeak and much more. We may even spot a Golden Eagle. We will be birding on gravel roads and wheelchairs could navigate this trip but it may not be a smooth trip. It may be hot so bring water. If you would like bring lunch and join the leader after the walk. **Directions:** take the San Mateo Bridge. Exit on Industrial and proceed south (right turn). Stay on Industrial as it turns east and crosses 880. Turn right on Mission Blvd and then get in the left lane and turn left on Garin. The park is at the end of the road. The gate is opened at 8:00. You may have to pay an entrance fee.

Leader: Ginny Marshall ginnybirder@sbcglobal.net

Pillar Point and Princeton Harbor

Friday, July 25 8:00 am – Noon

Join us on a weekday for birding this popular destination without the weekend crowds. Pillar Point is a hot spot for birding year-round with great habitat for a variety of waterbirds. 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. Bring binoculars, camera, a scope if you have one, water and snacks. A primitive restroom is available at the parking lot. Heavy rain cancels. **Directions:** The harbor is located just west of Hwy 1, 18 miles south of San Francisco and 4 miles north of Half Moon Bay. From Hwy 1, turn west at the stoplight at Capistrano 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 an 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" parking lot below the "Golf Ball".

Leaders: Malia DeFelice and Chris Hayward

malia.defelice.sas@gmail.com

(Upcoming Field Trips from Page 1)

September

Sun. 21st Pescadero Marsh
Sat. 27th Bluff Walk/Sweetwood
Group Camp

Seabirds of San Mateo
County - Pigeon Point
Companion Field Trip to the Sept. 11th
Program
Date/Time to be Announced

Edgewood County Park

Sunday, August 10 8:00 am- hike will last 3-4 hours

See write-up for July 13th.

Contact: Susie Hons susieturtlewings@mac.com

Enid Pearson Arastradero Preserve

Saturday, August 23 8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Arastradero is a wonderful park with rolling hills, oak trees and meadowland. We will look for Bluebirds, Swallows, Lazuli Bunting, Acorn Woodpeckers and several hawk species. Golden Eagle is also possible here. We will walk 2-4 miles at a birders pace.

It can get hot here so bring water. **Directions:** take highway 280 south. Exit Page Mill Rd and go west (right). Turn right on Arastradero Rd. The parking lot will be on the right.

Leader: Ginny Marshall ginnybirder@sbcglobal.net

Coyote Point County Park

Wednesday, Sept. 3 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

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 hopefully, some fall migrants. With such a variety of habitats at Coyote Point, we should be able to see quite a number of species. 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.

Leader: Donna Pomeroy dpom@comcast.net

Moss Landing/Elkhorn Slough

Wednesday, Sept. 10 8:30 am – 3:00 pm - whole day trip

This trip will explore some of Monterey County's best fall birding hotspots. We will plan to bird at Moss Landing, Moon Glow Dairy, Zmudowsky State Beach, and other spots as we have time. Plan to have lunch with the group at a great local seafood restaurant. Contact the leader to reserve a space and for carpooling and directions info. **Leader: Leslie Flint** lflint@earthlink.net

Seabirds of San Mateo County – Pigeon Point

Sept. Date and Time to Be Announced

Join Sequoia Audubon Society for a field trip to Pigeon Point to view seabirds. This is the companion field trip to the Sept. 11 presentation by Alvaro Jaramillo. Binoculars and spotting scopes

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advised if you have them. SAS will have a scope if you don't. Dress in layers. It can be quite cool and breezy along the coast. Heavy rain cancels. **Directions:** Take Hwy 1 south from Half Moon Bay for 20 miles. Turn right at the lighthouse and drive to the end of the road to the parking area.

Edgewood County Park

Sunday, Sept. 14 8:00 am hike will last 3-4 hours

See write-up for July 13th.

Contact: Susie Hons susieturtlewings@mac.com

Bluff Walk and Sweetwood Group Camp, Half Moon Bay

Saturday, Sept. 27 9:00 am – Noon

This approximately 2.5 mi. loop walk will take us through Sweetwood Group Camp and along blufftop trails that overlook Dunes State Beach and Venice State Beach.

Frenchman's Creek mouth and Pilarcitos Creek mouth will also be visited during our walk. **Beginning Birders Welcome! Directions:** Meet at the restrooms at Venice Beach State Park. Park at Venice State Beach for a \$10 day use fee (which can be used at any State Beach that day) or there is free street parking at the north end of Pilarcitos Ave., at Wave Ave. and on adjacent streets. If opting for free parking, park, then walk towards the beach, where you will intersect with the paved coastal trail. Head north along the paved trail to the meet-up location at Venice State Beach.

Leaders: Malia DeFelice and Chris Hayward

malia.defelice.sas@gmail.com

Volunteer Appreciation Day

As a way of thanking our active members, SAS hosted 44 people to a free day at Filoli Estate in Woodside on Sunday, May 18, 2014. Included was a box lunch and choice of either spending time touring the house and garden or taking a bird walk in the forest behind the mansion that is only seen by special tour. One of the most interesting birds seen by some of the participants was a Cassin's Vireo on a nest. The photo shows outgoing President Jennifer Rycenga speaking at the luncheon. Jennifer was awarded an SAS Lifetime Membership and gift certificate in appreciation for serving three years as president.



Photo by Pati Rouzer

Highlights from the 114th San Mateo County Christmas Bird Counts from Al DeMartini & Leslie Flint

(See the full report on our website.)

Last winter's CBCs had their highs and their lows with record numbers of counters and of several species. Overall number of species for the Crystal Springs count was higher than usual. The Ano Nuevo count recorded fewer species than in past years.

The Crystal Springs CBC held December 21, 2013 recorded 200 species plus 4 seen during the count week. We had a record number of counters: 105 plus 3 feeder-watchers. Rarely do we achieve 200 species but the stars aligned for us in the form of great seawatching conditions (for great seawatchers!), a freeze before the count that did NOT include our coast and seemed to concentrate remaining rare insectivores there, great weather that attracted more counters than ever who not only found some rarities but also allowed us to post record numbers of 18 species and 4 almost-record numbers.

The Ano Nuevo CBC was held January 4, 2014. We counted 153 species plus 4 seen during count week. Mostly great weather brought out our highest ever number of counters (98) which allowed us to post record counts of 14 species with 5 near records. 153 species (plus 4 count week) is below our average and may be attributed (at least in part) to local but thick fog that affected our sea-watchers severely as well the high high tides that made our ever worsening (at least locally within the circle) shorebird diversity harder to encounter.

Thanks to everyone for doing a great job and thanks to all who helped out and especially all the landowners or agencies that allowed us special access.

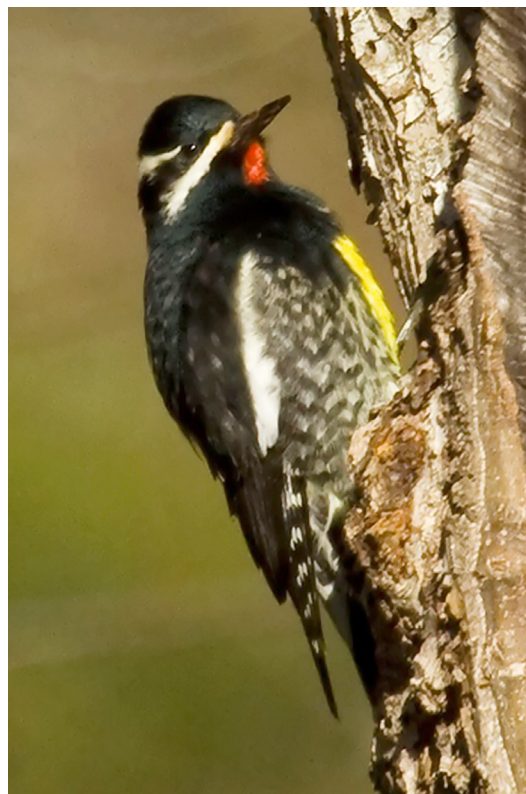
If you want to see the results in total, go to the National Audubon website: <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>

Click on "Results, Data & Research" and then "Results: Current & Historical"

Click on "Current Year" (at the top of the page) and enter the Count Codes: CACS for Crystal Springs and CAAN for Ano Nuevo. That will give you a list of all the birds seen and the numbers.

Count dates for the upcoming CBCs in San Mateo County are:
Sunday, December 14 and Saturday, January 3, 2015.

SAVE THE DATES!



Male Williamson's Sapsucker
First seen at Butano Creek during the
Ano Nuevo CBC on January 4, 2014
Photo by Donna Pomeroy

If you would like to be involved in shaping the Chapter's future for the coming year, you are invited to the:

SAS Annual Summer Planning Meeting Saturday, July 12, 2014

Activities include an afternoon meeting followed by a barbeque hosted by SAS. Please RSVP as soon as possible to Sue Cossins at susancossins@gmail.com

Election of SAS Board of Directors

A nominating committee will be proposing a new slate of officers (check our website for nominees).

SAS members in good standing may participate in the voice vote to be held at the June 12, 2014 general meeting. Officers and directors will take office July 1, 2014.

appearance but can be distinguished from the Western by the white facial coloration that extends above the eye. It also has a brighter and slightly upturned bill. The two species are so similar biologically and in courting, breeding, and chick rearing behaviors that hybrids are known to occur. Both types of grebes nest in large colonies on inland lakes or coastal marshes and migrate west to coastal ocean in winter. Though the grebes begin their courtship, breeding, and raising of young early in the summer, my friend and I still observed a wide variety of behaviors in late summer, from courtship displays, to nest building and tending, to the feeding of chicks. The grebes are well known for their flamboyant courtship displays in which both birds rush in unison across the water with their long necks extended. They also engage in an elaborate “weed ceremony” which involves presenting each other with lake weeds and nesting material. After courtship, nest building begins. New nests are built at the start of each breeding season. The nests are constructed of plant material gathered by both male and female. The nests most often float on the water, anchored in place to submerged snags or vegetation. Occasionally nests may be built on land. Nest construction usually takes one to three days but even after eggs have been laid, new materials may be added to the nest. Both male and female incubate the clutches of two to three eggs and incubation lasts approximately 24 days. Newly hatched chicks are completely dependent on the parents. Immediately upon hatching the young birds climb onto a parent’s back until they are able to swim and begin learning to find food for themselves. Even after they are confident swimmers they will climb onto the parents’ backs for a rest.

One interesting behavior that we observed was “feather-feeding.” From the first day, parents feed feathers to their young along with small fish, insect larvae and other food items. While the purpose of this behavior is not known, it is thought that the feathers enable more efficient digestion of fish and aid in removing digestive parasites. The adult’s feathers are in almost constant molt and when grooming dislodges them, the adults may ingest them or feed them to their young. Or, as we observed, a feather is floating by and the parent snatches it up and feeds it to the young. Though the Clear Lake colony is a large one, nest failure is frequent. On our visit only a very few pairs had chicks. Faith suggested that this might be a result of the heavy boat traffic on the lake. The Clear Lake grebe population is the subject of a study by a University of California biologist who will perhaps discover an explanation for the high nest failure rate.



Western Grebe Feather - Feeding Young
Photo by Justine Carson

Editor’s note – update May 27, 2014:

Paraphrased from “Eyes of the Wild” guide, Faith Rigolosi, <http://www.eyesofthewild.us/index.html>:

The water level at Clear Lake is very low. By law, if the water level is 3 feet or higher on the Rumsey Gauge in Lakeport, enough water must be constantly released to protect the fishery in Cache Creek below the dam. None of the released water is used by Yolo County for irrigation. But the level has measured below 3 feet for about one month, thereby disallowing water release at the dam.

The low water level may or may not affect the grebe nesting season. There is plenty of weed growth which they need for nest building. The birds have begun courtship activities but it appears to be happening earlier than usual. Last year there were 3,500 grebe nests and only about 20 actually fledged chicks. There are many possible causes of nest failure including boating activities, gulls and crows. River otters may be the main culprits.

Monthly Meetings

**San Mateo Garden Center
605 Parkside Way, San Mateo**

*(Parkside Way is west of Alameda de las Pulgas,
between 26th and 28th Avenues)*

Other Birding Activities

(SAS does not sponsor the following activities)

The 23rd Annual Southwest Wings Birding and Nature Festival

July 30 - August 2, 2014

Sierra Vista, Arizona

Another great year for field trips, a great assortment of free programs, vendors, exhibitors and Keynote Speaker, Ed Harper.

Information: www.swwings.org

Tucson Bird & Wildlife Festival

August 13-17, 2014

Tucson, Arizona

Southeast Arizona birding – field trips, workshops, programs, nature expo, Sky Islands Birding Cup and much more.

Information:

<http://tucsonaudubon.org/what-we-do/festival.html>

3rd Annual Wine Country Optics & Nature Festival Sunday, September 14th, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm (Free)

Cornerstone Gardens, 23570 Arnold Drive, Sonoma

Sonoma Birding will host another festive daylong event featuring most of the major binoculars and scopes companies in the USA along with extraordinary nature organizations, artists and authors from Northern California. Free family event and free parking. Approximately 1000 people attended this event last year. Invitations for participation will be coming out soon. If you have not participated in the past and are interested, please contact through the website: www.sonomabirding.com.

Tenth Annual Monterey Bay Birding Festival

September 25-28, 2014

Watsonville, CA

Information: www.montereybaybirding.org

Annual Kern River Valley Autumn Nature & Vulture Festival

Saturday, September 27, 2014

Kern River Preserve, 18747 Hwy 178, Weldon, CA

The late September festival date also corresponds with what is historically one of the finest weekends for observing fall land bird migration in California. In addition to the presence of many western migrants there are excellent chances for observing eastern rarities at nearby desert oases. Look for the free booths, exhibits, workshops and nature walks at the Kern River Preserve.

Information: <http://kern.audubon.org/tvfest.htm>

Golden Gate Raptor Observatory Public Programs Weekends in September and October

Hawk Hill, Marin Headlands

Hawk Talks and Banding Demonstrations normally occur every Saturday and Sunday during September and October - weather permitting (heavy fog or rain cancels). Hawk Hill is the best place to witness the fall raptor migration and provides habitat for the mission blue butterfly. You can also visit Battery 129, a historic World War II military installation.

Information: www.ggro.org

Conservation

Update – Egret/Heron Rookery at the Port of Redwood City

As of this writing, May 26, 2014, the nesting Snowy and Great Egrets and Black-crowned Night-Herons are attracting lots of attention. According to the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, who have been overseeing monitoring of colonial nesting sites in the bay area since 1982, the number of nests in this survey area are down from last year. SAS is working with SFBBO to expand the rookery monitoring circle to include the nests outside of the previous count trees. Hopefully this will provide a more accurate picture of the colony to answer the question: Are there fewer nesting herons and egrets, or are they dispersing along the adjacent street trees?

SAS is working to inform the managers of the port and neighboring businesses about the nesting birds in their midst, and why they are worth protecting. If you would like to volunteer for this project, please contact

Sue Cossins at susancossins@gmail.com

This photo, taken by Pati Rouzer, shows some of the 20 staff members from the nearby Marine Science Institute using scopes that SAS provided while learning about the breeding, nesting strategies, feeding and the complexity and challenges of the wildlife-urban interface.



Sequoia Audubon Society Membership Form

Individual membership for seniors (>62) \$15.00
 and students (<25) \$20.00
 Individual membership \$25.00
 Family membership \$
 Donation to SAS \$

Total

Yes, I am interested in volunteering _____

Newsletter Preference:

_____ Mail and / or _____ E-mail

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During our monthly public meetings SAS proudly serves Bird Friendly coffee certified by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. SMBC Bird Friendly® coffee is 100% organic & shade grown. SAS serves SMBC coffee because it supports our mission, to conserve and educate. For more information on SMBC coffee and how to purchase some visit: <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/SCBI/MigratoryBirds/Coffee/default.cfm>

Earth Day Events

SAS participated in two Earth Day events by tabling at the Marine Science Institute on April 19 and the Seaport Business Park on April 24, 2014. Both are located near the Port of Redwood City.

We offered information and activities relating to the nearby egret and heron nesting colony so people, mostly children, could learn what the birds look like and how big they are.

SAS also offers field trips for elementary school children to come to the rookery and see the birds in person. It's quite an experience for all the senses! The nesting birds will be there probably through mid-July. The densest area of nesting is at the end of Chesapeake near Saginaw Drive. Please keep a respectful distance.

Photo at left shows Lynn Porcedda working with children at the SAS table during the Marine Science Institute Earth Day Event. Photo by Sue Cossins



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.