

Napa Solano Audubon Society Birding Notes #4

Hello NSAS friends and members –

This is issue number 4 of our biweekly series of short notes and updates on activities and birding opportunities within Napa and Solano Counties. Past copies of these Birding Notes are posted on the NSAS website. Enjoy!

Note #1 – Don't forget that our next Zoom presentation will be on **Thursday, November 12 at 7 PM** and the speaker will be Matt Allshouse from Audubon California. Matt's talk will be about Conservation Ranching which is an effort to restore America's grasslands to benefit birds, people, and the planet. About 80 percent of our native grasslands have fallen to development and other threats — and the birds that depend on them are disappearing too. Conservation Ranching is about connecting bird-friendly ranches with eco-conscious consumers, giving ranchers new ways to stay competitive in the marketplace and at the same time preserve and restore the grasslands. For more information about this presentation and details for the Zoom Link for this talk visit our website at <http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/Event/20201112-NSASNovemberSpeakerSeries>. Hope to see you there!

Note #2 – What's being seen locally –

- In Birding Notes #3 we highlighted that Lake Herman has recently been a good birding Hot Spot. In response I got a question about ticks and should birders going to Lake Herman be concerned about ticks. I passed this question on to Eric Pilotte and not only did he answer the question, but he also provided his recommendation for a tick free birding tour.

“In spring ticks are abundant in the brushy areas at Lake Herman and you need to take care to remove ticks as you are walking and after you are finished walking, while tucking pants into socks and wearing light-colored pants to make ticks easier to see. In summer and fall few if any ticks are found there. That said, I can probably tell people how to bird it without even stepping foot in the brushy areas (see below).

I suggest parking at the Lake Herman parking area and check the parking lot and the areas along the lake which can be productive birding by themselves. Then walk down the dam (it's a steep drop down) to bird the riparian area just north of the dam along Lake Herman road. It is not very brushy down there and it has lots of interesting birds. You can just bird the area with the obvious water, no need to hike beyond that unless one wants a more challenging hike (and potentially ticks). After that, I recommend walking the wide levee trail that goes halfway around the lake to see species on the lake (including walking the spillway, which takes you to the other good riparian area). On the far side of the lake you can continue up to the Benicia Community Park where there are other habitats and often lots of birds (I personally consider the Community Park to be part of the Lake Herman area as the birds move freely around the entire place).

Also, to complete the circuit there is a wonderful wetland that you can access from the Community Park parking lot by walking southeast across Kearney Street into a canyon-like wetland that again has a unique habitat and different birds." This canyon area is also a good place to go if you don't have time to walk the entire loop from Lake Herman through the community park and then into the canyon. It has a level, paved fire road along the upper rim of the canyon that will take you from Kearney Street to McAllister Drive which makes it an easy walk and it can be easily accessed by parking on Kearney Street. Note that in the spring for the past few years there has been a pair of Red-tailed Hawks nesting in the single large tree in the middle of this canyon.

- I met Karen Sheldon, a long-time NSAS member, while birding at American Canyon Wetlands (ACW) and she recommended a visit to the Green Island Unit which is just north of ACW. To reach the location, from Hwy 29 drive on Green Island Rd just past the auto dismantling business to where the road is blocked by a gate and park there. Here's a google map to the location <https://www.google.com/maps/@38.2026137,-122.2961513,17z>



From the parking spot you can walk roughly north toward the Brazos Bridge over the Napa River or roughly south on the levee path toward American Canyon Wetlands Park. Both paths are packed dirt/gravel and flat, so suitable for both walking and bicycling. If you head south on the levee toward American Canyon, after a short walk you'll come to an arc shaped shoreline that seems to be a preferred haul out for shorebirds and waterfowl. This is directly across the street from the gate (marked 2500 - presumably it's an address) to the auto dismantler. The attached photo shows the high density of the birds at the spot.

Note #3 – Hog Island Audubon Camp is running a virtual *Making Bird Connections* lecture series. Each week features a different bird-focused presenter. Learn from top experts in the field with these free presentations. The schedule is included below and all of the talks are recorded for viewing at your convenience. See this website for details - <https://hogisland.audubon.org/programs/lecture-series>

September 29: Living on the Wind: Fall Migration with Scott Weidensaul

October 6: Intro to Birding with Holly Merker

October 13: Birding by Ear with Tom Johnson.

October 20: Bird-friendly Communities with Jillian Bell

October 27: Volunteering through the Lens with Jean Hall

November 3: *Vote for the birds! No presentation tonight.*

Nov. 10: Indigenous Conservation: Boreal Birds in Canada (TBD)

November 17: Tracking Seabirds with Don Lyons

If there is a silver lining to the pandemic it is that there has been a wide variety of talks that have been produced by many different birding organizations, including NSAS, and all of these talks are being recorded for viewing at a later date. For years and years to come we will all have access to some very excellent birding educational materials!

Note #4 – Check it out! This is from the Golden Gate Audubon Chat group. A nature reserve in Pennsylvania caught and banded a bird where half of its body is female and the other half is male, a rare condition called gynandromorphism. The bird is a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. For details check out this website -

<https://carnegiemnh.org/press/?fbclid=IwAR1cYVgyLKodqnLIymqFEdpWcXW-WJDJqJ5g30wUOFeyTQg0twGNzZ-32h8>



Note #5 – Time to take a step away from the birds to express our concern for everyone in the Napa and Solano counties who have had to deal with the fires, the mandatory evacuations, and the worry about the potential loss of homes or dear ones. It has been a horrendous fall season for fires and the RED Flag warnings just seem to keep coming. And, on top of the fires we have friends, neighbors, and family who are contracting and dying from CoVid-19. As Robin Leong reminds us, there are a lot more important things than birding. Please take a minute of silence to remember all of those in our community who have had to deal with the difficult times of 2020 and think very positively that 2021 is going to be a better year.

- 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 updates.
- If you would like to unsubscribe from receiving these birding notes please send your unsubscribe request to SolanoBirder@gmail.com.