

Napa Solano Audubon Society Birding Notes #17

Hello NSAS friends and members –

As I was procrastinating and putting off working on this issue of Birding Notes, I watched a male House Finch at my sunflower seed feeder who was cracking open seeds and then flying to the top of the feeder to feed a fledgling that was patiently waiting to be fed. Everywhere I go I'm finding nests and seeing the process of feeding young birds. Hope you are also having success in finding nests and watching the emergence of the newly born birds!

Note #1 –NSAS announcements

1. This is a **heads-up message** to make sure you are aware that at the end of June we will be finishing up our 2020 – 2021 year and **will be taking the summer off before starting up activities again in September.** That means that after the June Field trips the next scheduled trips will be in September, and after finishing his schedule of June weekly walks, **Andrew Ford will not be leading any walks in July or August.** Also, in May we completed our schedule of monthly meetings for the year and will be starting them up again in September, hopefully as in-person presentations.
2. June Field Trips are:
 - a. **Yuba Pass and Sierra Valley** field trip, which is scheduled for June 4 - 6, 2021. Robin Leong is leading this trip. The trip officially begins at Yuba Pass on Hwy 49 at 7 AM on Saturday, June 5. On Sunday, June 6, we will watch the morning birds at Yuba Pass and then head down to Sierra Valley. On Friday, June 4 starting at 6:30 AM at Yuba Pass Robin will lead a scouting expedition and you're welcome to join him. **At our recent Board Meeting Robin indicated that there is no limit to the number of participants so if you are interested in joining this trip, please RSVP to Wendy Cole at beehaven2@comcast.net.** When you sign up, she will send you more details about the trip.

- b. **Dover Park Heron/Egret Rookery** field trip, which is scheduled for Sunday, June 6 from 10 AM to Noon. The location is Dover Park, 800 East Travis Blvd., Fairfield. Ron Brown, who is the volunteer monitor of the Dover Park rookery, will be leading the trip. Ron will give a brief presentation at 10 and then be there to answer questions. If you haven't had the opportunity to visit a rookery during the nesting season, it is an amazing sight! No RSVP necessary. Just show up between 10 and 12 and prepare to be entertained. If you have questions about this trip, you can email Wendy Cole at beehaven2@comcast.net.
3. **Thank you** to all who exercised your right to vote and elected our Board Members for the 2021 – 2022 year. All 4 of the current board members were re-elected to serve another term with Mark Stephenson as President, Tom Slyker as Vice-President, Helena Kassel as Secretary, and David Kassel as Treasurer. Hip-Hip-Hooray!

Note #2 – *What about the birds?*

1. Because I like the picture and because it's spring and birds are being fed.



Barn Swallows. Photo: Alan Peterson – From Audubon CA email flyer

2. Mark Stephenson wanted to share this with you. **Our Orioles are back!** Both our Hooded and Bullock's Orioles are now back for the breeding season. The males began to trickle in during the last week of March and first week of April and began eagerly singing from their respective perches hoping to attract a female that typically arrives a couple of weeks after the males. This early arrival gives the males time to stake out their territories and solicit the arriving females with their intricate songs.

The Hooded Oriole, which is found throughout the Southwest, frequents our suburban neighborhoods, particularly ones with Washington Palm trees (*Washingtonia robusta*). These palms, also known as the Mexican fan palm, are the ones that attract these Orioles as their favorite nesting spots. Although they can be located further afield, they are seldom found in a location unless a palm tree is somewhere nearby. They can often be detected by their distinctive call note, a loud "veek" or "veep". Their song is a softer series of whistles that contains this distinctive "veep" call note embedded throughout along with soft chatter notes.



Hooded Oriole. Photo: Mark Stephenson

Since their diet consists of insects, nectar, and fruit, Hooded Orioles will readily show up at Hummingbird and Oriole Feeders sipping the sugar water and slurping the jelly that they seem to enjoy so much. They can be identified from their close associate, the Bullock's Oriole, by their bright orange forehead, orange back of head and neck, and extensive black bib that creates a distinct line from the bill to the eye extending straight down the neck to the throat.

The Bullocks Oriole, which is found throughout the Western US, prefers our grassy, oak woodland habitats where they often perch up high in a tree and announce their presence with their varied song of whistles and extensive loud chatter calls. Their diet consists of arthropods, insects, and ripe fruit, so they are less likely to visit hummingbird feeders. The identifying marks for this Oriole are a thin, dark eye-line extending from the bill to the back of the head, where it meets the black crown at the nape and a black bib that is considerably thinner than the bib of a Hooded Oriole.

Females of the two species are trickier to tell apart as they are both a pale yellow with orange hints, but the Bullock's tends to have a brighter orange/yellow head, face, and throat along with an extensive white section on their belly. They differ subtly from the female Hooded Orioles which are overall more yellow to olive yellow on the head, rump, tail, and a large portion of the breast. The female Hooded Oriole also has a smaller more limited gray to white patch along its flanks.



Bullock's Oriole. Photo: Mark Stephenson

Note #3 – More about migration –

Bob Hall posted this note on the GGAS Chat forum. “*Here's lovely migration video with beautiful animations: <https://vimeo.com/374902765>.*” It turned out to be a 5-minute story of one man’s preoccupation with monitoring bird migration. ***The animation in this award-winning story is wonderful.***

It’s a story about Eric Masterson who is no ordinary birdwatcher. An immigrant himself from Ireland to New England, *he's fallen in love with bird migration* - specifically with a little-known wonder of the world that happens every spring and fall, right over our heads, under cover of darkness. ***I highly recommend you take a look at this video.***

Note #4 – Advocacy opportunity –

“Urge your U.S. Senators to protect seabirds by protecting the fish they need to survive.” Forage fish are small, schooling fish such as anchovies and herring that fuel the entire marine ecosystem. The Forage Fish Conservation Act aims to

change the way fish are managed to include the dietary needs of seabirds, marine mammals, and more. **This bipartisan bill would allow these essential fish populations to rebound and become more stable so that the seabirds and other marine wildlife, people, and economies that depend on them can continue to thrive.** Use this link <https://act.audubon.org/a/forage-fish-conservation> to act and help secure passage of this legislation.

Note #5 – Because you need to know the Science News –

Check out the article “*From Avocet to Zebra Finch: Big data study finds more than 50 billion birds in the world*” at <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/05/210517194658.htm>.

It reports on a new study by UNSW Sydney that suggests there are roughly **50 billion individual birds** in the world, *about six birds for every human on the planet*. The study was made possible with the help of more than 600,000 citizen scientists who contributed their sightings to the eBird dataset between 2010 and 2019.

"Large global citizen science databases such as eBird are revolutionizing our ability to study macroecology," says Prof. Cornwell. Everyone of us who contributes bird lists to the eBird site is helping to generate the data that is being used for research projects like this one being done by UNSW Sydney. ***Hopefully, you are adding all of your sightings to your eBird account.***

Quick question - Only four bird species belong to what the researchers call '**the billion club**': species with an estimated global population of over a billion. Can you name them? If not, you can find the answer by reading the article.

- If you have ideas for what can be done to make the NSAS a better birding resource for our community or have Birding Notes and/or Pictures to share with the rest of the NSAS community please send them to Tom Slyker at SolanoBirder@gmail.com.
- Be sure to check the calendar at the NSAS website (<http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/>) for meeting announcements and Field Trip updates.
- This is issue number 17 of our biweekly series. Past copies of Birding Notes are posted on the NSAS website at <http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/>
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