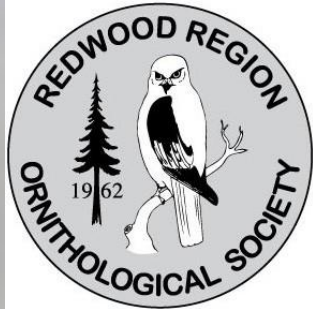


KITE TALES

A monthly newsletter from the Redwood Region Ornithological Society



Yellow-headed Blackbird
Campbell Cove on Bodega Harbor,
October 8, first noted by Dan Nelson.
(his photo)

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.

Next RROS Meeting, Nov. 8 @ 7 PM
United Methodist Church,
1551 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa

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Our next Membership Meeting for 2023-24

Where: United Methodist Church, 1551 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa, in the Fellowship Room located on the west side (left) of the church.

Zoom Link for the Join Zoom Meeting:

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

.1

Meeting ID: 870 1259 4653

Passcode: 398696

Arthur Dawson:

Vegetation Trends and Cycles in Fire-Prone-Landscapes of Sonoma, Lake, and Napa Counties.

Arthur Dawson enjoys exploring the local landscape through science and art. As an historical ecologist he has collected oral histories from local elders and contributed field and archival research to regional restoration efforts. His unique approach integrates field work, oral histories and archival research to tell the story of places and people at every scale, from small parcels to entire watersheds.

An independent consultant, Arthur has worked with the Sonoma Land Trust, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Pepperwood Preserve, CALFIRE, the Sonoma County Water Agency, Sonoma Ecology Center, UC Berkeley and many other agencies, organizations and individuals.

As a writer, Arthur has published several articles in scientific journals and written three local bestselling books: *The Stories Behind Sonoma Valley Place Names*, *On Foot in Sonoma* (with Rebecca Lawton) and most recently *Where the World Begins: Sonoma Mountain Stories and Images*. He has also published a book of poems through Finishing Line Press, *Saying this Place Right*. His column on Sonoma County place names appears monthly in the *Press-Democrat*.

Currently serving as Chair for the non-profit Sonoma Mountain Preservation, Arthur lives with his wife Jill in Glen Ellen.



A note from your Membership Chair, Nancy Hunn:

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



RRROS 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**

November 4, 2023, 8:00AM – 1:00PM, Tolay Regional Park, Craig Roth

We'll spend the morning with Craig Roth exploring the trails around Sonoma County's largest regional park. Notable sightings may include Loggerhead Shrike, Prairie Falcon and many other Raptors. Meet at the Tolay Regional Park parking lot (38.2050058, -122.5210195) (\$7 fee, or County pass). For more information or to RSVP, contact Garrett Pierce (415) 260-7406.

December 2, 2023, 8:00AM – 12:30PM, Ellis Creek, Peter Colasanti

Ellis Creek is one of the best birding hotspots in central Sonoma County, where many rare birds have been documented over the years. We will be led by Peter Colasanti, who knows Ellis Creek and the Petaluma Wetlands like the back of his hand. Expect waterfowl, shore birds and much more (perhaps the Least Bitterns will still be around?) Meet in the parking lot off Cypress Drive, Petaluma (38.2268466, -122.5850014) at 8:00AM.

January 20, 2023, 8:00AM – 1:00PM, Gulls of Bodega Bay and Jenner, Eugene Hunn

Who here doesn't want to improve their Gull identification skills? To help us further our Gull understanding, Gene Hunn will lead us around Bodega Bay (Doran Spit, Gaffney Point, Salmon Creek) and Jenner in search of all the many different species that congregate around the bay in the height of winter. Meet at Doran Regional Park at the parking lot across from the Rich Stallcup Platform (38.314249, -123.044244) at 8:00AM. Bring lunch. Carpooling is strongly encouraged. For more information or to RSVP, contact Garrett Pierce (415) 260-7406.

UPCOMING YAMS Field Trips (for youth and guardians only)

All field trips meet at 8:30 am at the site unless otherwise noted. Most are half-day excursions ending at 12:30pm with a group lunch and field trip bird list compilation. As always, bring binoculars, water, snacks, lunch, plenty of layered clothing, and field guides.

Sunday, November 5, 8:30am to 12:00pm – Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility. This will be a leisurely walk around the ponds at Ellis Creek in Petaluma (3800 Cypress Drive). There should be a good variety of ducks and possibly even an American Bittern. Bring binoculars, field guide or app, water, snacks, and lunch.

Sunday, December 3, 8:00am to 12:30pm - Hamilton Wetlands and Pacheco Pond. Hamilton Wetlands is a newly restored saltmarsh recovered from the old military airport in Novato. There is always a wide diversity of shorebirds and waterfowl. We will hike from the overlook located by Hangar 7 on Hangar Avenue to Pacheco Pond and back. This is a flat, approximately 2-mile hike. We will meet at the Park-and-Ride at the corner of Hwy. 101 and Lakeville Hwy. at 8:00am and carpool to the overlook on Hangar Avenue. Bring binoculars, field guide or app, water, snacks, and lunch.

Sunday, December 17 – Santa Rosa Christmas Bird Count YAMS will have a new territory this year! It will include the Laguna Water Treatment Plant on Llano Road. This is a more rural territory than our traditional West Santa Rosa territory. All present and former YAMS are welcome to participate. We can make this a YAMS reunion event. Meeting place and time TBA. Definitely an all-day event with optional CBC dinner in the evening.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS. Mark your calendars.

Cheep Thrills CBC, Thursday, December 14

Contact Susan Kelly, shastasusan@me.com, 415-497-4240.

Santa Rosa CBC (sponsored by RROS), Sunday, December 17

Contact Gene Hunn, enhunn323@comcast.net.

Sonoma Valley CBC (sponsored by Sonoma Ecology center, Friday, December 29

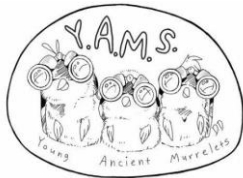
Contact Gene Hunn, enhunn323@comcast.net.

West Sonoma County CBC (sponsored by Madrone Audubon), Sunday, December 31

Contact Dr. Stacy Li, stacyli@sonic.net.

YAMs 2023 Sonoma County Bird-a-Thon

—Aubrey Phipps-Parnay, YAMS Field Columnist.



In the dusky morning glow of October 7th, Clayton, Aubrey, and Bea met with seasoned leaders Liz Lewis and Lisa Hug at the Sebastopol Community Center for our annual Point Blue Rich Stallcup Bird-a-Thon. We were ready for a full birding day ahead and began by walking the Laguna trail. There, we watched some **Snowy Egrets** flap soundlessly over our heads and heard the tenuous fall song of a few **Golden-crowned Sparrows**. **Canada Geese** were already honking noisily in the sky, and we spotted three **Cackling Geese** as well. Point Blue sponsored a bonus challenge for teams to see one mammal, reptile, and amphibian, and we were determined to win the extra \$50. Our first mammal towards the challenge was a black-tailed deer. On the way back, we found the **Barn Owl** (that Bea had noticed flying in when she arrived) huddled in a liquidambar tree.

We all piled into Lisa's car and drove to West County Trail. Foraging by the pond was an immature **Greater White-fronted Goose**, a great first find. Hiking by the treatment ponds, a stunning **Wood Duck** paddled along while a **Spotted Sandpiper** scurried on the bank. We caught up with a flock of **Chestnut-backed chickadees**, a chattering **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, and a **Hutton's Vireo**. A quick stop by Bodega Farm Pond picked up an **American Wigeon** and our first **Turkey Vulture**. By the gate, several banded garden spiders hung in their branch. Lisa braked the car fast and we jumped out. "**Spotted Owl!**" exclaimed Bea. Within a few seconds, there was no doubt. The owl had dark eyes, a round face, and spots on its neck and chest. We couldn't believe our luck! But, before anyone could take a picture, the elusive ghost of the redwoods opened its wings and silently flapped away. We ran after it, leaving the car behind. A truck came up behind us, with some frustrated drivers. We explained that we were birding. The people couldn't have cared less and roared on by. Despite this, everyone was beyond thrilled to see this incredible bird, and full of adrenaline, we set out towards Bodega Bay.

At the entrance to Doran, a couple of **Pintails**, a **Black-bellied Plover**, and dozens of **Marbled Godwits** were in the estuary ponds. We were momentarily stumped by a leucistic Turkey Vulture which, as it wheeled around and showed its white back, appeared to be shapeshifting into a hawk. At the Tides Wharf we saw both **Pied-billed** and **Eared Grebes**. **Porto Bodega** turned out some gull species including **Heermann's**, **Western**, and **Ring-billed**.

Gaffney Point proved worth checking, because we spotted a **Brant** and watched a **Song Sparrow** bathe in the tide pools.

Looking out from Bodega Head, Liz observed a pair of **Black Oystercatchers** while we watched the **Pelagic** and **Brandt's Cormorants** preen themselves on the rocks. Out on the horizon, Bea saw whales spouting which was a welcome sight. Campbell Cove produced a **Pigeon Guillemot**, then we raced over to Owl Canyon, where we saw **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, **Surf Scoters**, along with a few more species. We drove back to Spud Point and all at once Liz saw a kingbird from the car. We turned into the parking lot and identified it as a **Tropical Kingbird**, YAMS' second of the year!

After a few hours of birding on the coast, we started back to Petaluma. Along the way, Carmody Road provided an opportunity to spot **Lark Sparrows** and a quick detour to Browns Lane turned up a **Loggerhead Shrike**, aptly spied by Bea. We reached Shollenberger by sunset, the sun's last rays glinting brightly over the water. Lisa picked out a few **Long-billed Curlews** and Aubrey noticed a **Black-necked Stilt**. Over at our final destination, Ellis Creek, it was a cacophony of thousands of **Red-winged Blackbirds** belting out their song from the bullrushes. At the first pond, an **American Bittern** crouched, camouflaged amid the reeds. In many places, we tried clapping for rails, but the blackbirds' incessant singing was too loud to hear any responses. Staring down into the murky water, we saw a bullfrog, our much-needed amphibian! Finally, as darkness spread and **Black-crowned Night Herons** flew overhead to roost, we heard a **Virginia Rail**. Everyone was satisfied and we walked briskly back. Nearing the parking lot, a car with flashing lights drove around, and closed half the gate. We just made it out just before curfew! At Mountain Mike's, with the parents, we enjoyed pizza and counted up our sightings. The total species was 128! It was YAMS' second highest count ever, and definitely one of the most special experiences for us all.

YAMs Bodega Bay Trip 9/23

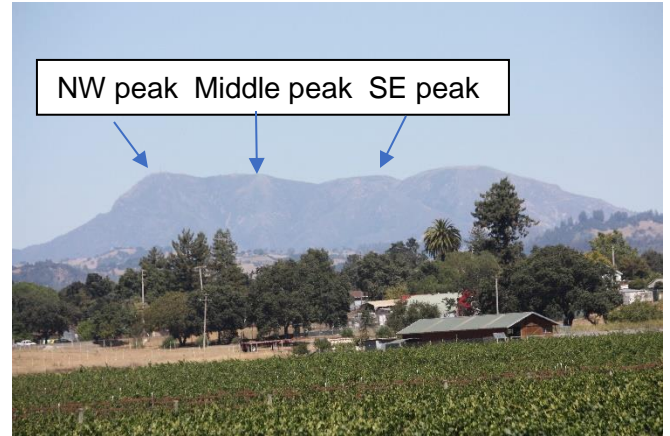
–Aubrey Phipps-Parnay, YAMS Field Columnist

On a crisp, foggy September morning, YAMs met at Porto Bodega. There, we watched a **Western Gull** eating a crab. At Gaffney Point, coveys of quail scurried around, and we spotted a **Tropical Kingbird**! Down by the ocean, we learned how to count large numbers of birds and saw **Snowy Plovers**, **Long-billed Dowitchers**, and **American-white Pelicans**. Owl Canyon had exciting glimpses of a **Magnolia Warbler**. We had lunch at Campbell Cove and looked at the first **Yellow-rumped Warblers** of the season. Afterwards, we drove over to Bodega Dunes Campground. There, we trailed a large flock of **Bushtits**, chickadees, **Hairy Woodpeckers**, six or seven **Townsend's Warblers**, and a striking male **Black-throated Gray Warbler**. From under the branches of a cypress, Clayton noticed a small falcon fly-catching over the campground. Although the light wasn't good enough to identify it, the falcon was fun to watch. YAMs had a rewarding day out at the coast and enjoyed observing the first fall migrants.



Site Guide: Mt. St. Helena summit, a high patch in Sonoma County

Those of us dedicated to enlarging our Sonoma County bird list may look to the summit of Mt. St. Helena as a unique relatively high elevation habitat patch that might harbor a unique species or two (or three). However, getting there is a challenge. Other than by parachute, one either hikes or mountain bikes the trail and fire road from the Robert Louis Stevenson State Park trailhead off State Highway 29 at the summit between Calistoga and Middletown. The high northwest summit (4343 feet above the sea) is a bit over 5 miles and 2119 feet up from here. (I've climbed this route at least 27 times since 2010.) It is not quite Sonoma County's highest point. That honor goes to a spot just west of the summit of Cobb Mountain, visible to the north. One may boil beneath the unremitting sun on a warm summer day or freeze in fog, snow, or high wind in winter. On a clear day from the top one can see (almost) forever (e.g., the San Francisco skyline, the Farallons, Mt. Lassen, and maybe Mt. Shasta). Get an early start and give yourself a solid two hours to the county line, as the first 4.5 miles is in Napa County. The rough, switch-backing trail from the parking lot to the fire road is about a mile. From there you pass three big switchbacks (the first at a popular climbers' rock) before the turnoff to the southeast peak. These slopes have burned repeatedly, so the dominant tree is the knobcone pine, which offers limited shade.



At the turnoff you enter an extinct volcanic crater. It's mostly a level stroll to the final switchback (or take the standard shortcut), then climb back across the east slope of the middle summit (the high point of Napa County, by the way) up to the county line at the middle summit turnoff. You've now reached sacred Sonoma County ground. Follow the road past some impressive sugar pines, then up the last steep pitch to the communication towers on the northwest summit. Take a load off and look around. If fortune smiles, you may hear the descant song of the resident **Canyon Wren** (or maybe not). Back at the middle peak junction you may follow a rough trail north along a sharp ridge through chaparral. To your right is now Lake County, Sonoma County to the left towards Ida Clayton Road far below. The cliffs on your left here is an historic spot for nesting **Dusky Flycatchers**, last seen by yours truly singing on territory June 26, 2017.

A spring or summer visit might offer such resident or nesting species as **Mountain Quail**, **California Scrub-Jay**, **Oak Titmouse**, **Bewick's Wren**, **Wrentit**, **California Thrasher**, **Spotted Towhee**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, **Western Tanager**, **Black-headed Grosbeak**, or **Lazuli Bunting** (favoring burned terrain). **Turkey Vultures**, **White-throated Swifts**, **Common Ravens**, **Violet-green Swallows** (and maybe **Purple Martins**), cruise the summit area. Possible summer rarities include **Rock Wren** and **Bell's Sparrow**.

A winter hike should produce "**Thick-billed**" **Fox Sparrows** (from their nearest nest sites on Snow Mountain, 30 miles north), **Townsend Solitaires**, and a number of potential super-rare county birds, e.g., **Northern Goshawk** (10/29/2012), **Greater Roadrunner** (1/31/2016), **Clark's Nutcracker** (9/23/1990; 11/4-22/2000; 1/15/2015), **Mountain Chickadee** (12/2/1989; 6/5/2013), **Cassin's Finch** (10/31/2022, by Garrett Pierce).

Sonoma Chipmunks are common in the chaparral at the summit, as are Sagebrush Lizards. Colin Meusel led a field trip to the top on October 28. See details next month.

RROS September 24, 2023, Bodega pelagic trip aboard the *New Sea Angler* with captain Rick Powers

Once again the mid-week gales offshore died back and we enjoyed placid seas, even fine tropical skies for the afternoon, out at the continental shelf. We got off to a slow start, bird wise, not counting the hundreds of **Common Murres** and near-shore **Brown Pelicans**. The true pelagics came by in dribs and drabs, a smattering of **Pink-footed** and **Sooty Shearwaters** and **Rhinoceros Auklets**, with just a handful (metaphorically speaking) of **Northern Fulmars**, **Buller’s Shearwaters**, **Black-footed Albatross**, **Sabine’s Gulls**, **Arctic Terns**, and **jaegers** (representing eventually all three species after heated discussion). A **South Polar Skua** or two or three were close enough for the cameras. Numerous lazily foraging **Humpbacked Whales** enlivened our outward-bound slog over Bodega Canyon to the shelf edge.



The captain then changed course to the south towards Marin County waters and the Cordell Banks, cruising just west of the shelf edge. Our first storm-petrel was, I believe, a Black, but soon roosting flocks of hundreds appeared ahead. For the next hour we were never out of sight of masses of storm-petrels, roosting and then bounding and fluttering off. Our master spotter, Steve Howell, examined his flock photos that evening and arrived at estimates of numbers: **Black Storm-Petrels** (2500+), **Ashy Storm-Petrels** (1400+), leavened nicely by smattering of **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels** (80+) and **Wilson’s** (50+). Steve ventured to guess he had never seen quite such a concentration of these “sea-swallows,” at least off our coast. A fine opportunity to get familiar with the distinctive flight patterns of these four species. In the mix we watched a **Brown Booby** cruise by. Then Steve called out LEAST, as a single **Least Storm-Petrel** skittered away off the starboard side, seen by those lucky enough to be looking that way. This Mexican species is very rare north of southern California waters.

While cruising back to port, two cooperative and well-dressed **Tufted Puffins** put on their usual show. Dozens of **Humpbacked Whales** breached and tail flapped en route; **Pacific White Sided Dolphins** came in for a bow-ride; gamboling **sea-lions** porpoised and **fur seals** lounged about in their characteristic “jug-handle” postures, including both **Northern** and **Guadalupe** species. So we closed out another fine day offshore.

Gene Hunn, for RROS Pelagics.



Least Storm-Petrel with Black and Ashy Storm-Petrels west-southwest of Bodega Head, Marin Co., September 24, 2023 Steve Howell photo

PHOTO GALLERY: SOME RECENT HIGHLIGHTS



Northern Parula, Santa Rosa, October 13, 2023, Malcolm Blanchard photo



Orchard Oriole, Rail Ponds, Bodega Bay, September 23, 2023, Dan Nelson photo



Red-footed Booby, off Bodega Head, September 17, 2023, Rick LeBaudour photo



Leach's Storm-Petrel, near Cordell Banks, Marin Co., October 15, 2023, Gene Hunn photo



Tropical Kingbird, Bodega Marine Lab entrance road, October 13, 2023, Gene Hunn photo



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Bodega Head, October 18, 2023, Garrett Pierce photo

Observations: September 21, 2023, to October 20, 2023, compiled by DAVID A. HOFMANN

Species	Date/s	Location	cy	#	Observer/s
Snow Goose	10/04/23	Petaluma---Shollenberger Park	SON	11	PeC photo
Snow Goose	10/05/23	Sea Ranch	SON	1	JaW fly--over
White-winged Scoter	10/19/23	Bodega Head State Park	SON	1	EuH, JoS
Long-tailed Duck	10/19/23	Bodega Head State Park	SON	3	EuH, JoS
Pacific Golden Plover	10/10/23	Jenner Beach	SON	1	JoV photo
Common BlackXRed-shoulderd Hawk	09/24-10/04-15/23	Santa Rosa Creek Trail west of Willowside Road	SON	1f	Brian Webb, ChR photos
Red-naped Sapsucker	10/09/23	Santa Rosa-Administration Drive	SON	1	DaM photos
Lewis's Woodpecker	09/22/23	Kenwood School field	SON	1	RuR
Tropical Kingbird	09/23/23	Bodega Bay---Gaffney Point	SON	1	YAMS, mob photos
Tropical Kingbird	10/07-13/23	Bodega Bay---Spud Point	SON	1	YAMS, mob photos
Tropical Kingbird	10/15/23	Bodega Bay---Doran Reg. Park	SON	1	RoM, RyJ, mob
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	10/18-20/23	Bodega Head State Park	SON	1	ToW, KeM, mob photos
Mountain Bluebird	10/06/23	Bodega Bay---Westside Reg. Park	SON	1	JaT photos
Vesper Sparrow	10/17/23	Petaluma---Twin House Ranch Rd	SON	1	LuC
Orchard Oriole	09/23/23	Bodega Bay---Rail Ponds	SON	1	DaN, RuR photo
Yellow-headed Blackbird	10/08/23	Campbell Cove State Beach	SON	1m	DaN, EuH, CoW photo
Tennessee Warbler	09/29/23	Paulin Creek OSP	SON	1	DaM photos
Tennessee Warbler	10/01/23	Santa Rosa Memorial Park	SON	1	DaM, MaB
Nashville Warbler	10/03/23	Bodega Bay---Bodega Dunes CG	SON	1	ScM
American Redstart	09/29/23	Bodega Bay---Owl Canyon	SON	1	MaB, EIC, CoW photo
Northern Parula	10/08-11/23	Santa Rosa--Administration Drive	SON	1	DaM, WeD, AIW photo
Magnolia Warbler	09/22/23	Campbell Cove State Beach	SON	1	ScM
Magnolia Warbler	09/23-28/23	Bodega Bay---Owl Canyon	SON	1	BrW, YAMS, GaP, mob

Chestnut-sided Warbler	09/21/23	Bodega Bay---Bodega Dunes CG	SON	1	ROD, ToB, SuK
Chestnut-sided Warbler	09/26/23	Sebastopol---Pleasant Hill Road	SON	1	MiC photos
Chestnut-sided Warbler	10/01/23	Santa Rosa Memorial Park	SON	1	DaM, MaBr
Chestnut-sided Warbler	10/07/23	Santa Rosa---Spring Lake Reg. Pk	SON	1	GeG
Palm Warbler	09/23/23	Bodega Bay---Gaffney Point	SON	1	RuR
Palm Warbler	09/24/23	Bodega Bay---Rail Ponds	SON	1	ScC
Palm Warbler	09/23/23	Campbell Cove State Beach	SON	1	DaS photo
Palm Warbler	09/30/23	Jenner--hawk watch location	SON	1	MoF, mob
Palm Warbler	10/03/23	Bodega Farm Pond	SON	1	ScM
Prairie Warbler	10/05/23	Bodega Bay---Owl Canyon	SON	1	ScM, JoK, JiK photos
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	09/23/23	Campbell Cove State Beach	SON	1m	DaS photos
Painted Bunting	09/25/23	Maxwell Farms Regional Park	SON	1	MaW, DaB, mob, photos

OBSERVERS FOR THIS PERIOD: mob = many observers, David Benson, Malcolm Blanchard, Matt Brady, Tony Briggs, Michael Carozza, Scott Carey, Lucas Corneliussen, Elizabeth Crouthamel, Wendy Dandridge, Mookie Fudenberg, George Gibbs, Eugene Hunn, Ryan Janke, Jim Kirk, Susan Kirkbride, John Klobas, Roger Marlowe, Dan Maxwell, Keller McDonald, Scott Morrical, Dan Nelson, Rob O'Donnell, Garrett Pierce, Christopher Reiger, Ruth Rudesill, Josh Snead, David Stoltz, Jane Thompson, John Vieira, Brian Webb, James Weigand, Brian Westerhold, Alan Wight, Corinne Williams, Maikel Wise, Young Ancient Murrelets,



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Bodega Head, Rick LeBaudour photos

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 Sugar Loaf Ridge State Park at 5:30 pm.

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

Membership forms can be found at 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

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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.

Send all other content to KT Editor Gene Hunn at enhunn323@comcast.net.

