


# KITE TALES

a monthly newsletter from the  
Redwood Region Ornithological Society

Volume 57 Number 8

April 2022



Northern Pygmy-Owl  JeffValfer



**Next RROS Meeting**  
April 13th // 7:00 pm



### What's New on the RROS Website?

Did you miss last month's membership meeting? Or maybe you just want to watch it again?

A recording of March's Presentation can be found on the [Zoom Meetings](#) page!

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## SAVE THE DATE

### April Virtual Membership Meeting :Wednesday, April 13th , 7:00 pm

We have located a comfortable venue in lieu of the traditional church hall (which is still off-limits due to covid restrictions). We will gather at The Arlene Francis Center for Spirit, Art, & Politics ([www.arlenefranciscenter.org](http://www.arlenefranciscenter.org)) located just north of Railroad Square in downtown Santa Rosa at 99 6th St. This meeting will be streamed live via Zoom for all members.

### This month's program: A talk with wildlife biologist John Sterling



**About the Speaker:** John has been a very active birder since 1971 and a professional wildlife biologist since 1981. He has traveled extensively throughout California learning about local bird distribution in all 58 counties and has traveled internationally as a guide and ornithologist for many institutions to 40 countries including projects as a Smithsonian ornithologist to Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, Sumatra, the Philippines, Canada and Russia. John currently has his own company specializing in tours, birding classes, research and environmental consulting.

Meeting will be Zoomed, but might also be in-person, COVID permitting.

### TO "JOIN" THE ZOOM MEETING

- 1) click on the "Join Zoom Meeting" link provided in the email sent by RROS. To protect the security of the meeting, this link will not be posted on the RROS website. The meeting is open to both RROS members and non-members. A non-member MUST contact Jeff Valfer ([jhvalfer@gmail.com](mailto:jhvalfer@gmail.com)) to "register" their email contact info for the meeting (will be used ONLY for the purpose of verifying a friendly person).
- 2) Follow the prompts to download and run ZOOM and/or to ensure that you have the current version of the ZOOM app.
- 3) Enter the meeting ID NUMBER\*, if prompted. Enter the PASSCODE\*, if prompted.
- 4) Click to "join the audio conference". Once in the meeting, you may click on the "START VIDEO" or "JOIN VIDEO" button to Zoom yourself into the conference.
- 5) Once the presentation starts, please select the "mute" button to block audio from your station. At any time during and/or at the conclusion of the presentation, click on the "CHAT" button at the bottom of the screen to type in any comments or questions.

#### **Trouble Shooting:**

If the presenter and slides are blocked by the "windows" of other participants, click on "hide video panel", on the TOP RIGHT of your screen.

If you find that you've reached the "waiting room" and can't get into the meeting, or if you've been dropped from the meeting, PLEASE contact Jeff Valfer, identify yourself and we'll try to make sure you can join.

\*More specific info (including ID NUMBER and PASSCODE) will be sent in an email to all RROS members between now and the meeting time.

## UPCOMING RROS FIELD TRIPS & EVENTS

### RROS Field Trips in the Time of COVID-19

This last year, due to Covid, we required field-trip attendees to make reservations in order to limit the size of the group. We will not be doing that this year, 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.

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

#### Sunday - April 10, 2022, Pine Flat Road with Scott Carey , 8:00AM – 1:00PM

**Note this trip is on a Sunday, not our usual Saturday.** Scott will lead us on a trip along Pine Flat Road. Possible birds are Mountain Quail, Purple Martin, Bell's Sparrow, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and California Thrasher. Meet at 8:00AM at the bottom of Pine Flat Road, near the intersection with Red Winery Road (38.6759087, -122.8076800). Bring lunch, fluids, layered clothing. Please note there are no bathrooms. This is a narrow winding road, watch for bicyclists. If you have been fully vaccinated for Covid, you are encouraged to carpool with other birders who have also been fully vaccinated, since fewer cars on this road the better.

To RSVP or more information contact Malcolm Blanchard (707) 480-2210

#### Sunday - April 10, 2022, YAMS Field Trip: Doran Beach and Bodega Bay , 8:30AM – 1:00PM

Meet at 8:30am at the Rich Stallcup Viewing Platform in Doran Regional Park. We will focus on shorebird identification to begin with and then explore various areas around the harbor.

Directions here: <http://parks.sonomacounty.ca.gov/Visit/Doran-Regional-Park/>

To RSVP or more information, contact Lisa Hug.

#### Saturday - April 23, 2022, Mitchell Canyon, in Contra Costa Co., with Rick LeBaudour, 8:30AM – 1:00PM

Rick LeBaudour will lead us on a tour of Mitchell Canyon, a great spring birding spot on the north flanks of Mt. Diablo. Hoped-for birds include Hammond's Flycatcher, Calliope Hummingbird, Hermit Warbler, and Nashville Warbler. The wildflowers and butterflies should be beautiful. Meet at 7:30AM at Lakeville Park & Ride at Lakeville Highway and Highway 101 (38.2341361, -122.6190167) for carpooling. Or meet at 8:30AM at the Mitchell Canyon Parking Area (37.9206335, -121.9412004) which is located on Mitchell Canyon Road off of Clayton Road northeast of Walnut Creek. Bring binoculars, sunscreen, water, food for lunch, and hats. This is a walking field trip, about 3 miles. To RSVP or more information contact Malcolm Blanchard (707) 480-2210.

Let Malcolm know if you plan to meet at Mitchell Canyon. Heavy rain cancels.

#### Sunday - May 1, 2022, YAMS Field Trip: Santa Rosa Creek Trail and 9th Street Heronry , 8:30AM – 1:00PM

Meet at 8:30am at the trailhead on Willowside Road. We will meet Brian Webb and celebrate spring on this gorgeous lowland riparian trail. Then, we will observe the nesting behavior of herons and egrets at the large rookery on Ninth Street in Santa Rosa. To get to the parking area use this address 655 Willowside Rd (Summerfield Waldorf School) but park on the side of the road, not the school parking lot. Bring binoculars, field guide, water, snacks, lunch and layered clothing.

To RSVP or more information, contact Lisa Hug.

#### Wednesday - May 11, 2022, Annual Spring Outdoor Meeting Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, 8:30AM – 1:00PM

This is our final Membership Meeting for 2021-22 to be held live, COVID restrictions permitting. Meet at Sugarloaf at the picnic tables on the right, just past the entrance kiosk and across from the main parking lot. Come earlier for late afternoon birding and/or stay after dinner for a late evening bird walk out towards the observatory. Outdoor dining at the picnic tables near the first parking lot. BYO - everything. Only share safely!! If desired, bringing your own camp chair and/or blanket to help with safe distancing. Even though we'll be outdoors, social distancing and mask-wearing will be strongly encouraged to the extent practical.

**Where: Sugarloaf Ridge State Park. Directions: From Hwy 12 East, about 6 miles beyond Calistoga Road, take a left on Adobe Rd. Follow Adobe Rd to its end in the park. Main parking lot is on the left, past the entrance kiosk. What to Know: State Park entrance fee is \$10 per car / \$8 for senior or student. Covered with California State Parks pass.**



# Field Trip Reports

## King Ridge Road Field Trip



On Saturday, March 26, 12 RROS members ventured up King Ridge Road in north-west Sonoma County. At the bottom of the road, we encountered a variety of early spring migrants; including Orange-crowned Warbler, Warbling Vireo, Cassin's Vireo and Pacific-slope Flycatchers. We also encountered a few Red-bellied Newts and numerous species of wildflowers.

We made our way up to the upper stretches of the road where we had an eventful lunch hour. We easily heard Sooty Grouse and Jeff Valfer spotted one in a Douglas Fir Tree that we all had a chance to see through scopes. It was an amazing sighting! We also heard Northern Pygmy-owl and some of the group got to actually see one!



We didn't stop there as we wandered even further up to the top of King Ridge where we had excellent views of Lark Sparrows. We also added Wilson's Warbler to our spring migrant list and watched a "mixed flock" of Pacific orange-tips, Margined Whites and Mylitta Crescent butterflies flitting and feeding over a patch of yellow flowers.

All in all, we had a very fun day with lots of wildlife encounters, beautiful scenery, and enjoyable company!

-Lisa Hug

The Sonoma State University Department of Music presents

# New Music Sonoma

Featuring music by guest composer/guitarist John Mayrose and SSU faculty member Thom Limbert, New Music Sonoma (LOOPS!) will be devoted to presenting electroacoustic music that features cyclical sounds, repeated grooves, and live looping.

Limbert's works on the program incorporate field recordings gathered as part of Soundscapes to Landscapes ([soundscapes2landscapes.org](http://soundscapes2landscapes.org))

Friday, April 1 | 7:30pm  
Schroeder Hall | Green Music Center

**ADMISSION: \$12**



Get Tickets: [tickets.sonoma.edu](http://tickets.sonoma.edu) | 707.664.4246 | Free Parking

SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC [music.sonoma.edu](http://music.sonoma.edu)

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Limbert's works on the program incorporate field recordings gathered as part of Soundscapes to Landscapes, a NASA-funded SSU research project currently focused on mapping bird diversity in Sonoma County. ([soundscapes2landscapes.org](http://soundscapes2landscapes.org))

# OBSERVATIONS

February 21, 2020 to March 20, 2022 // COMPILED BY DAVID A. HOFMANN

Species	Date/s	Location	Cty	#	Observer/s
Mandarin Duck	03/17/22	Santa Rosa Creek--Spring Lake Village	SON	1m	ShS photo
Redhead	03/03-08/22	Hudeman Slough	SON	3	GaP, JeV, EuH, DoK, EIC, CoH photos
Black Scoter	02/22/22	Goat Rock	SON	4	JeL
Long-tailed Duck	03/09/22	Bodega harbor	SON	1f	EuH
Sooty Grouse	03/18/22	Stewart's Point-Skaggs Spgs Road	SON	1f	SeR photo
Slaty-backed Gull	03/16/22	Shollenberger Park	SON	1	NoA, ScS, LuC photos
Glaucous Gull	02/25-03/20/22	Shollenberger Park	SON	1	JeV, GaP, DoL, ElG, EvV, JoS, AnY, ScC, PeC, AIW, NoA, EuH, CoM photos
Lesser Black-backed Gull	03/02/22	Shollenberger Park	SON	1	NoA
Least Bittern	03/20/22	Ellis Creek WRF—pond "D"	SON	1	EuH, DoK, GaP, RAR, AIW heard only & taped
Red-shouldered Hawk X Common Black Hawk	02/21-03/20/22	Santa Rosa Creek Trail west of Willowside Road & Delta Pond	SON	1	BrW, ElG, MiA, DaL, NiB, LeC, RoO, CaR, DaF, CaP, PaD, AnL, Ma&LuS, LuC photos
Barred Owl	02/24-03/01/22	Armstrong Woods State Park	SON	2	DeH, ToB, DaM, MaD photos
Northern Saw-whet Owl	03/02/22	Sebastopol---Coffee Lane	SON	1	DaM, SaM
Short-eared Owl	03/12/22	Skagg's Island	SON	1	KeW photo
Lewis's Woodpecker	03/13/22	Pepperwood Preserve---Betchel H.	SON	1	TiE
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	02/21-23/22	Guerneville--River House	SON	1f	ScC
Rock Wren	02/26/22	Hudeman Slough	SON	1	DoK
Scaly-breasted Munia	02/22-03/16/22	Laguna Farm---Sebastopol	SON	3	EIC, CoH, DaS, JoS photos
Nashville Warbler	02/22-23/22	Diekmann's Store	SON	1	ScC, WivD, JiC

MacGillivray's Warbler	03/13/22	San Pablo Bay NWR— Reclam Rd	SON	1m	LuC, LuS
Summer Tanager	03/13/22	Santa Rosa--- Place to Play Park	SON	1f	DoK

### OBSERVERS FOR THIS PERIOD

Michael Abrams • Noah Arthur • Nicole Barden • Tom Baxter • Scott Carey • Lee-Hong Chang • Peter Colasanti • Lucas Corneliussen • Elizabeth Crouthamel • Jim Crumpler • Willem van Dam • Patricia DiLuzio • Marjorie Dunham • Tiffany Erickson • Dawna Foreman • Eli Gross • Connie Haile • Derek Hamiester • Eugene Hunn • Donald Kirker • Donna Lamke • Ann Linder • David Lumpkin • Jeremy Leslie • Samantha Marois • Dan Maxwell • Colin Meusel • Rob Oconnell • Carla Parkinson • Garrett Pierce • Carolyn Rich • Ruth A. Rudesill • Sean Rune • David Sexton • Josh Snead • Scott Sorby • Lucas Stephenson • Mark & Lucas Stephenson • Shirley Sugawara • Eva Valfer • Jeff Valfer • Brian Webb • Kenneth Weidner • Alan Wight • Andersen Yun

## My 2021 Big Year ....

by Lisa Hug

On January 1, 2021, I decided to try for 300 species in Sonoma County in one year. I have never done a big year of any kid in the past. I was unemployed because of the pandemic so I had more time than usual on my hands. There were quite a few rare birds around at the beginning of the season, and the most birds that I have ever seen in a year in Sonoma County was -292 in 2015.

I've always thought that doing a big year was a solitary endeavor, but I was amazed at how many people were backing me and supporting me, helping me and cheering me on. I might have been doing the birding, but it was really a team effort. From Brian keeping me informed on the current treasures at Santa Rosa Creek to Scott telling me about the Tundra Swans and his sapsuckers. Ruthie, Tony, and Gene were always careful to make sure that I knew the latest gems in the county. Josh would invite me to his home to look for his myriad of "good" birds. And, I can't even mention everyone that was behind me and making sure that I knew what was around. The Valfers and the Blanchards were there. Mike Parmeter and David Hofmann were constantly asking about my current totals and planning what I should be going for next. And I am sure there are others who have helped me that I have forgotten to mention.

I started the year by dutifully going around the county ticking off Hammond's Flycatcher, Phainopepla, Short-eared Owl, Sandhill Crane, Mountain Bluebird, Burrowing Owl, Swamp Sparrow, Glaucous Gull and Long-tailed Duck. This was going to be a GREAT year! I could feel it. The winter was going pretty well as I also made sure to look for the harder to find waterfowl: Snow Goose at the Salmon Creek mouth, Barrow's Goldeneye at Port Sonoma, and Black Scoter at Goat Rock Beach (thanks Alan). Another highlight was "stumbling upon" an adult Harris's Sparrow in Freestone. Josh found a second immature one and lots of people got to go see them and enjoy the birder-friendly people of Freestone and the great bakery!

With such a great winter, I couldn't wait for Spring migration! But there were only a few highlights of the season. One of these highlights was an over-wintering Summer Tanager found by Peter Dellavalle. That was a lovely bird and number 210. One beautiful spring day, as I was atlas my Marin County Breeding Atlas Block, I received a call from Alan Wight. He and Don Kirker were looking at a Black-chinned Sparrow on Pine Flat Road. I had never seen one in the county. I was lucky the next day as a group of birders and I were able to relocate the bird. Hurray! I also located a Solitary Sandpiper at the Sebastopol Community Center and scraped up a Wandering Tattler off the coast.

Last year was also a stellar year for pelagics! Lucas Corneliussen organized some pelagic trips in the spring. These haven't been done in years because the weather is usually foul and they get cancelled. Dan Nelson also organized some offshore pelagics in addition to the fall pelagics that Gene had already organized through RROS. I accumulated an unbelievable list of pelagic birds for the year, including Parakeet Auklet, Hawaiian Petrel, Murphy's Petrel, and Cook's Petrel. Three Pterodroma species in one year!

Summer was interesting as I needed to go to Ohio and visit my family. I really needed to see my 93-year-old Mom. During my first visit, Don Kirker texted me a Laughing Gull at Bodega Bay. One day later, Noah Arthur found a Franklin's Gull on Doran Beach. There wasn't anything I could do from Ohio, and those birds didn't stay around. When I returned, I did manage to find my own Semipalmated Sandpiper. During my search over about 10 days for that bird I only saw Elegant once. They were unbelievably scarce that summers.

Then came August: the gateway month to fall migration. I was happily birding in Tolay Regional Park hoping for a rare Hummingbird when Ruthie calls to tell me about a Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher that she and Don Kirker just saw at Santa Rosa Creek. Whoosh! I was there! I spent from about 5 hours there, knowing that I was going on a pelagic the next day, and then to Ohio again to visit family for about 10 days. Luckily toward evening the young birders located the bird, and had pointed out the chip note of the Hooded Warbler as well. Just before sunset a group of about a dozen birders photographed the Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher that had been found a few days earlier by Brian Webb and Liza Vekoney.

It was a long 10 days in Ohio. I was watching reports from Sonoma County every day. Lots of people were reporting birds that I "needed." My first day back I went out to Owl Canyon and there was a MacGillivray's Warbler sitting up in a bush that I could see plainly from my car. They are never that easy! Then other birders arrived and we had fun and went around to the Doran Entrance Pond where Tony Briggs found a Ruff just moments before I arrived. My luck was still going strong when I read the report of Ron Storey's report of a Least Bittern at Ellis Creek. Oh Happy days.

I was psyched for fall migration. I scoured the coast several days in September looking for any vagrants. I came up empty-handed on most of these ventures. I was lucky to be at Campbell Cove when Zac and Theodora found a Northern Waterthrush. Then, while seeking rarities in the Bridgehaven area, I received a text from Dan Nelson that there was a Magnolia and a Blackburnian Warbler at Owl Canyon. Of course, I abandoned my own search and went straight down to Bodega Bay. It took what seemed like forever for these skulking birds to show up. I only got brief views of the Magnolia Warbler but the Blackburnian turned out to be a real show-off. At one point it was directly over my head. I had to lay on the ground to watch it. The next fall migrants that I saw were a Tropical Kingbird that Tony Briggs found and a Palm Warbler found earlier in the day by the Sneads and Valfers at the Bodega Marine Lab. I shared this moment with the YAMS during our Bird a thon. I picked up my last owls of the year during the Rich Stallcup Point Blue Bird a thon with the Gray Jays with Northern Saw-whet and Spotted Owl. A Green-tailed Towhee at the Terry Loveton and Jeff Johnson private residence in Barnett Valley was a great addition to my growing list. Thank you Terry and Jeff!

In early November, I was sitting at 298 after seeing a Red Phalarope at Bodega Bay. Now I really wanted anything: a Rough-legged Hawk, a Ross's Goose, a Lewis' Woodpecker, anything and I was just birding frantically to pick anything up.

Then, as I was sitting in my car at Port o Bodega, eating some junk food, I caught a glimpse of a weird gull. I didn't think much of it at first but then I kept staring at it. The features were going through my brain and I thought "the features fit Slaty-backed Gull (SBGU), but it can't be a SBGU because it is sitting only 50 feet from me in plain view. One has to go to Goat Rock Beach on the coldest, windiest day of the year and sort through thousands of California Gulls to find a SBGU in Sonoma County. So, I photographed it. My first photos were backlit because that was the best I could do. But eventually I was able to get it in decent light and get pretty good photos. I even got a crappy photo of the "string of pearls." I was still scared to call this bird a SBGU, even though the features fit and I couldn't make it a pale-eyed Western or a weird California or a Lesser Black-backed or even a dreaded hybrid. It only fit SBGU. So, I sent the photos to a few experts and they agreed – straight-forward SBGU. It stayed for 2 more days and people got better photos and really got the string of pearls documented and the molt pattern and everything. That was my favorite bird of the year.

I was then sitting at 299. I didn't want to have to hike up Mt. St Helena because I wasn't sure that my knees were up to the downhill portion of the trek. I didn't want to stand on that cold dike at Shollenberger Park and hope for the Taimyr race of Lesser Black-backed Gull that I affectionately call "Noah's Gull" to come in at dusk and sit in amongst a thousand similar looking gulls and try to pick it out in the half light. My best bet was to find a Rough-legged Hawk. Birders were reporting it at Jenner Headlands. I drove into the parking lot one morning and there it was. Beautiful! 300! I did it. I wasn't out to shatter any Sonoma County record because I knew that I wasn't up for it. I just wanted to personally have a year where I saw 300 birds in Sonoma County. I was satisfied.

And then Lucas Stevenson discovered the longspurs out on Skaggs Island Road. He invited to me to come with him and his Dad one morning and we did manage to see a Lapland Longspur in a scope. That was 301 and it felt good to get an "extra" one.

I am so grateful to the Stephensons for helping me see that bird because .....It wasn't extra! As I was going over my 2021 list, I noticed that I had Short-tailed Shearwater on it. I never saw Short-tailed Shearwater. It was seen on 2 pelagics that I was on, but I couldn't say that I actually saw one, and I forgot to delete it from a shared list. I had to cross it off. I was paralyzed with uneasiness. It took me a couple days to get up the nerve to double-check the rest of the list. and I am totally relieved to say that I did NOT have to cross any more birds off of the list. So, I ended up with exactly 300 birds on the list. But, I will say that I slowed down in late December. I was exhausted and I turned my attention more to participating in the local Christmas Bird Counts and the White-sparrow project that Dave Shuford and I are organizing.

*I will not do this again.*

- Lisa



## ABOUT RROS

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

In compliance with local Sonoma County Covid-19 guidelines, meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month October through April. Location TBA. The most current info can be found at [www.RROS.org](http://www.RROS.org).

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

Annual dues are \$20 per individual, \$25 per family, and \$5 per student. Dues can be sent to RROS Treasurer Rob O'Donnell, 421 St. Mary Place, Santa Rosa, CA 95409

## RROS STAFF

### OFFICERS

President: Eugene Hunn .....enhunn323@comcast.net // 707-981-7301  
 Vice President: Jeff Valfer .....jhvalfer@gmail.com // 415-524-3741  
 Secretary: Peter Colasanti.....peter\_colasanti@yahoo.com // 707-780-7296  
 Treasurer: Rob O'Donnell.....robodonnell1@outlook.com // 707-694-9776

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Field Trips: Malcolm Blanchard.....mab@mabco.com // 707-480-2210  
 Observations: David A. Hofmann .....nnamfoh@comcast.net // 707-546-0325  
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 Kite Tales: Eva Valfer.....evaantonvalfer@gmail.com //415-524-3222  
 YAMS Coordinator: Lisa Hug.....lisahug@sonic.net // 707-535-9370  
 Membership: Rob O'Donnell.....robodonnell1@outlook.com // 707-694-9776  
 Website: TBD.....

Kite Tales deadline is the 20th of each month. Observations may be sent to David A. Hofmann.  
 All other content may be sent to Eva Valfer.