KITE TALES

A monthly newsletter from the Redwood Region Ornithological Society

Next RROS Meeting
May 10 @ 5:30 PM

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.

Violet-green Swallow Spring Lake Regional Park Photo by Barry Samuel

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SAVE THE DATE!!

May Membership Meeting: Wednesday, May 10th, 5:30 pm
Annual Spring Outdoor Meeting Sugarloaf Ridge State Park

This is our last Membership Meeting for 2022-23. Meet at Sugarloaf at the picnic tables, just past the entrance kiosk, on the right and across from the first (main) parking lot. Come early for late afternoon birding and/or stay after dinner for a late evening bird walk out towards the observatory. Outdoor dining at the picnic tables starting around 5:30-6. BYO - everything. Share safely! If desired, bring your own camp chair and/or blanket.

Where: Sugarloaf Ridge State Park.

Directions: From Hwy 12 East, about 6 miles beyond Calistoga Road, take a left onto Adobe Rd. Follow Adobe Rd to its end in the park. Main parking lot is on the left, past the entrance kiosk.

What to Know: State Park entrance fee is $10 per car / $8 for senior or student. Covered with California State Parks pass.

Members and Non-members are welcome to join for the May 10 picnic potluck, Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, the last Membership Meeting of the 2022-23 birding year.

UPCOMING RROS FIELD TRIPS & EVENTS

We are not requiring 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, car pooling is encouraged.

Along with the birds, chances for extraordinary WILDFLOWER SPOTTING could be a treat for those participating in the RROS field trips and joining in the membership meeting at Sugarloaf.

As reported by Jack Lee in the SF Chronicle (4/23/23): Colder-than-normal weather this year has meant a delayed spring, so Bay Area residents still have a chance to experience amazing blooms. According to Cyndy Shafer, natural resource program manager for the Bay Area District of California State Parks, “There are going to be incredible opportunities through May for people to still see wildflowers”.

YAMS Sunday, April 30, 2023 7:30 am-12:30 pm  Pine Flat Road Lisa Hug

Meet at the intersection of Red Winery Road and Pine Flat Road, just east of Jimtown which is north and east of Healdsburg. We need to meet early to beat the heat and to try and avoid clashing with other outdoor activities that occur on the mountain. We will be in the car much of the time, traveling from site to site looking for spring migrants and other natural history wonders. Bring lots of snacks, water and lunch. We will try to compress in as few cars as possible.

YAMS Sunday, May 28, 2023 8:30 am-12:30 pm  Coastal Prairie Trail Lisa Hug

Meet at the Bodega Bay Community Center lot on Highway 1, just 1 mile north of the town of Bodega Bay. This is a lovely trail that goes through some coastal dunes habitat. We will walk at a relaxed pace and see what we encounter! Be sure to bring lunch and layered clothing.
SPRING CAMPING TRIP JUNE 1-4 Susanville Area

The Spring RROS Camping Trip will be the weekend of June 1-4 in the Susanville area. The final details are still being worked out. If you would like to get updates, contact Malcolm Blanchard (707) 480-2210.

Report of … RROS field trip: Pine Flat Road, April 15, 2023 led by Josh Snead

Our Pine Flat Road field trippers were greeted with overcast skies at 8 am. The original plan was to drive straight to the top and bird our way down, but hopes were high that we might re-find the Vesper Sparrow that was present on my recon a few days prior, so the first stop was at the Ferguson Springs pullout. We were greeted by fairly thick fog and no sign of the target bird… we settled for poor views of a Rufous-crowned Sparrow just visible in the mists singing from a prominent rock.

From there we drove almost nonstop to the top: we had to slow down for the Purple Martins at Schoolhouse Flats and have a quick stop for a singing and newly arrived Ash-throated Flycatcher.

At the top we had good numbers of Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and California Thrasher but it was otherwise fairly quiet. The relative quiet allowed for a great lesson in the call of the Wrentit, often heard but not seen and a “lifer” for some in terms of bird calls. A lone Double-crested Cormorant soared around the top of the hill at one point, an unexpected addition to the list at that elevation.

We returned to Schoolhouse Flats and spent a pleasant hour or so eating lunch and searching the area. At least 8 Purple Martins were easy to see and hear as they explored potential nesting cavities in the tall burned up trees. We also added Hermit Thrush and American Kestrel to the tally but the real prize was a Mountain Quail spotted by Jeff Valfer - we were able to get excellent views of this hard to see bird and enjoyed hearing a range of seldom heard vocalizations in addition to the usual, distant, “QUEark!”.

We picked up a few more returning springtime birds on the way back to Ferguson Springs and had much better views of Rufous-crowned Sparrow. The final treat was a singing Grasshopper Sparrow at this spot before parting ways.

Good weather, company and birds!

- Josh Snead

California Thrasher Pine Flat Road
photo by Brendon Westerhold
Birding with Babies

by Beatrice Blanchard

More and more younger birders are bringing their children along on birding journeys. It seems like a natural fit: kids in the outdoors, parents and kids together, escapades galore. The families of Josh Snead, and Eva and Jeff Valfer, both of Sonoma County, have become Besties over the years and their children have come enthusiastically along for the ride.

The secret to birding with Sada (8-years old) and Saul (5-years old), according to Jeff and Eva, is SNACKS! and a second set of clothes. “Eva is the master of knowing what the kids will need long before they do, which really helps make for a better experience for everyone in the field” exclaims Jeff. “Eva always has the best food, snacks and drinks for the kids and that all-important second set of clothes to ensure the kids really get to enjoy their outdoor experience. Whether for those unexpected cold days at the coast or stomping through and sloshing in the muddy trails of Tolay, parents always have to be ready.”

Additionally, Eva has introduced a lot of art projects with the kids that are centered around being in the field. Art has really helped the kids engage with nature and made it accessible at their level. Since they can access it, they have begun to love it. Especially when it comes to nesting season and baby birds, Sada and Saul cannot get enough of that exciting time of year.

Jeff, being a teacher in Sonoma County, has experience working with children and adolescents. Jeff finds it important to remind himself that, “when you’re with kids in the field, you’re on THEIR time”, and should pace your adventure to their speed and interests, and just guide.

Josh Snead of Monte Rio and his three Littles: Effie (8 years old), Freya (6 years old), and Julius (2), are out on the trails often. Because Josh “birds obsessively”, the adventures become a social event for the foursome and an opportunity to hang out with their good friends, the Valfers.

Josh’s kids, who favor Bodega Bay, are into birds even at home. A favorite game is Bird Bingo, and an evening game named Sibley’s Bird flashcards can become contentious, when one child’s pile of correct cards becomes bigger than another, and the competition becomes tense.

It is noticed by other Birders, that when all these children are along on a venture, there are no cries for attention, complaints about the length of the trip, or disgruntled attitudes. If a mild melt-down is imminent, Birder parents quietly whisk the child away so as not to interrupt the quiet experience of others.

The two 8-year-old girls, Sada Valfer and Effie Snead have moved to a slightly higher level of maturity than their younger siblings, and now hike out in front away from parents and siblings. More importantly, the girls have enthusiastically joined the Young Ancient Murrelets (YAMS) headed up by Lisa Hug of Sebastopol. These parents are delighted their daughters have Lisa Hug as a model of an experienced woman in science.

Josh is an East Coast kid who as a younger guy was a competitive bicyclist. Always an outdoors type – skateboarding, cycling, snowboarding – his interests now veer toward birding and parenting his little birders.

Growing up in New England, Jeff Valfer made his way to California almost 25 years ago and is now home in Sonoma County, while Eva, originally from northern California, traveled the world, lived in many regions, and also made her home in the preferred northern portion of this beautiful state. Together they have created a family of young outdoors naturalists.

How fortunate are all these tykes to have such marvelous and charming Birder Parents. Lucky all.
PHOTO GALLERY - end of season salute to some SoCo residents, seasonal visitors, & a ’23 rarity: LAGO

L: Cattle Egret; R: Black-Crowned Night Heron - Ninth St Rookery, Santa Rosa  
photos by Malcolm Blanchard

Black-throated Gray Warbler - Spring Lake Regional Park  
photo by Rob O’Donnell

Lawrence’s Goldfinch - Santa Rosa Creek Trail  
photo by Garrett Pierce
**Observations March 21, 2023 to April 20, 2023 compiled by DAVID A. HOFMANN**

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<tr>
<th>Species</th>
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<td>Tufted Duck</td>
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<td>Say's Phoebe</td>
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PHOTO GALLERY

Bushtit - Spring Lake Regional Park  
Red-necked Phalarope - Doran entrance ponds

Fox Sparrow - Sonoma Co  
Anna’s Hummingbird - Sonoma Co
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 5:30 pm.

Annual dues are $20 per individual, $25 per family, and $5 per student. Membership forms can be found at www.rros.org/join-rros
Dues can be sent to
RROS Treasurer Bob Hasenick, 4453 La Paz Lane, Santa Rosa, CA 95404-9510

Visit us on the web at www.RROS.org

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