

KITE TALES

A monthly newsletter from the Redwood Regional Ornithological Society



Stephen Pearce
PHOTOGRAPHY

Trumpeter Swan (with Canada Geese)

Photo by Steve Pearce

*Next RROS Meeting
February 8 @ 7:00 PM*

What's New on the RROS Website?

The most current and up to date info on Field Trips, Presentations, Meetings, and more can be found at www.RROS.org

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SAVE THE DATE

February Membership Meeting: Wednesday, February 8th, 7:00pm

First United Methodist Church, 1551 Montgomery Dr, Santa Rosa.

Meet in the McMullin Room, just east of the entrance to the main sanctuary.

Before the meeting, join for dinner at 5:30 pm at Mary's Pizza, 535 Summerfield Road, Santa Rosa.

February's program: Birding in Panama. Another international adventure, this time to Panama. Bob and Carol Hasenick will share photos and stories about their birding in Feb 2022.

UPCOMING RROS FIELD TRIPS & EVENTS

RROS Field Trips in the Time of COVID-19

We are not requiring field-trip attendees to make reservations, unless a specific trip needs to be limited due to physical restraints. However, you are encouraged to RSVP for all trips. In return, you will receive a reminder of the trip and automatically be shared on the group eBird list., unless you opt out. As always, car pooling is encouraged.

To RSVP, contact Malcolm Blanchard: email mab@mabco.com or text at (707) 480-2210

Saturday, February 11, 2023 Hudeman Slough Malcolm Blanchard 8am-12pm

Meet at the parking area (38.2211039, -122.3953507) off Ramal Road at 8:00am. South of the town of Sonoma, near Skaggs Island, is a rich birding area hosting many water fowl when the fields are flooded. Join us for a survey of the area. Owls, shrikes, and raptors are expected. No bathrooms. Bring a lunch. For more information or to RSVP, contact Malcolm Blanchard (707) 480-2210.

Sunday, February 19, 2023 YAMS Field Trip: Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility
Lisa Hug 8:30am-12:30pm

Meet at 8:30 am for a walk around the wetlands at Ellis Creek ponds. We hope to see lots of ducks and other waterbirds. Bring a lunch and lots of warm clothes!

Saturday, February 25, 2023 Today Lake Regional Park Peter Colasanti 8am-12pm

We will spend the morning observing local raptors as well as water fowl, now that water has returned to the lake. Hopefully, the Burrowing Owl will make an appearance. If the Causeway Trail is still closed, due to flooding, we'll regroup at Shollenberger to see how the restoration of that park is proceeding, now that it, too, has water. Meet at the Tolay Regional Park parking lot (38.2050058, -122.5210195) (\$7 fee, or County pass) at 8:00AM. To RSVP or more info, contact Malcolm Blanchard (707) 480-2210

Saturday, February 25, 2023 YAMS Field Trip: Owling at Armstrong Woods State Park
Lisa Hug 3-6:30 pm

Meet at the parking lot by the Visitor Center at Armstrong Woods State Park. There is a \$10 per car day use fee so we may arrange some carpooling into the park itself. No owls are guaranteed, but there is a pretty good chance of hearing Barred Owls. Bring lots of warm clothes and you might want to bring a flashlight.

RROS field trip along the San Pablo Bay shore, January 21, 2023, Gene Hunn leading.

Fifteen birders emerged from their wet caves to enjoy a brilliant morning starting at the abandoned marina at the mouth of the Petaluma River. The tide was high and rising, towards a new moon king tide later in the morning. Buffleheads and some 160-odd Common Goldeneyes battled the current. A group of Greater Scaup tested our ID skills. A parade of Snowy Egrets, trailing their yellow feet, passed heading upriver. The salt marsh Song Sparrows were joined by a nice male Common Yellowthroat, but no sign of the elusive Ridgway's Rails known to inhabit this area. Some glimpsed a very distant Merlin streaking by.

A short way east we were able to study roosting shorebirds with the sun behind us. American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, Marbled Godwits, Willets, and Long-billed Dowitchers, which vocalized once but were judged to be Long-billed given the season. We had Killdeer, Semipalmated Plovers, and dozens of Least and Western Sandpipers in our scope fields. Graceful Long-billed Curlews whistled their plaintive calls as they soared overhead.

Next stop, Reclamation Road and a hike to the dike overlooking the reclaimed tidal flats of the San Pablo Bay NWR. Golden- and White-crowned Sparrows and flocks of House Finches foraged in the brush. Single Fox and Lincoln's Sparrows, Say's and Black Phoebes added variety. Distant raptors on power towers proved to be Red-tailed Hawks, but one more slender hunter was judged not a Peregrine, but rather a Prairie Falcon. The tan back, long tail, and distinct facial markings were convincing. Up on the dike we found the mud flats flooded by the tide, but spotted a mass of roosting avocets in the muddy fields behind the dikes. A short hike brought us within range. At least 400 Avocets and hundreds more Dunlin and peeps and dowitchers, plus a single Black-bellied Plover. The few gulls in view were mostly Ring-billed.

Exploring (with permission) the eucalyptus grove and associated barns, we scared up a Barn Owl (apologies for disrupting its nap-time) and added American Kestrel, Red-shouldered Hawk, and California Quail.

After a brief early lunch break we moved east to the Tubbs Island trailhead parking area off insanely busy highway 37. The flats here at the mouth of Tolay Creek were also flooded, but hosted Green-winged Teal, Canvasbacks, Gadwalls, Northern Shovelers, American Wigeon, a Northern Pintail or two, plus a single male Greater Scaup. A large roosting shorebird flock a short way out the trail included several hundred Black-bellied Plovers amongst the smaller waders, but the sun angle prevented picking out anything rare. Meanwhile, Ravens dodged attacks by Northern Harriers.

We wrapped it up at the Skaggs Island bridge turn-off (and turn-around) east off highway 37 in Solano County, adding Mute Swans, Canada Geese, American Coots, White-tailed Kite, and Yellow-rumped Warbler, surprisingly scarce up to that point.

Another pleasant day in the field studying the birds.

Gene Hunn, for RROS Field Trips

Next up: Feb 11 Field Trip to Hudeman Slough with Malcolm Blanchard

A Word about SWANS

A big story for Sonoma County bird watchers of late was the appearance of two rare swans in a Rohnert Expressway field. First spotted by Don Kirker (“I think I saw ...”), the swans’ identity was questionable from the start. Lacking a scientific write-up of the recent discussions and debates, KT’s presents a commentary on why correct ID matters.

Comments flew like “a Trumpeter would be a lifer!”; “Tundra is one more for me!” “one adult swan with one juvenile – must be the same species” “Is the beak is “U” or “V” shape? depends on the font!”. Remember the days when the answer was “take the birds” and analyze the DNA? Yep, birds were killed to get it right.

Part of the answer of “why bother?” rests with research centers such as Cornell that use these “citizen science” bird reports to show where and how bird populations are changing. These data can help pinpoint areas with the steepest population declines, allowing conservation groups to identify where focus and funding will do the greatest good in efforts to restore declining bird populations and habitats.

Take the case of the Trumpeter Swan (TRUS). In the late 19th to the last of the 20th century, the TRUS was on its way to extinction. By the early 20th century, the population was probably below 1000, centered in the NW and Canadian West. In the 1960’s and 70’s, a small effort was started by federal and some state agencies to reintroduce the TRUS, starting with former nesting areas in the Midwest. Slowly the population has been making a comeback. A 1968 survey estimated a North American population of 2572. In 2010, US Fish & Wildlife estimated over 34,000 and in 2015 almost 63,000!* The sharp population increases over the last 50 years have been related to conservation efforts at least in part guided and supported by “citizen scientist” bird counts.

So, leave the ID of rarities to the experts, if you want. Meanwhile, enjoy the outdoors, the birds, and your fellow scientists. Identifying the species, especially for the rarities, including how appearances might change year to year, really does matter.

**History from: “The Amazing Return of the Trumpeter Swan” by G.Cope Schellhorn; Bird Watchers Digest 9-10/2020*



Trumpeter Swan

Tundra Swan

Photo by Tom Reynolds

Tundra Swan

Photo by Malcolm Blanchard



RROS INCOME AND EXPENSES

CALENDAR YEAR 2022

| Category | 1/1/2022-6/30/2022 | 7/1/2022-12/18/2022 | OVERALL TOTAL |
|---|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| INCOME | | | |
| Dues, Member | 295.00 | 2,330.00 | 2,625.00 |
| Member Donations | 1,515.00 | 1,490.00 | 3,005.00 |
| Pelagic Trip 2022*10*17 | 0.00 | 795.00 | 795.00 |
| RROS Caps Sales | 160.40 | 95.00 | 255.40 |
| TOTAL INCOME | 1,970.40 | 4,710.00 | 6,680.40 |
| EXPENSES | | | |
| Donation - American Bird Conservancy | 500.00 | 0.00 | 500.00 |
| Donation - Bird Rescue Center of Sonoma | 500.00 | 0.00 | 500.00 |
| Donation - Brian Webb | 396.94 | 0.00 | 396.94 |
| Donation - Tierra de Aves, Mexico | 500.00 | 0.00 | 500.00 |
| Education | 800.00 | 400.00 | 1,200.00 |
| Equipment | 0.00 | 856.33 | 856.33 |
| Food & Dining | 20.00 | 102.13 | 122.13 |
| Kite Tales | 193.33 | 450.91 | 644.24 |
| Liability Insurance Policy | 0.00 | 589.00 | 589.00 |
| Meeting Room Rental | 700.00 | 525.00 | 1,225.00 |
| Office Expense | 0.00 | 153.20 | 153.20 |
| Pelagic Charter 2022 Exp | 0.00 | 31.83 | 31.83 |
| Postage | 151.61 | 9.00 | 160.61 |
| Quicken Accounting App. | 51.99 | 0.00 | 51.99 |
| RROS Caps Purchase | 363.68 | 0.00 | 363.68 |
| State Taxes | 38.00 | 625.00 | 663.00 |
| Web Fees | 0.00 | 168.00 | 168.00 |
| YAMS - Expenses | 0.00 | 89.38 | 89.38 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | 4,215.55 | 3,999.78 | 8,215.33 |
| OVERALL TOTAL | -2,245.15 | 710.22 | -1,534.93 |



Northern Pygmy Owl
Photo by David Hofmann

Observations December 21, 2022 to January 20, 2023 compiled by DAVID A. HOFMANN

| Species | Date/s | Location | Cty | # | Observer/s |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--|------------|----------|--|
| Trumpeter Swan | 01/16-20/23 | Rohnert Park—Lowell Avenue E.of Stony Point Road | SON | 1ad | DoK, BoH, JeV, ToB, ReM, PeC, EuH, ScM, DoS, CoM, LiH, Ma&BeB, ScS, CoH, EIC, BoH, WeD, ScM, TiE, RAR, Ma&LuS, TrD, BrW, EmS, AIW, BeM, DaSi, AnL, ScB, WiD, JoH, JoL, RoO, BoB, DaL, DaSe, KaP, JoS. EvV, EIL, ScM, DaF, LiF, MiH, YvM photos |
| Trumpeter/ Tundra Swan | 01/16-20/23 | Rohnert Park---Lowell Avenue E. of Stony Point Road | SON | 1juv | DoK, BoH, JeV, ToB, PeC, LiH, Ma&BeB, RAR, Ma&LuS, ScM, ScC, ScS, WeD, MaB, JoS, EmS, TrD, BrW, AIW, BeM, DaS, AnL, ScB, WiD, JoH, JoL, RoO, KaP, EvV, EIL, ScM, DaF, LiF, MiH, YvM photos |
| Mandarin Duck | 12/30/22-01/20/23 | Sonoma—Denmark Road | SON | 10 | EuH, CoW. EIF, DaF |
| Eurasian Wigeon | 12/22/22 | Bodega Bay---Doran Regional Park | SON | 1m | LiH, AnM |
| Eurasian Wigeon | 12/28/22 | Santa Rosa Creek Trail west of Willowside Road/Delta Pond | SON | 1m | BriW photos |
| White-winged Scoter | 12/22-28/22 | Bodega Bay---harbor | SON | 1m | LiH, AnM, JoS, CrD, MarB, TaS, JoP, BDP photo |
| Sandhill Crane | 01/06/23 | Spring Hill Road | SON | 1 | Ma&LuS |
| Pomerine Jaeger | 01/07/23 | Bodega Head State Park—grounded, waiting for the storm to subside. | SON | 1 | JaS photos |
| Glaucous Gull | 01/01/23 | Jenner Beach | SON | 1 | DoK |
| Black Skimmer | 01/09-20/23 | Doran Regional Park | SON | 2 | SaB, JoK, TiE, HeH, Ma&LuS, MaS, LiF, JoS, TiE, DeH, MaB, LiH, BreW, MaH, MoF, JaS, GaP, BoH, BrO, CoH, WiG, KiH, GaM, AIW, CoW, DoK, ReO, KEM, JML, ScS, CoM, BrD, JeV, EvV, LeR, RoO, CiR photos |
| Least Bittern | 01/01-06/23 | Ellis Creek WRF | SON | 1 | EIC, JeG, KrO |
| White-faced Ibis | 12/28/22 | Santa Rosa Creek Trail west of Willowside Road/Delta Pond | SON | 2 | TiE photos |
| White-faced Ibis | 01/04-17/23 | Rohnert Park—Wilfred Ave | SON | 2 | AIW, ScM, ScC, JeV |

| | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|--|-----|----|--|
| Common Black Hawk x Red-shouldered Hawk | 12/23/22-01/19/23 | Santa Rosa Creek Trail west of Willowside Road/ Delta Pond | SON | 1f | BriW photos |
| Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | 01/02-20/23 | W. Olivet Road x Wildwood Lane | SON | 1 | WiB, TiE, AKO, JoS, LiF, MoF, JeG, CoW, DoK, ScM, BoH, EIC, AIW, MiH photos |
| Lewis's Woodpecker | 12/22/22-01/20/23 | Nagasawa Community Park | SON | 1 | AIW, WiB, MaG, DaW, MoF photos |
| Townsend's Solitaire | 12/26/22 | Nuns Canyon Road x Nelligan Road | SON | 1 | DaL recorded |
| Townsend's Solitaire | 12/30/22 | Calabazas Creek Open Space Preserve | SON | 1 | TiE |
| Tree Sparrow | 12/20-21/22 | Sea Ranch---Pipers Reach area | SON | 1 | KaW, JaW photos |
| Vesper Sparrow | 12/23/22 | Laguna de Santa Rosa Trail | SON | 1 | ToW, DaW |
| Swamp Sparrow | 12/21-26/22 | Santa Rosa Creek Trail & Delta Pond | SON | 1 | BriW photos |
| Swamp Sparrow | 01/07/23 | Salmon Creek Pond & Bridge | SON | 1 | ScS |
| Swamp Sparrow | 01/14/23 | Jenner Pond---Hwy 1 x Hwy 116 | SON | 1 | JoS |
| Bullock's Oriole | 01/02-12/23 | Boyes Hot Springs---Riverside Drive | SON | 1m | EvV, JeV photos |
| Bullock's Oriole | 01/06/23 | Braehurst Lane | SON | 1 | DaL photos |
| Tennessee Warbler | 12/22/22-01/20/23 | Bodega Bay---Diekmann's Store | SON | 1 | LiH, AnM, JoS, JoP, BDP, CrD, BrO, DoK, WeD, EuH, RAR, DeF, DaL, ScC, TiE, MaB, MoF, MaH, JeG, LeR, EmS, ToB, RoO photos |
| Summer Tanager | 01/12/23 | Bodega Bay---Diekmann's Store | SON | 1m | MaH photos |

OBSERVERS FOR THIS PERIOD: Mario Balitbit, Bob Battigan, Malcolm Blanchard, Malcolm & Beatrice Blanchard, Will Boucher, Tony Briggs, Sarah Brooks, Scott Buchanan, Scott Carey, Peter Colasanti, Elizabeth Crouthamel, Travis Dale, Willem van Dam, Craig Dodson, Brock Dolman, Tiffany Erickson, Elizabeth Ferber, Dawna Foreman, Linda Fraley, Dea Freid, Mookie Fudemberg, Will German, Jeffer Giang, Mary Grishaver, Connie Haile, Bob Hasenick, Joel Hedgpeth, Denise Herzberg, Michael Hingerty, Marcel Holyoak, Kirk Hopkin, Heidi Horvitz, Lisa Hug, Gene Hunn, Don Kirker, John Klobas, Jennifer Michaud-Laird, David Leland, Elizabeth Lewis, Ann Linder, David Lumpkin, John Luther, Yvette MacDonald, Renee Masotti, Becky Matsubara, Anne Menke, Colin Meusel, Gary Morgret, Scott Morrical, Brook O'Connor, Rob O'Donnell, Kristin Olson, Rebecca Olsen, Aviv Karasov-Olson, Benjamin D. "Mike" Parmeter, John Parmeter, Garrett Pierce, Karen Pinckard, Levi Rehberg, Cindy Roach, Ruth Ann Rudesill, Mark Sawyer, David Sexton, Doug Shaw, Dan Singer, Josh Snead, Jackie Sones, Scott Sorby, Taylour Stephens, Mark & Lucas Stephenson, John Sterling, Emilie Strauss, Jeff Valfer, Eva Valfer, Torin Waters, Danelle Waters, Brian Webb, David Webster, James Weigand, Brendon Westerhold, Alan Wight, Karen Wilkinson, Corinne Williams

ABOUT RROS

Redwood Region Ornithological Society was organized in 1962 “to encourage the study and conservation of birds, other wildlife, and their natural habitat.”

Meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month October through April, at 7 pm at the First United Methodist Church, 1551 Montgomery Dr, Santa Rosa.

Sept & May meetings are held outside at 5:30pm.

Annual dues are \$20 per individual, \$25 per family, and \$5 per student.

Membership forms can be found at www.rros.org/join-rros

Dues can be sent to RROS Treasurer Bob Hasenick, 4453 La Paz Lane, Santa Rosa, CA 95404-9510

Visit us on the web at www.RROS.org

RROS STAFF

OFFICERS

President: Eugene Hunnenhunn323@comcast.net // 707-981-7301

Vice President: Monica Schwalbenberg-Peñafieldsketcher@gmail.com // 707-479-2949

Secretary: Peter Colasanti.....peter_colasanti@yahoo.com // 707-780-7296

Treasurer: BobHasenick.....bobhasenick@att.net // 707-486-0055

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Field Trips: Malcolm Blanchard.....mab@mabco.com // 707-480-2210

Observations: David A. Hofmannnnamfoh@comcast.net // 707-546-0325

Christmas Bird Count: Eugene Hunn.....enhunn323@comcast.net // 707-981-7301

Kite Tales: Eva Valfer.....evaantonvalfer@gmail.com //415-524-3222

YAMS Coordinator: Lisa Hug.....lisahug@sonic.net // 707-535-9370

Membership: Bob Hasenick.....bobhasenick@att.net // 707-486-0055

Website: Katharine Branstetter.....kathbran@well.com

Kite Tales deadline is the 20th of each month. Observations may be sent to David A. Hofmann

All other content may be sent to **Anne O'Donnell** auodonnell@gmail.com