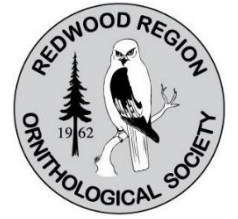
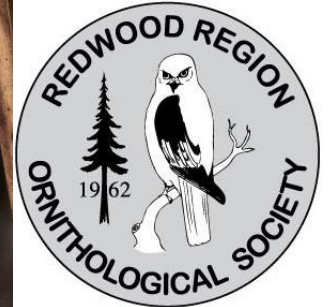


# KITE TALES



A monthly newsletter from the Redwood Region Ornithological Society

Sora  
December 12, 2023  
Ellis Creek  
Betsy Crouthamel photo



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

The most current info on meetings, field trips, presentations, and more can be found at [www.RROS.org](http://www.RROS.org).

If you missed a previous program, video recordings are available our website at [www.RROS.org/virtualmeeting](http://www.RROS.org/virtualmeeting).

Or just click on <https://youtube/FAew-4z09v0> for the YouTube recording of the RROS presentation last month.

**\*\* At the February meeting we will be voting on this year's charitable donations made by RROS. The following organizations have been nominated to receive \$500 each: Bird Rescue Center of Sonoma; Tierra de Aves, Mexico; El Encanto, Colombia; Sonoma County Parks Foundation. \*\* The board is open to suggestions for other worthy recipients of our support.**

## Next RROS Meeting

**February 14, 2024 @ 7 PM**

All Zoom This Month

(to accommodate church schedule)

### Zoom Link for the Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87012594653?pwd=dDAf1FKOmMSBHp8Y87JpxZ1BoDQiLo.1>

Meeting ID: 870 1259 4653; Passcode: 398696

## What's On The Program? Abstract

**Ruthie and Bob will delve into several aspects of bird vocalizations** including anatomy specific to making sounds, physics of sound transmission, and which birds vocalize & how. Plan also to learn about current recording & editing tools, broader field sound recording initiatives, and resources to additionally inform you.

### Ruthie Rudesill's Bio

A lifelong nature lover with a degree in Wildlife Management Biology, Ruthie became a serious birder during college. Blessed with great hearing, bird calls and song has always been in the background. Night sounds have become a special interest along with a love of owls.

### Bob Hasenick's Bio

From humble farming roots to a career in testing high technology products, Bob enjoys a wide range of endeavors. Always interested in sound and stereo, he studied acoustics in college, has been known to read 600-page tomes on audio listening & technology, and completed Cornell's Sound Recording Workshop with Carol. At 39 and holding, he still finds the learning curve for bird vocalizations quite steep.



**A note from your Membership Chair, Nancy Hunn**

**Welcome New Members**

**Martha Collins, Amanda Krauss, Linda Davis-Reed, Randy Reed**

If you have not yet returned your membership renewal, please send it in ASAP.  
\$25 for Individuals, \$30 for families, \$5 for students.



## RROS Coastal Gull Study Field Trip January 20, 2024

Gene Hunn met an intrepid group of dedicated gullers at Doran at 8 AM in defiance of a threatened atmospheric river. Our group eventually swelled to 11, as some were initially dissuaded by a passing early shower. Bodega Harbor was calm and dry by 8 and gulls trickled in to loaf off the Stallcup viewing platform as the tide began to drop. They were soon joined by the usual horde of Marbled Godwits, with a mix of Whimbrel, Willets, Sanderlings, and Dunlin. Flyover Glaucous-winged and Thayer's tantalized. Then we had intimate visits with roosting Short-billed, née "Mew," Gulls, maybe 200, with convenient comparisons with Ring-billed, a few butter-billed Westerns, a single "staring" Herring, and a Western x Glaucous-winged hybrid. Most were adults, but a few early cycle individuals challenged our ID skills. A walk up the outer strand added California Gulls and an Iceland Gull of the Thayer's persuasion, plus a Common Murre and a White-winged Scoter, both deceased.

We then headed north to the Salmon Creek surfing beach before the tide dropped too far.

Perhaps 1000 gulls rested on the sand and bathed in the estuary. As luck would have it, a rain squall came ashore, soaking birders and their gear, impeding careful study. Sharp-eyed Brendon spotted a small gull with the roosting flock, which took off heading in our direction, landing in the river near at hand. Gene yelled out "KITTIWAKE!" given it was a small gull with a heavy black collar, a first cycle pelagic gull driven ashore by the storm. The Black-legged Kittiwake was in view for a few minutes before drifting downstream and apparently flying back out to sea, as we could not relocate it. The Salmon Creek flock proved to be primarily California Gulls, saviors of the Mormon colonist in Utah, according to legend. However, there was an informative mix of Western, Glaucous-winged, and Herring Gulls, a Thayer's or two, as well as hybrids of Glaucous-winged with Western (from the Olympic Peninsula) and with Herring (from Prince William Sound in Alaska). A second, more powerful squall came ashore, and we retreated to our cars and headed north to Jenner and the Russian River mouth, a favorite gull hang-out. The rain tapered but at Jenner the gulls were swirling high overhead. The reason proved to be the BOBCAT staking out the beach, though the loafing harbor seals ignored it. We returned to Bodega Harbor at low tide, Garrett put icing on the cake by relocating the Long-tailed Duck that had been previously reported at the Porto. It spent 90% of its time under water but did reward patience. Eight species of gulls plus two hybrids. Then home to a warm bath.

Thayer's Iceland Gull, 1<sup>st</sup> cycle, Porto Bodega, 1-20-2024, Scott Morriscal photo



## RROS FIELD TRIPS, UPCOMING

*We do not require 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, carpooling is encouraged. For more information or to RSVP, contact **Garrett Pierce (415) 260-7406**.*

**February 10, 2024, Hudeman Slough**, south of the town of Sonoma, near Skaggs Island, is a rich birding area hosting many waterfowl after the fields are flooded. Join us for a survey of the area led by **Malcolm Blanchard**. A great many species of ducks along with owls, shrikes, and raptors are expected. We'll meet at the parking area (38.2211039, -122.3953507) off Ramal Road at 8:00AM. No bathrooms. Feel free to pack lunch. For more information or to RSVP, contact Garrett Pierce – [garrettallenpierce@gmail.com](mailto:garrettallenpierce@gmail.com) or (415) 260-7406.

## YAMS FIELD TRIPS WINTER/SPRING 2024

### **Saturday February 10 - Arrowhead Marsh 9am to 3pm**

Meet at the Lakeville Park and Ride at the west side of Rte. 101 at Rte. 116 at 9:00am. We will carpool to Arrowhead Marsh in Oakland. A predicted noontime 6.7 king tide at noon here should make conditions great for viewing rails. Soras might be seen swimming in channels and hopefully we will be able to see Ridgway's Rails and if we are incredibly lucky – a black rail might show itself. It is also a good time to look for Nelson's Sparrows. Of course, even if nothing unusual gets seen, it is always fun to explore a new place. Bring binoculars, field guide and/or app, lunch, water, snacks and of course layered clothing.

### **Sunday March 17 - Giacomini Wetlands 8am to 1pm**

Meet at the Lakeville Park and Ride at the west side of Rte. 101 at Rte. 116 at 8:00am., or meet at the corner of C and Third Street in Point Reyes Station at 8:30. We will carpool to Point Reyes Station and plan to arrive at the wetlands around 8:30am. This is a restored tidal marsh at the mouth of Lagunitas Creek which historically had been a cattle grazing pasture. We may find a variety of waterbirds and landbirds as we explore this interesting habitat. We will have a picnic lunch at the Bear Valley Visitor Center. We plan to be at the park and Ride around 1:00pm. Bring binoculars, field guide and/or app, lunch, water, snacks and of course layered clothing.

### **Saturday May 18 – Riverfront Regional Park (7821 Eastside Rd, Healdsburg) 8:30am to 12:30pm**

Meet in the parking lot at Riverfront Regional Park We will hike around the two lakes and enjoy the spring migrants that this rich forest habitat provides for. Bring binoculars, field guide and/or app, lunch, water, snacks and of course layered clothing.

## YAMS Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas block surveys:

### **Sunday April 14 - Outer Point of Point Reyes National Seashore 7:30am to 1:00pm**

Meet at the Lakeville Park and Ride at the west side of Rte. 101 at Rte. 116 at 7:30am. We will travel together to explore our block on Outer Point Reyes. Liz is a member of the steering committee for this important research project and she will be sharing the project protocols and we will see what our block holds for us in bird diversity. It will be great to be part of this important research project for Marin County! Bring binoculars, field guide and/or app, lunch, water, snacks and of course layered clothing.

### **Sunday, May 5 - Outer Point of Point Reyes National Seashore 7:30am to 1:00pm**

Meet at the Lakeville Park and Ride at the west side of Rte. 101 at Rte. 116 at 7:30am. We will travel together to our Breeding Bird Atlas Block and collect real data for the project! Don't forget your data sheets! Bring binoculars, field guide and/or app, lunch, water, snacks and of course layered clothing.

### **Sunday June 2 - Outer Point of Point Reyes National Seashore 7:30am to 1:00pm**

Meet at the Lakeville Park and Ride at the west side of Rte. 101 at Rte. 116 at 7:30am. We will travel together to our Breeding Bird Atlas Block and collect real data for the project! Don't forget your data sheets! Bring binoculars, field guide and/or app, lunch, water, snacks and of course layered clothing.

## THE SONOMA VALLEY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

By the time you read this, the Sonoma Valley CBC will also be history. Rain or shine, 25 teams will survey nine major sectors of this count circle, centered at Grove and Carriger northwest of the town of Sonoma. RROS recently joined the Sonoma Ecology Center as co-sponsor. The count was started in 2005 by Tom Rusert and Darren Peterie. Gene Hunn took over the coordinating role in 14 when Tom and Darren left town. Next year we welcome a new coordinator, Suzie Silverman, as Hunn enjoys semi-retirement.

### Sonoma Valley CBC 12-29-2023, summary and analysis

Total count-day count of 162 species (plus three more count week) was solid, above average. However, the total number of individuals of all species, 43,562, was a record low. This low count of individuals seems due to the fact that two thirds of our local species (111) were down from their long-term averages, with 21 species at or near record low numbers. Contributing here were quite modest numbers of such usually abundant species as Brewer's and Red-winged Blackbirds (2680 vs. 10,700), robins (3370 vs. 5241), Yellow-rumped Warblers (859 vs. 1489), Dark-eyed Juncos (818 vs. 2124), and American Crows (366 vs. 936). Nevertheless, a third of our species (51) showed gains from their long-term averages.

Among the winners this year were several waterfowl species, perhaps thanks in part to the rain we dodged on count day. It was good weather for ducks: Northern Pintails (3600 vs. 263 average) was the careful count by Liz Lewis from the Viansa overlook. Northern Shovelers (970 vs. 390) were also up substantially. Less dramatic increases were noted for Cinnamon Teal, American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, and Hooded Merganser. Scaup, however, were nearly non-existent. While some gulls were up (Mew, Thayer's, and Herring), common species such as Ring-billed and California Gulls were down substantially, as were Killdeer. However, Black-bellied Plovers and Western Sandpipers were up, though Dunlin, avocets, and dowitchers were down. No obvious explanation here.

It was not a notable "finch year." Pine Siskins were up (162 vs. 17.0), but finches generally, as well as many woodland species, were low. American Goldfinches and Purple Finches were notably scarce. Varied Thrushes, Brown Creepers, Hutton's Vireos, Bushtit, Hermit Thrushes, California Towhees, Song Sparrows, and chickadees were all down. The spotty weather contributed here. This likely also suppressed raptor numbers, as all diurnal raptors were below average.

Species that appear to be favored by climate change here are the swallows, Tree, Violet-green, and Barn Swallows are now expected all winter and did not disappoint this year. Mourning Doves (slightly up at 291) out-numbered their new neighbor, the Eurasian Collared-Dove (down at 75) (supposedly an introduced species, which I dispute). Our introduced Mute Swans, Wild Turkeys, and Mandarin Ducks were off somewhat. Bald Eagles -- seven this year, - - continue their dramatic recovery.

Notable misses included white geese, Eurasian Wigeon, Spotted Sandpiper, American Bittern (count week only), and California Thrasher. The Glaucous Gull and Swamp Sparrow present the week before eluded detection. Notable rarities found included a persistent Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in Temelec, a Lesser Yellowlegs near Wingo, a Townsend's Solitaire up Cavedale Road, and a Western Tanager count week. Otherwise, the usual suspects.

Gene Hunn, CBC compiler

# PHOTO GALLERY: SOME RECENT HIGHLIGHTS



**White-throated Sparrow, Spring Lake, January 8, 2024, Rob O'Donnell photo**



**Horned Lark, Donnell Ridge, December 29, 2023, Betsy Crouthamel photo**



**Mandarin Duck, near Sonoma, December 29, 2023, Betsy Crouthamel photo**



**Pygmy Nuthatch, Spud Point, Bodega Bay, December 31, 2023, Betsy Crouthamel photo**



**Nashville Warbler, Diekmann's, Bodega Bay, December 31, 2023, Betsy Crouthamel photo**

**Observations December 21, 2023 to January 20, 2024 compiled by DAVID A. HOFMANN**

Species	Date/s	Location	Cty	#	Observer/s
Tundra Swan	12/21/23	Doran Regional Park	SON	1	ScM photo
Tundra Swan	12/27/23	Gualala Point Regional Park	SON	1	KaW photos
Redhead	12/28/23	Shollenberger Park	SON	1m	EuH
Mandarin Duck	12/29/23- 01/08/24	Sonoma---Denmark Road	SON	3m 1f	EuH, EIC, CoW, JiC, JoR photos
Harlequin Duck	12/24/23	Sea Ranch---Wild Moor Reach	SON	1m	AaH
White-winged Scoter	12/24/23- 01/02/24	Bodega Bay harbor	SON	1m	BDP, JEP, EIS, LiH, ScM photo
Red Knot	12/31/23	Doran Regional Park	SON	1	RuR
Wandering Tattler	12/24/23	Bodega Head State Park	SON	1	BDP, JEP, EIS
Cassin's Auklet	12/23/23	South Salmon Creek Beach	SON	1	C.Beck photos
Glaucous Gull	12/22- 25/23	Shollenberger Park	SON	1	Ma&LuS, DaE LeR, JoR photos
Glaucous Gull	12/27- 29/23	Doran Regional Park, Bodega Head State Park	SON	1	DoM, MaH
Least Bittern	01/18/24	Ellis Creek WRF	SON	1	EIC
Common Black X Red- shouldered Hawk hybrid	12/22/23- 01/15/24	Santa Rosa Creek Trail west of Willowside Road Delta Pond	SON	1f	BrW photo
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	12/23- 27/23	Guerneville---Riverside Drive	SON	1	ScC photos
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	12/26/23- 01/09/24	Temelec---Mission Drive	SON	1m	EuH, AbB, EIC, GaP, mob photo
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	01/18- 19/24	Oakwild Lane	SON	1m	BaK, MaG, ScC photos
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	01/18/24	Spring Lake Regional Park	SON	1m	ChR photos
Townsend's Solitaire	12/29/23	Sonoma---Cavedale Road	SON	1	DaL, MiC
Scaly-breasted Munia	01/11- 15/24	Shollenberger Park/ Ellis Creek WRF	SON	4	PeC photos; RoO, BoH, MalB
Orchard Oriole	01/11/24	Petaluma---Daniel Drive	SON	1f	JoM photos
Northern Waterthrush	12/24/23	Bodega Dunes Campground	SON	1	BrO
Black & White Warbler	01/01/24	Willow Creek Road	SON	1	JoS
Nashville Warbler	12/23/23- 01/18/24	Bodega Bay---Diekman's Store	SON	1	MaB, RuR, ScC, mob photos
Blackburnian Warbler	01/09- 18/24	Ragle Ranch Regional Park	SON	1	JoS, LiH, MalB, GaP, mob photos
Palm Warbler	01/05- 15/24	Valley Ford wetlands	SON	1	GaP, CoW, EIC, MoF mob photo

**Observer/s:** Mario Balitbit, C. Beck, Malcolm Blanchard, Abbie Birmingham, Scott Carey, Michael Carozza, Peter Colasanti, Elizabeth Crouthamel, Jim Crumpler, Daniel Edelstein, Mookie Fudenberg, Mary Grishaver, Martha Harbison, Lisa Hug, Eugene Hunn, Bob Hasenick, Aaron Hirsh, Barbara Kendrick, David Leland, Joy Mander, Doug McEachem, Scott Morrival, Rob O'Donnell, Brook O'Connor, Benjamin D. "Mike" Parmeter, John E. Parmeter, Garrett Pierce, Levi Rehberg, Jonathan Rehberg, Christopher Reiger, John Robinson, Ruth Rudesill, Josh Snead, Mark & Lucas Stephenson, Ellen Strauss, Brian Webb, Corinne Williams, Karen Wilkinson, mob = many observers

## ABOUT RROS

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

Annual dues are \$25 per individual, \$30 per family, and \$5 per student.

Membership forms can be found at [www.rros.org/join-rros](http://www.rros.org/join-rros)

Dues can be sent to RROS Membership Chair, Nancy Hunn, 1504 Smokey Mtns. Dr., Petaluma, CA 94954

**Visit us on the web at [www.RROS.org](http://www.RROS.org)**

### RROS STAFF: OFFICERS

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Kite Tales deadline is the **20th of each month**, August through April.

Observations may be sent to David A. Hofmann at [nnamfoh@comcast.net](mailto:nnamfoh@comcast.net).

Send all other content to KT Editor Gene Hunn at [enhunn323@comcast.net](mailto:enhunn323@comcast.net)



