



# *The Western Grebe*

Redbud Audubon Society, Inc.,

[www.redbudaudubon.org](http://www.redbudaudubon.org)

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## Linking extreme behavior and biodiversity in birds

The Redbud Audubon Society is pleased to host Dr. Daniel Baldassarre at its Jan. 16, 2025 Zoom program starting at 7 p.m.

Dr. Baldassarre is an Associate Professor and Provost Teaching Fellow in the SUNY Oswego Department of Biological Sciences in New York. The title of his program is “Linking extreme behavior and biodiversity in birds.”

“I am interested in animal behavior and biodiversity, and especially love studying birds,” Baldassarre says. To study avian biodiversity, he focused on small populations of birds and looked for connections between extreme behaviors and broad-scale patterns. For example, how does the promiscuous sexual behavior of subspecies of the Australian Red-backed Fairy-wren affect whether or not they will interbreed? Does the Galápagos Vampire Finch’s bizarre habit of

*(Continued on page 2)*



Join us on January 16, 2025, at 7 p.m. for an enlightening Zoom program with Dr. Daniel Baldassarre, Associate Professor and Provost Teaching Fellow at SUNY Oswego.

### REDBUD AUDUBON

#### JANUARY MEETING

Thursday, January 16, 7 pm

*Topic: Linking Extreme Behavior and Biodiversity in Birds*

To register for this Zoom meeting, click link:

[Redbud Audubon Program Registration](https://www.redbudaudubon.org/registration)

Or visit [RedbudAudubon.org](http://RedbudAudubon.org) and click on the registration link

Or scan the following QR code:



# President's Message

by Donna Mackiewicz



Donna Mackiewicz

We have so much to be thankful for as the New Year begins.

Just knowing Lake County bird sighting totals are in the hundreds makes me thankful. Other facts, like our great state having the highest number of bird species, the highest number of endemic species, and the rarest species of any state in the contiguous United States, also bring joy. And we can't forget our state is one of 36 Global Biodiversity Hotspots designated by Conservation International.

2024 Redbud Audubon chapter highlights were presented at the Clear Lake Integrated Science Symposium held last spring. These highlights included doing educational outreach at numerous events, continued collection of fishing line sent on for recycling, and receiving the National Audubon in Action Grant to continue our Western and Clark's Grebes nesting populations monitoring involving high schools and drones.

We couldn't do all this without our tremendous Board of Directors, volunteers, and of course you, our members. Special thank you to Roberta Lyons, Marilyn Waits, Susanne Scholz, Nicola Selph,



*A Peregrine Falcon snacking at the wetlands adjacent to the Clearlake Keys subdivision in Clear Lake Oaks.*

Katherine Lindsley and Cindy Jassar, our board members. You are the backbone that keeps us making positive impacts in Lake County. And special thanks to our webmaster, Bonnie Thompson who continues helping us even after moving to Oregon; Jim Scholz, who has mailed the Redbud Audubon newsletter now for years, and Brad and Kathy Barnwell who do an excellent job of organizing and reporting the annual Christmas Bird Count.

Happy holidays and happy birding!

## Explore avian behavior with Dr. Daniel Baldassarre

*(Continued from page 1)*

drinking blood mean it is on a trajectory to become a new species?

"In the southwestern USA, is the Phainopepla really two cryptic species that breed in different locations at different times of the year? Come to my seminar to find out!" the scientists urges.

Dr. Baldassarre is an Associate Professor and Provost Teaching Fellow in the SUNY Oswego Department of Biological Sciences. He grew up in Tully, NY, received his undergraduate degree at Syracuse University, attended the Cornell Lab of Ornithology for his PhD, and did postdoctoral research at the University of Miami and Princeton University. He has

been fortunate to study birds in Alaska, Namibia, Costa Rica, Australia, The Galápagos Islands, California, and New York.

For more information about his research go to: [www.danbaldassarre.weebly.com](http://www.danbaldassarre.weebly.com) and follow him on Twitter: [@evornithology](https://twitter.com/evornithology).

To register, go to the Redbud Audubon Society's website at [www.redbudaudubon.org](http://www.redbudaudubon.org) and click on the registration link on the home page. If you receive the newsletter by email, you can click on the "Redbud Audubon Program Registration" link on the front page of the newsletter. Please register early, the link to attend will be sent the day of the program.



*Robert Patton and volunteers with discarded fishing line and trash they cleaned from the environment.*

## ***Robert Patton, ultimate volunteer and citizen will be missed by his many friends and colleagues***

*“I heard the wind whisper and the earth sigh; it made my soul smile as I walked by” - Michelle Schaper*



*Robert Patton*

Our friend and long-time dedicated volunteer, Robert Patton, 82, died Nov. 26, 2024 after suffering a massive brain aneurysm. He will be missed by so many. A unique human being, who took joy in music, gardening, saving birds and all things alive.

His two daughters, Cathy and Cheryl survive him. His beloved Teva will live with her best friends, Willie and Karen.

For many years, Rob managed the Community Garden in Lucerne and until recently he coordinated and watered the garden as well as hand-carried water for the Memorial Rose Garden at the Senior Center in Lucerne.

He was one of the founding members of FLOW (Friends of Locally Owned Water).

Since 2013 he was the coordinator for Redbud Audubon's recycled fishing line collection and installed 27 plastic collecting bins at boat launches around the lake. Volunteers continue to collect and recycle the used plastic fishing line to keep it from damaging the lake and the animals that get trapped.

Rob dressed up as a farmer and gave kids tractor rides at the Ely musical events. He was an accomplished guitarist with a beautiful tenor voice. Along with his musical talent he was an outstanding bird photographer.

A good man with a big heart, Rob was always enormously helpful to all his friends and neighbors.

Rob recited the above poem many times when I worked with him at the Lucerne gardens and as our soul smiles at the next wind whisper and earth sigh, we can remember Rob and hope we can mimic his level of volunteerism, dedication and love.

He will truly be missed.



# 2024 Christmas Bird Count preliminary results

*By Kathy Barnwell*

Congratulations to our dedicated and generous birders for participating in Redbud Audubon's 50th Christmas Bird Count held December 14, 2024! The temperatures ranged from 39° to 52°, but heavy rain in the morning, along with light rain and gusty (to 45 mph) winds in the afternoon made count day very challenging.

The preliminary species count is 120, with 15,947 total birds seen by 15 separate groups and 27 participants. This year's species count and total bird count is the 3rd lowest in 28 years. Both 2021 and 2023 had lower counts.

Uncommon birds seen this year are: **Costa's Hummingbird** (1), **Wilson's Warbler** (1), **Chipping Sparrow** (1), **Western Tanager** (1), and **Great-tailed Grackle** (1). High numbers are: **Canada Goose** (450), **American Wigeon** (45), **Mallard** (675), **Double-crested Cormorant** (2,079), **American White pelican** (591), **Turkey Vulture** (161), and **Osprey** (5). Low numbers: There are 44 species I have categorized as 'Low' this year; too many to list. The following are the lowest counts: **Bufflehead** (112), **Great Blue Heron** (24), **Steller's Jay** (4), **California Scrub-Jay** (88), **American Crow** (119), **White-breasted Nuthatch** (18), **Wrentit** (4), **American Robin** (21), **Spotted Towhee** (20), **House Sparrow** (14).

Our official Count Week extended from Dec 11 to Dec 17. Count Week (cw) birds are not a part of our official census data for our count day, but birds seen during the days before or after our count day are recorded on our checklist as "cw". No other information about count week birds is recorded in the CBC database, including the numbers observed or the date seen, but recording them helps us to establish some of the birds that were in the circle and missed on count day. This year those birds were: **Snow Goose**, **Bald Eagle**, **Band-tailed Pigeon**, **Barn Owl**, **Northern Pygmy Owl**, **Merlin**, **Tree Swallow**, **Rock Wren**, **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**, **California Thrasher**, **Bell's Sparrow**, and **Purple Finch**.

We are so grateful for the many long term participants in our count, and also truly appreciate the new members who have joined recently. The importance

of having as many participants and groups covering our count circle is shown by the great bird sightings below. Without all the eyes and ears out there, many of these birds would have been missed. Through tremendous skill, effort and persistence, 6 of our groups were the only ones who reported one or more of the following species:

**Greater White-fronted Goose** (4)  
**House Wren** (1)  
**Lesser Scaup** (6) **Pacific Wren** (1)  
**Common Loon** (2) **Marsh Wren** (1)  
**Sharp-shinned Hawk** (1) **Phainopepla** (1)  
**Western Gull** (1) **Common Yellowthroat** (1)  
**Iceland Gull** (1) **Wilson's Warbler** (1)  
**Great Horned Owl** (1) **Chipping Sparrow** (1)  
**Costa's Hummingbird** (1)  
**Rufous-crowned Sparrow** (1)  
**Red-breasted Sapsucker** (2)  
**Western Tanager** (1)  
**Hairy Woodpecker** (2) **Tricolored Blackbird** (3)  
**Pileated Woodpecker** (1)  
**Brown-headed Cowbird** (2)  
**Prairie Falcon** (1) **Great-tailed Grackle** (1)  
**Hutton's Vireo** (1)

Using preliminary numbers, the top three species this year are:

1. **Western/Clarks Grebe**: 2,575
2. **Double-crested Cormorants**: 2,079
3. **European Starling**: 1,772

We are so grateful for everyone who participates in the count each year, either in a group, or by birding at your own homes. Your willingness to spend many hours birding in the field and more hours at home putting together all your reporting forms is appreciated so much. Your exceptional efforts result in an accurate and complete account of birds located in our count circle year after year.

We hope all participants had a nice day of birding despite the inclement weather, and will plan to join us next year for Redbud Audubon's 51st Annual Christmas Bird Count on **Saturday, December 20, 2025**.

# Why moving firewood is a bad idea

Why is moving firewood such a bad idea? Tree-killing insects and diseases can lurk in or on firewood. These insects and diseases can't move far on their own, but when people move firewood, they can jump hundreds of miles. New infections destroy our forests, property values and cost huge sums of money to control.

The Mediterranean Oak Borer (MOB), *Xyleborus monographus*, is an invasive ambrosia beetle from the Mediterranean region. The insect was first detected in Napa County around 2017-2018 and has since spread to Lake, Sonoma, Sacramento, and several counties in Oregon. MOB primarily targets oak trees (*Quercus* spp.), including confirmed species like valley oaks and blue oaks, but it may also impact many other oak species that have not yet been identified. Early reporting and detection are crucial to protecting our heritage oaks.

MOB tunnels into tree trunks, disrupting water transport and creating pathways to farm the fungus *Raffaelea montetyi*, which it feeds on. This pathogen, to which oaks have no natural resistance, weakens the trees, making them more susceptible to further dam-



age. Repeated attacks by MOB over several years can cause the tree to wilt and die within 3-5 years.

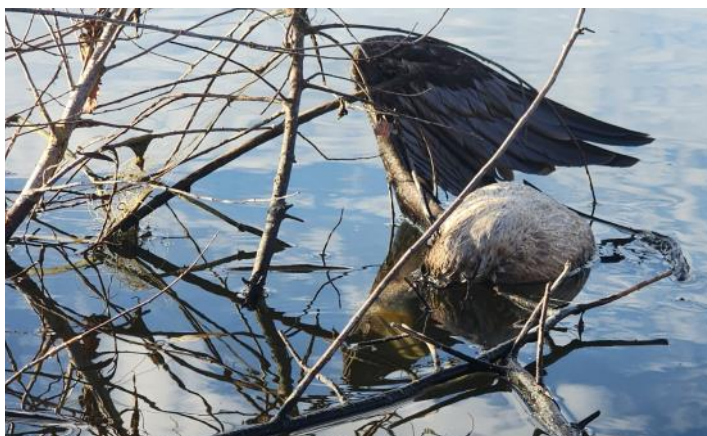
Information courtesy of the Clear Lake Environmental Research Center.

## Redbud Audubon is looking for a project coordinator for our fishing line bin recycling collections

Are you seeking a rewarding volunteer job that lets you set the time and hours? We need someone to help coordinate and collect fishing lines at the 25 fishing bins at boat ramps around the lake. Once collected, sorted and items picked up and tallied they are sent in once a year for recycling.

Anyone can adopt a bin or two to take care of, if you don't have time to do more. Every bit helps protect our birds from ending up tangled and mangled.

Send us an email at [redbud.audubon@gmail.com](mailto:redbud.audubon@gmail.com) or reach out by phone and leave a message at (707) 805-9410.



*A victim of discarded fishing line. The POA collected the bird and line as soon as they were notified. Photo taken by Pam Smithstan as she was kayaking near the CLO Keys.*





*Colusa NWR is always a great place to bird.*

## ***Join Redbud Audubon's annual trip to the Sacramento Valley NWRs***

Everyone is invited to join Redbud Audubon for its annual field trip to two Sacramento Valley Wildlife Refuges (NWRs) on Saturday, Jan. 18. This is a wonderful opportunity to see thousands of migrating water birds and observe them up close. Participants are asked to arrange their own transportation and carpooling as the chapter is unable to provide carpooling because of insurance reasons.

Redbud attendees will meet as a group at 9 am at the Colusa Wildlife Refuge viewing platform. We usually begin by spending 30-45 minutes on the Observation Platform, We will then enjoy the auto tour of the preserve, driving along an elevated road. Most of the ponds along the auto tour are flooded, again offering close views of the birds.

The refuge is located at 2180 State Highway 20 East, Colusa, shortly after Williams. It's a little tricky finding the entrance road; it is the second sign about the refuge. PGE transmission lines near the entrance road will let you know you are in the right area. If you have GPS on your phone, you should be fine.

After the Colusa tour, interested participants will travel on to the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge. Drive north on Interstate 5 about 25 miles and exit at the Sacramento NWR sign. The address is 752 County Rd. 99W Willows, CA. Again, a little tricky if you have never been there, but we can caravan from Colusa. There is a nice observation deck along the six-mile auto tour. There is also a walking trail that will



*A variety of water fowl at the Colusa NWR.*

be open if not weather-impacted. The Visitor Center restrooms and kiosks should be open to the public, and portable restrooms are provided at the Visitor Center parking lot. There is a \$6 fee at this extensive NWR. Bring a lunch and something to share if you like as we usually gather for lunch at the main visitor center.

Need more info? Call Donna at (405) 227-6020 or email [redbudaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:redbudaudubon@gmail.com).



*Cinnamon Teals are often seen on the annual trip to the Sacramento Valley NWRs.*

## 2025 Field Trip Calendar

*Please note: field trips will start at 9 a.m. unless otherwise announced in the newsletter*

**January 18 – 2025** – National Wildlife Refuges – Colusa and Sacramento

**February – 22** – Reclamation Area, Upper Lake

**March – 22** – Clark’s Island and more Clearlake Oaks

**April – 19** – Cache Creek’s Redbud Trail, flats only

**May – 15** – Annual evening picnic at Lakeside County Park

Details for each field trip will be published in the preceding newsletter, including directions and start time if different from 9 a.m. Field trips are weather dependent and will be cancelled if there is severe weather or weather issues make accessibility difficult. Put these dates on your calendar and plan for a fun day of birding with friends!

## REDBUD AUDUBON BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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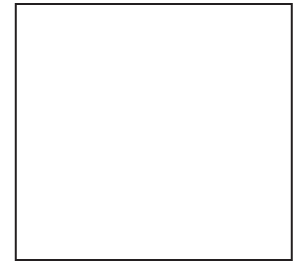
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**Redbud Audubon**  
**PO Box 5780**  
**Clearlake, CA 95422**



**National Audubon/Redbud Audubon**  
**Joint Membership Application**  
**New Member Introductory Rate — \$20 for the first year**

**YES** Enroll me in both the National Audubon Society and local chapter Redbud Audubon. Start my subscription to **Audubon Magazine**, and **The Western Grebe** chapter newsletter.

Check this box only if you wish to receive **The Western Grebe** newsletter by regular mail. Otherwise, it will be emailed to you.

From time to time, National Audubon may share its mailing list with other environmental organizations. If you do not wish to be contacted, please check this box.

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You have the option of joining just the Redbud Chapter by enrolling online at [www.redbudaudubon.org](http://www.redbudaudubon.org).  
Newsletter by email \$25/year; by regular mail \$35/year.

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I would also like to make a donation to the local work of Redbud Audubon. My check is enclosed for \_\_\_\_\_  
\$25 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$75 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Please make check payable to Redbud Audubon Society. Mail your application and check to POB 5780, Clearlake, CA 95422**

**Thank you for supporting Redbud Audubon Society**  
*Connecting People with Nature since 1974*