

KITE TALES

a monthly newsletter from the
Redwood Region Ornithological Society

Volume 57 Number 7

March 2022



Eurasian Wigeon 📷 Dennis Luz



Next RROS Meeting
March 9th // 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 February's "Birdability" Presentation can be found on the *Zoom Meetings* page!

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SAVE THE DATE

March Virtual Membership Meeting :Wednesday, March 9th , 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) 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: Aztec Ethno-ornithology” with Gene Hunn, RROS President and Emeritus Professor, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Washington

Ethno-ornithology compares how ordinary people name, classify, and understand the birds they encounter in their daily lives. This topic integrates biological systematics, ecology, anthropology, linguistics, and, in the case of the Aztecs, an historical perspective.

From Gene: I recently rediscovered a copy of Book 11 of the Florentine Codex, part of a cultural encyclopedia dedicated to “Earthy Things,” one small part of a vast compendium of Aztec cultural knowledge compiled by Aztec scribes circa 1560, written in their native Nahuatl language. The work was commissioned and edited by the Franciscan Friar Bernardino de Sahagun, founder of the Colegio de la Santa Cruz, an institution devoted to the instruction (and indoctrination) of the children of the defeated Aztec nobility.

Chapter 2 of this book treats of the birds known to the Aztecs. An effort in 1940, by the Mexican biologist, Rafael Martin del Campo, to identify 133 birds named and described, sometimes briefly, in other cases in considerable detail in this book, is often on target, but quite often clearly in error. We now know much more, both about Mexican birds and about the Nahuatl language. I will illustrate the surprising sophistication of Aztec bird lore, the roots of their fascination with feathers, and note as well their occasional fantastical ideas. I will analyze the challenge of equating Aztec concepts with the species concepts of today.

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) 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 or text at (707) 480-2210.

Saturday - March 12, 2022, Huichica Creek, with Lucas Stephenson, 8:00AM – 12:00PM



Huichica Creek is a unit of the Napa-Sonoma Wildlife Area in Napa County on the border with Sonoma County. It hosts an abundance of wintering water fowl. We will be led by Lucas Stephenson, one of the top young birders in the North Bay. We will meet at the parking lot at Huichica Creek at the end of Buchli Station Road (38.2147295, -122.3318977). Drive past Hudeman Slough on Ramal Road. Once in Napa County turn right on Las Amigas Road, then right on Buchli Station Road.

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

Sunday - March 13, 2022, YAMS Field Trip: Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility, 8:30AM – 1:00PM



NOTE: March 13 is the first day of Daylight Savings Time!!! Be sure to reset your clock ("spring forward")

Meet at 8:30am (Daylight Savings Time) at the Ellis Creek Parking lot at 3890 Cypress Drive in Petaluma. This is always a good place to get great looks at waterfowl, and it sometimes produces little unexpected surprises. Bring binoculars, field guide, water, snacks, lunch and layered clothing. If time allows, we may also visit Shollenberger Park.

To RSVP or more information, contact Lisa Hug.

Saturday - March 26, 2022, Kings Ridge Road with Lisa Hug, 8:00AM - 1:00PM



In order to minimize the number of cars on this narrow road, the trip is limited to 12 people. You must RSVP. First-come, first served, with preference given to RROS members. Details to follow.

Lisa Hug will lead us birding the remote northwestern corner of Sonoma County. Bring lunch/snacks, fluids, and folding chairs (for the lunch stop). No bathrooms once we start up the hill. Possible Sooty Grouse.

To RSVP (REQUIRED) or for more information contact Malcolm Blanchard (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 (REQUIRED) or for 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.



Bring Lunch



Bring Water



Restrooms Not Available



Restrooms Available



Parking Fee



Hats for Sale!

New hats are here! Available in Khaki, Navy, and Sage.

\$15 for in person purchases or \$20 to have them mailed.

Send an email to robodonnell@gmail.com to get yours!

Field Trip Reports

San Pablo Bayshore (Highway 37 adventures!), January 22, 2022, RROS field trip, Gene Hunn in the lead.

The day proved bright, sunny, and unseasonably warm. We had a good crowd, some 25 eager birders. We met for our first stop at the abandoned boat harbor at the mouth of the Petaluma "River" under the highway bridge at the Marin County line. Tide was out; mud was in. We blanked on our hoped-for Ridgway's Rail but after hiking the tidal margins east we enjoyed close views of several shorebirds (lots of Willets, Black-necked Stilts, a few Semipalmated Plovers, plus seven Long-billed Curlews up close and personal) and waterfowl (75 Canvasbacks, for example), plus the first of three Bald Eagle sightings (maybe the same bird?). A Snow Goose with honkers at the harbor was a nice surprise.

We then drove east to Reclamation Road and hiked up to the dike. The tide was turning, pushing large numbers of peeps into good positions for viewing: avocets (200), Dunlin (500), Least (300) and Western Sandpipers (200), close enough for detailed study of their differences. Four Black-bellied Plovers, another curlew, two Marbled Godwits, three Willets, and a Greater Yellowlegs rounded out the list. Ducks galore: American Wigeon (50), pintails (300), Green-winged Teal (500), Canvasbacks (200 more), and four lonely Ruddy Ducks. These numbers are rough approximations, as there were likely quite a few more. Two white pelicans circled overhead, joining some 20 Turkey Vultures, six Red-tailed Hawks, a harrier one or more Bald Eagles, and a Peregrine Falcon in hot pursuit. We inspected the shacks near the parking lot and were jumped by two Great Horned Owls. The nearby fields held flocks of dozens of pipits, plus perhaps a Horned Lark or two.



Our lunch stop was a bit further east at the Tubbs Island trail head turnoff. The tide was just right for mud flat viewing. Another Snow Goose. Eight hundred avocets, 50 Black-bellied Plovers (up close), and more of the usual suspects. Another harrier, another Peregrine, and a Tree Swallow or two. At this point our observer numbers shrunk to the hard core who persisted to the last stop, the Skaggs Island road, open to just foot traffic. This mile hike crosses three counties: Solano, Napa, and, finally, viewed from atop the Sonoma Creek bridge, Sonoma. The flooded fields were alive with the usual shorebirds. One hundred and sixty Black-necked Stilts plus 80 Long-billed Dowitchers stood out. Sparrows, a Marsh Wren, and a yellowthroat added a bit of diversity to our trip list, heavy on the water birds.

-Gene Hunn

Hudeman Slough , February 12, 2022, RROS field trip, led by Malcolm Blanchard

February 12, fourteen birders converged on Hudeman Slough, south of the town of Sonoma to survey the abundant bird life there. We were richly rewarded. The day started cool, but quickly warmed to spring-like conditions. Right out of the parking lot we flushed several Wilson's Snipe. Ascending the dike around the first holding pond, we had great scoping views of ducks to the southwest. Lots of Northern Shovelers, American Wigeons, a few Northern Pintails, and Black-necked Stilt. Continuing to the second holding pond, Annette Roth found the "bird of the day". On the railroad tracks to our left was a Rock Wren, working its way east as we approached. This was only the second eBird record for this bird at Hudeman—the last being in 2017. Everyone got great looks. We continued around the second pond, seeing Forster's Terns, Common Mergansers and a Lesser Scaup there, to the huge flock of ducks in the flooded field to the south. We were looking for Redheads that had been seen there the week before among the many hundreds of Northern Pintails, Northern Shovelers, and Ruddy Ducks. Lots of scoping produced no Redhead, but we were able to find a Eurasian Wigeon. All the while, a Peregrine Falcon was periodically strafing the ducks, providing great views and drama. At the end of the causeway, we saw two Great Horned Owls in a barren willow tree. Based on their relative size, they were probably a male/female pair. On our way back to the parking lot, a few Horned Larks flew by, adding to the unusual birds. At the end of the day, we had seen 69 species. To see the full list, go to "<https://www.rros.org/ebird>". A beautiful Sonoma County outing.

-Malcolm Blanchard

OBSERVATIONS

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

| Species | Date/s | Location | Cty | # | Observer/s |
|--|--------------------|--|-----|-------------|--|
| Tundra Swan | 01/23-29/ 22 | Laguna Lake/ Spring Hill Road | SON | 3 | LuC, Ma&LuS, ReC, FrT, BoB, MaF |
| Tundra Swan | 01/29-02/ 03/22 | Valley Ford Road | SON | 2 | LuC, Ma&LuS, ReC, RoS photos |
| Redhead | 01/23/22 | Bodega Bay--- North Shore | SON | 1 m | ScM |
| Redhead | 01/23/22 | Ellis Creek ponds | SON | 1 m | LuC, Ma&LuS, ReC |
| Redhead | 02/09/22 | Hudeman Slough | SON | 1 m f | GaP photo |
| Black Scoter | 01/28/22 | Sea Ranch Bluffs | SON | 2 m | LuC, Ma&LuS, ReC |
| Long-tailed Duck | 01/28-30/ 22 | Doran Regional Park | SON | 1 | JoS, MaD photos |
| Barrow's Goldeneye | 01/23/22 | Petaluma River | SON | 1 m | LuC, LuS, ReC |
| Barrow's Goldeneye | 02/12/22 | Skaggs Island Road | SON | 1 m | Ma&LuS, BruW |
| Common Poorwill | 01/28/22 | Willow Creek Road | SON | 1 | LuC, Ma&LuS, ReC photos |
| Sandhill Crane | 01/29/22 | Laguna Lake/ Spring Hill Road | SON | 1 | BoB, MaF |
| Glaucous Gull | 01/21/22 | Bodega Bay--- Porto Bodega | SON | 1 | Br&TiB |
| Glaucous Gull | 01/21/22 | Jenner Beach | SON | 1 | ReC |
| Glaucous Gull | 02/18/22 | Shollenberger Park | SON | 1 | ScD photos |
| Lesser Black- backed Gull | 01/26-30/ 22 | Shollenberger Park | SON | 1 | LuC, Ma&LuS, ReC, JaH photos |
| Black-legged Kittiwake | 01/23/22 | Bodega Head State Park | SON | 2 | LuC, Ma&LuS |
| Black-legged Kittiwake | 02/11/22 | Salt Point State Park-Stump Beach | SON | 1 | IsR photos |
| Red- shouldered Hawk X Common Black Hawk | 02/08-20/ 22 | Santa Rosa Crk Trail west of Willowside Road | SON | 1 | BrW, DaT, JoS, DaF, CaR, DaB, DoK, MaG, ScC, LaN, MiG, StP, LiV photos |
| Barred Owl | 02/04/22 | Sonoma Developmental Lands | SON | 1 | EuH photos |
| Barred Owl | 02/07/22 | 9643 Pocket Canyon Hwy | SON | 1 | JoS |
| Short-eared Owl | 01/23/22 | San Pablo Bay NWR---Tubbs Isd | SON | 1 | KoD, LyW photo |
| Yellow- bellied Sapsucker | 01/21-02/ 20/22 | Guerneville--- River House | SON | 1 f | ScC, Ma&LuS photos |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|-----|-----|---|
| Red-naped Sapsucker | 01/27/22 | Guerneville---River House | SON | 1 | ScC photos |
| Lewis's Woodpecker | 01/29-30/22 | Faught Road | SON | 1 | DaB photos |
| Lewis's Woodpecker | 02/02/22 | Hwy 128---Hanna Winery | SON | 1 | LuC, ReC photos |
| Lewis's Woodpecker | 02/14/22 | A Place to Play Park | SON | 2 | JeV photos |
| Rock Wren | 01/29/22 | Carmody Road | SON | 1 | LuC, Ma&LuS, ReC |
| Rock Wren | 02/12/22 | Hudeman Slough (RROS field trip) | SON | 1 | AnR, MaB, Je&EvV, PeC, CrR, RoO, GaP, CoL, BaT, CaM, PeA photos |
| Red Crossbill | 02/16/22 | Sebastopol---Burnside Road | SON | 1 | ChW, BrS, JeB fly-over |
| Swamp Sparrow | 01/23/22 | Bridgehaven-Jenner Pond | SON | 1 | LuC, LuS, ReC |
| Swamp Sparrow | 01/29/22 | Ellis Creek ponds | SON | 1 | LuC, Ma&LuS, ReC photos |
| Swamp Sparrow | 02/07/22 | Petaluma---Willow Creek Court | SON | 1 | LuC |
| Clay-colored Sparrow | 02/08-16/22 | Petaluma yard | SON | 1 | LeR, Ma&LuS, LuC, EuH, GaP, DaF photos |
| Nashville Warbler | 01/22-02/0322 | Bodega Bay---Diekmann's Store | SON | 1 | Br&TiB, ScC, JoS, MaB, RoS, DeF |
| Nashville Warbler | 02/13/22 | A Place to Play Park | SON | 1 | ScC |
| Nashville Warbler | 02/16/22 | San Antonio Road | SON | 1 | LuC |
| Summer Tanager | 02/05-14/22 | A Place to Play Park | SON | 1 f | JoS, GaP, Ma&BeB, DaT, LiV, Ma&LuS, LuC photos & taped |
| Scaly-breasted Munia | 01/22-02/20/22 | Sebastopol---Laguna Farm | SON | 8 | Ma&LuS, JoS, GaP, DaF, CaR, WeD, DaL, JiC photos |



Jeff & Saul Valfer on a sunny day at Tolay

OBSERVERS FOR THIS PERIOD

Peggy Albright • Dave Barry • Jessie Barry • Brian & Tim Barton • Bob Battigan • Malcolm Blanchard • Malcolm & Beatrice Blanchard • Scott Carey • Peter Colasanti • Reef Comer • Lucas Corneliusen • Wendy Dandridge • Matt Davis • Scott Dietrich • Konshau Duman • Mary Anne Flett • Dawna Foreman • Dea Freid • Mike Gragg • Mary Grishaver • James Holmes • Eugene Hunn • Donald Kirker • Coby LaFayette • David Leland • Larry Nigro • Rob O'Donnell • Levi Rehburg • Scott Merrill • Carolyn Metz • Steve Pearce • Garrett Pierce • Isabelle Reddy • Carolyn Rich • Annette Roth • Craig Roth • Josh Snead • Mark & Lucas Stephenson • Lucas Stephenson • Ron Storey • Brian Sullivan • Francis Toldi • David Tomb • Barbara Tomin • Jeff Valfer • Jeff & Eva Valfer • Liza Vekony • Brian Webb • Bruce Webb • Lynette Williams • Chris Wood

Birds of a Feather Flock Together

Short Bios of Birders , By Beatrice Blanchard

One wouldn't expect this New England youngster, oldest of the 8 bilingual siblings of French-Canadian parents, in love with hunting and fishing and birding as a tyke in the rural hinterlands, to find himself in the cross-hairs of 20th century historical world events, but that is how it unfolded.

As a kid in rural New Hampshire, **Andy Lacasse's** first children's book was the Golden Book of Birds, and he was thrilled at night to hear the Whippoorwill in the distance. In 1958, his parents hauled all 8 children cross-country from New Hampshire to Petaluma in a Plymouth Station wagon where Dad had a new job at the Mare Island shipyards in California. In the West, he was overjoyed to see the Redheaded Woodpecker, and, on Western Avenue in Petaluma, his first White-Tailed Kite.

Like the fabled Forrest Gump, Andy Lacasse has popped up in 20th century historical junctures on at least two occasions. After completing St. Vincent's High School in Petaluma at age 18, Andy joined the Military, trained at Fort Ord, went to "Jump School" and joined the 101st Airborne Division as a "jumper". It was in this role as a paratrooper that Andy found himself armed and in a flak jacket in October 1962, on an airplane headed south, though the soldiers on that troop plane had no idea where they were going. After a long bumpy flight, Andy looked to his left through the little port window out over the water, and immediately recognized what he was seeing. It was the island of Cuba below and he and his buddies were on their way to invade that island nation. Just then and without warning, Andy says, the plane slowed and reversed direction, heading back home. "I guess Kennedy and Khrushchev had a talk or something, so we came home" says Andy.

In another historical incident occurring around the very same time, Andy Lacasse was among the federal troops sent by President Kennedy to Jackson, Mississippi to accompany student James Meredith as he law-

fully enrolled in the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss). Thousands of armed protestors circled the University calling Andy and the other US troops vile names, and rioting against the U.S. Marshals, National Guard, and troops sent by President Kennedy. Meredith enrolled.

Later in Sonoma County, Andy was introduced by his sister to a local girl. He took her to a rodeo, and later married Sebastopol native Raeann and they raised their two kids in Petaluma where he was a Mail Carrier for 27 years.

Over the years Andy and Raeann have birded the tropics – Belize, Costa Rica were "mind-boggling"- and north to the Yukon and North Alaska where they swam with Polar bears and Belugas (apparently a human female humming will draw the Beluga close to investigate). A favorite? Perhaps the Northern Hawk Owl, or the Great Grey Owl.

Petaluma Wetlands Alliance grew out of the Friends of Petaluma River, an educational promote opportunities for the education of children through public tours and investigating the wetland habitat. Andy has helped with over 20 bird boxes, many for owls, at Ellis Creek and Shollenberger Wetlands.

Andy and Raeann live on a 2-acre property where they have viewed 129 bird species. Recently, Andy was on his back on the ground surveying the undersides of his 20 tomato plants when he reached for an unrecognizable object, and suddenly halted, realizing it was a female Quail on the nest. He silently withdrew, and the tomatoes can wait until the 12 – 18 eggs have hatched and fledged.

A Fathers' Day gift from son Todd, an Engineer, and Aimee who works for US Bank, has proved entertaining and valuable. The gift was a motion-activated backyard cam, from which Andy has viewed Grey and Red Foxes, racoon, possum, jack rabbits, black-tailed deer, barn owls, badgers, etc. The perfect gift. ■





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.

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

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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.