



The Western Grebe

Redbud Audubon Society, Inc.,

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Status and conservation of the Purple Martin in California

The Redbud Audubon Society is pleased to host Wildlife Biologist Dan Airola who will present an overview of the status and conservation issues facing the Purple Martin in California at the upcoming Feb. 20 Zoom program meeting starting at 7 p.m.

The Purple Martin is recognized as a species of special concern in California. Dan's talk will discuss the unique life history of this largest North American swallow, differences between the eastern and western subspecies and current threats they face. He will also discuss conservation opportunities through nest box programs and plans for the upcoming 2025 statewide status survey.

Dan Airola is a Wildlife Biologist and Ornithologist who has worked for over 40 years in research and conservation of at-risk bird species

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Wildlife Biologist Dan Airola will discuss the Purple Martin in California at the February meeting.

REDBUD AUDUBON

FEBRUARY MEETING

Thursday, February 20, 7 pm

Topic: Status and Conservation of the Purple Martin in California

To register for this Zoom meeting, click link:

[Redbud Audubon Program Registration](#)

Or visit RedbudAudubon.org and click on the registration link

Or scan the following QR code:





Learn all about Purple Martins at this month's meeting. Photo by [jnelson](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Purple Martins are a California species of special concern

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in Northern California. Dan has conducted a research and conservation program on the Sacramento Purple Martin population for over 30 years. He also has conducted several status assessments of the species in California and is leading a statewide status survey in 2025. He has also studied Swainson's Hawks, Turkey Vultures, Ospreys, Bald Eagles, fire-adapted forest species, migrant songbirds, and diving ducks in northern California. Dan also serves the Central Valley Bird Club as a Director, Conservation Chair, and editor of the journal *Central Valley Birds*.

To register for the program, go to the Redbud Audubon Society's website at 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 the program will be sent the day of the program.

Please provide us with your email

A number of our members have emailed us at redbud.audubon@gmail.com to opt in to receive our newsletter, "The Western Grebe" by email as opposed to receiving it by mail.

Not only do you help save a tree, you help us save on expenses and energy in sending it to you by regular mail, and it comes to you in color versus the black-and-white mailed version. If you have been meaning to, but haven't yet done so, take a minute or two out of your time to do so.

Even if you still prefer to receive the mailed version of the "Grebe", we would like to have your email for our records. Once in a while, we send out emails to our members about important events or bird sightings that may be of interest. You are also welcome to email us with any information that you think would be of interest to the membership. Questions requiring expert opinions are forwarded to the appropriate persons.

Also, we rely on our members for whom we have emails to help us with any volunteer efforts that we may have. Often it just means a couple of hours of your time. Whether you have areas of expertise or birding skills that you can share, or are willing to help us with general staffing of booths, setting up booths and transporting materials, we welcome your participation.

So please give us your email address by sending it to redbud.audubon@gmail.com, and, if you wish, let us know in what areas you feel you can help.

President's Message

by Donna Mackiewicz



The Heron Rookery at the Clearlake Oaks wetland is already active.



Donna Mackiewicz

Early nesters

Early nesters are getting a spring-ahead on nesting season. Spring is in the air—wait—it's only winter!

Lake County's experiencing many notable changes with our bird populations this year. We had the third lowest count recorded of bird species and individual birds in 19 years for the Christmas Bird Count conducted in December.

But here is also some good and interesting news. We have 39 pairs of Double-crested Cormorants and nine pairs of Great Blue Herons actively sitting and/or building nests in the rookery in Clearlake Oaks.

A pair of Peregrine Falcons has been spotted and photographed together in Clearlake Oaks. Great Horned Owls have been calling each morning claiming territory in Clearlake Oaks Keys, also.

Behavioral cues to nesting

Behavioral cues to look for birds at the nest are one of birdwatching's highest rewards; but, there is a skill to finding early nesting signs that involve looking for indications that birds are preparing to build nests and lay eggs.

Some signs to look for include:

Female behavior: A female bird may stay in one

area without feeding, or she may arrive with nesting material and leave without it.

Male behavior: A male bird may sing around a territory or copulate with a female in the same tree or nearby. Note: Male Western Meadowlarks usually have two mates at the same time. The females do all the incubating and brooding.

Bird movement: Birds may be seen making a mess or moving vegetation to hide the nest.

Bird sounds: Birds may make extra noises, such as nasal whining from nestlings or scolding from a female.

Avoid disturbing nests, especially during the first few days of incubation, avoid approaching nests when young birds are close to fledging, avoid checking nests during bad weather, or at or after dusk, move slowly through dense foliage when searching for nests and verify the status of a suspected nest site a few hours later, when the female is absent.

Let's take a closer look at the Western Meadowlarks. We can see them singing and feeding in the grasslands in Highland Springs adjacent to the disc golf courses.

Over the last 50 years, its population has fallen by more than 40 percent due to habitat loss, pesticide use, and human activities such as mowing, which, if done during peak nesting season (March-

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President's Message

by Donna Mackiewicz

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August), can wipe out grassland bird broods, endangering our remaining populations.

I urge everyone to take a minute to ask the County to delay low grass mowing near the Highland Springs grass areas near the disc golf course in order to let the grasses go to seed to provide nesting habitat for meadowlarks and all grassland birds. You can do this by emailing Director Upadhyay at water.resources@lakecountyca.gov. This would give Meadowlarks and other birds the chance to fledge. If mowing must be done, have a biologist or even a neighbor walk the area flagging the nests to avoid mowing them over. The best thing the County can do for the birds is delay work in the field for about 25 days after the first nest is spotted.

We are reminded of The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 which is still very much in effect in the US. It states that it is illegal to disturb an active nest, even if it is in an inconvenient location (like a mourning dove nest on construction equipment). But protecting birds, especially those in decline or endangered, is simply the right thing to do.

From a country gal who grew up with the grass fields of Arkansas and Oklahoma, let's help our grassland birds as we protect all of Lake County's amazing birds.



The Peregrine Falcon pair at the Clearlake Oaks wetland. Photos by Donna Mackiewicz.



Western Meadowlark nests and young are endangered by early mowing.

Final Numbers for 2024 CBC

By Kathy Barnwell

The data for the 50th Redbud Audubon Christmas Bird Count has been compiled and reviewed, and the total species seen on Saturday, December 14, 2024 remains at 120. The total birds seen has been adjusted down slightly to 15,824, and our count week birds remain at 12. We also had five Rare Bird Reports: Costa's Hummingbird, Wilson's Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Western Tanager and Great-tailed Grackle.

The weather this year was not ideal for birding, with heavy rain in the morning and light rain and high winds in the afternoon. The bad weather conditions prevented our kayakers from going out on the lake, and it hindered some of our participants. We had 27 participants this year, with only 65.5 total hours. We haven't had participation numbers this low for more than 20 years.

This year we had an unusually high number of Yellow-rumped Warblers (269). Unfortunately, we had 14 species with low numbers: Horned Grebe (2); Clark's Grebe (4); Great Blue Heron (22); Red-shouldered Hawk (8); Belted Kingfisher (6); Nuttall's Woodpecker (14); Stellar's Jay (4); California Scrub-Jay (88); American Crow (119); White-breasted Nuthatch (18); Wrentit (4); American Robin (21); Song Sparrow (9); and Spotted Towhee (19). The California Scrub-Jay, American Crow and Spotted Towhee were all on last year's list of 10 species with low counts. We hope the counts were low this year due to the bad weather and fewer birders, and next year these numbers will rebound.

We appreciate all of the participants who went out this year in poor weather conditions and completed your routes and paperwork. We especially appreciate the pre and post count day birding done by many of the participants. They reported 12 very good birds during count week, showing that we actually had at least 132 species in our count circle from 12/11/24 through 12/17/24.

Please join us next year for the 126th Annual Christmas Bird Count, and Redbud's 51st count, on Saturday, Dec. 20, 2025. Mark your calendar!



Kathy Barnwell viewing the Green-winged Teals.

Field trip to NWRs was enjoyed by small group

Ten Redbud Audubon members enjoyed the field trip to the Colusa and Sacramento NWR's in January. White-faced Ibis were found at both locations along with lots of Snow Geese, White-fronted Geese and some Canada Geese. The consensus was that there seemed to be fewer birds over-all, but it could have been that they were just more widespread.

It was fun to see Blue-winged Teal along with the Green-winged Teal and Cinnamon Teal. Several Blue-winged were spotted at Sacramento. The Stilts were a fun sighting along with numerous Bald Eagles at both spots. Also seen were Common Gallinule and Great Horned Owl.

The Black-crowned Night Herons that usually roost along the creek as you cross over the bridge at the Colusa NWR were still there and as usual were an amazing sight.

Because it was a holiday weekend, the newly remodeled nature/visitor center at the Sacramento NWR was still closed but we remain hopeful to see it some day! The picnic tables have been removed but everyone managed to find a spot to enjoy lunch anyway.



Nicola Selph and Brad Barnwell.



Snow Geese coming in for a landing. Photos by Roberta Lyons



Viewing the Stilts.



Meg Harper, new to our field trips checking out some identifications

2025 Great Backyard Bird Count coming soon!

Calling all community scientists! Feb, 14 - 17 is the 28th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC).

Whether you're a budding birdwatcher or a seasoned bird-count enthusiast, your identification skills can play a crucial role in helping scientists protect birds and their habitats.

Don't miss this opportunity to contribute to the well-being of our feathered friends and the places they call home.

Let's flock together for a meaningful and impactful bird-counting experience!

Over these four days we are invited to spend time in our favorite places watching and counting as many birds as we can find and reporting them. These observations help scientists better understand global bird populations before one of their annual migrations.

If you use the ebird app and list your sightings, they will automatically be sent to the GBBC. If you don't have the app, and don't want to download it and use it, you can report your sightings to Redbud Audubon at redbud.audubon@gmail.com and we will report them.

Welcome new members

Welcome new and returning members: Ann Nolasco, Clearlake; Diane Anthony, Clearlake Oaks; Arlene Rankine, Kelseyville; Jill Saylor, Nice; Jeannette Knight, Cobb; and Diana Hamilton-Smith, Lakeport.

Join us for a field trip to the Reclamation Area on Feb. 22

All are welcome to join Redbud Audubon for a field trip to the Reclamation Area near Upper Lake on Saturday, Feb. 22. Attendees are asked to meet at the Upper Lake Park, at 575 East Highway 20, west of the Running Creek Casino at 9 a.m. Please don't be late. After meeting, the group will caravan to the Reclamation Area.

The walk will be on flat ground (for the most part). We never know what we will see, but it's a fun area to visit and an enjoyable walk with friends.

Legislative support needed

Some of our members who are also members of National Audubon may receive email from National on legislative issues that affect our birds. National Audubon (as well as California Audubon) makes it easy to click on a link to locate your representatives in Congress and their email. Your voice is important! Our voices together can make a difference. Redbud Audubon forwards pertinent legislative notices via email to you. We hope you will not mind if you receive them both from National Audubon and us. The protection of our bird life is extremely important.

Audubon memberships explained

Just a quick reminder that you have a choice between two types of membership. Most of you are members of National Audubon and are assigned by National to our Redbud Audubon chapter. We offer chapter-only membership for which you ***must enroll via the internet.***

Visit our website at www.redbudaudubon.org and click on membership for further details.

Also, as a reminder, if you are receiving this newsletter by regular mail and are open to receiving it by email, you can save the chapter significant printing and mailing costs by emailing us at redbud.audubon@gmail.com and letting us know.

If you prefer to receive the newsletter by mail, please consider donating \$10 - \$15 to Redbud Audubon to defray printing and mailing expenses.

2025 Field Trip Calendar

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

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!



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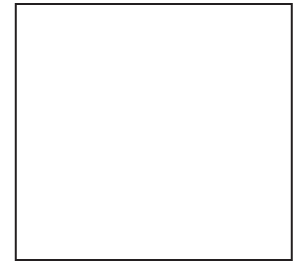
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YES Enroll me in both the National Audubon Society and local chapter Redbud Audubon. Start my subscription to **Audubon Magazine**, and **The Western Grebe** chapter newsletter.

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.

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

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