



White-tailed Kite

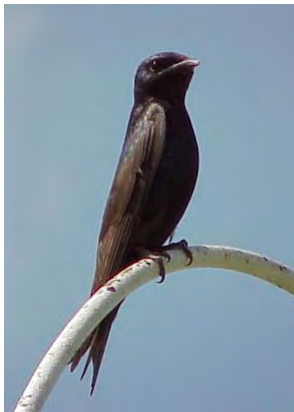
February/March, 2007

Mission: To promote the awareness, appreciation and protection of native birds and their habitats through education, research and environmental activities.

Program meetings for the general community are held on the third Monday of each month (except for July and August) at 6:30 p.m., at the [Chico Creek Nature Center](#) 1968 E. 8th St.

February Program Meeting – Monday, February 19, 2007, 6:30 p.m., [Chico Creek Nature Center](#)

Come join your neighbors in listening to a fascinating program on [Purple Martins](#) presented by wildlife biologist, ornithologist and Purple Martins were once a common fixture in California's Central Valley, but since the early 70s, they have been restricted to the highly urban elevated freeways and overpasses. Dan will present an overview of research spearheaded as a volunteer since the early 90s. Research has focused on distribution, nesting habitat, and causes for decline of these birds. Recent work has also focused on evaluating survival and site fidelity of nesting birds using color-banding, and on understanding the systematics of actions have included means to reduce "nest fallout" from the vertical nest holes and protection of nest



environmental consultant [Dan Airola](#). Research has focused on distribution, nesting habitat, and causes for decline of these birds. Recent work has also focused on evaluating survival and site fidelity of nesting birds using color-banding, and on understanding the systematics of actions have included means to reduce "nest fallout" from the vertical nest sites from incompatible land uses.

Dan is a fifth generation Californian whose Purple Martin Project began in the early 90s, and after a respite, resumed vigorously in 2002. He is frequently seen peering through binoculars at freeway overpasses in some of the grittiest downtown Sacramento locations. He fits this work in as a volunteer around a busy professional life and a young family. He frequently publishes his work in the [Central Valley Bird Club Bulletin](#), where he chairs the Editorial Committee.

March Program Meeting – Monday, March 19, 2007, 6:30 p.m., Chico Creek Nature Center

Our March program, "A brief history of [Wild Turkeys](#) in Butte County" coincides nicely with the exciting and sometimes cacophonous spring mating season in our local foothills. Altacal Field has spent almost 25 years observing, studying and hunting this magnificent game bird, and has trapped and banded turkeys for relocation by the National Wild Turkey Federation.



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Scott will trace for us the history of Wild Turkeys in California from the pre-historic *Meleagris californica* which became extinct app. 10,000 years ago, to the various introduced sub-species of *Meleagris gallopavo* that are thriving throughout the State today. Especially interesting is how wildlife biologists from the Chico area were instrumental in the success of wild turkey plantings in the 1970's.

In addition to the history and biology of the bird, Scott will share photos and anecdotes from his years in the field and will demonstrate the specialized art of Turkey calling, illustrating the relatively complex vocalizations of wild turkeys.

December Program Meeting – Monday, December 11, 2006, 6:30 p.m., Chico Creek Nature Center

The final Altacal program of 2006 was a big hit with our members and friends who managed to find their way to the Chico Creek Nature Center a week earlier than our regular meeting date. The December program was devoted to our annual membership slide show and we had great participation from six of our own. Always a big hit, this year proved to be no exception. Steve Emmons, John Lewis, Scott and Liam Huber, Steve King and Phil Johnson all presented photos that they had taken over the past years. The subjects ranged from exotic species from far away places to backyard shots of local favorites. The quality and diversity of photos as well as the stories that went with them delighted the audience. Thanks go out to those who participated and our apologies to those who were confused by the change of date.

Help Wanted

We are still looking for someone to be our **Finance Committee Chairperson**, a newly created Board of Directors position. For more information, contact Phil Johnson at 530-570-7139 or ptj64@sbcglobal.net

Also, in all our areas of interest (Field Trips, Education, Conservation, etc.) we are trying to get things done more efficiently and effectively by asking members to contribute in any way they can by contacting a Committee Chairperson or other Board member and offering to help in some area of interest. There's no need to sign on for a particular position or office and you can be sure you'd be appreciated.

Upcoming Bird Walks and Birding Trips

All of our field trips are open to beginning birders. Anyone with a sense of wonder is welcome to participate.

February 4, Sunday – Black Butte Lake - Trip leader: Anne-Lise Feenstra - This is a good time to look for wintering birds such as [Mountain Bluebirds](#), [Phainopeplas](#) and [Bald Eagles](#). Meet at the Burger King in Orland, (Hwy 32 & I 5) at 8:45 a.m. Dress warm and wear shoes for hiking. Bring lunch, water, binoculars or spotting scope and your birding field guide. The trip will be over around 2:30 p.m. Rain will cancel. Call [Anne-Lise](#) at 865-5254 for more information.

February 9-11, Friday/Saturday/Sunday - Bodega Bay - Trip leaders: Mike Fisher and Jennifer Patten - Join us for a first-time trip to Bodega Bay as we explore and discover its birds and wildlife. Bodega Bay is probably the hottest birding spot in Sonoma County. More rare birds have been spotted here than in any other area of the County. We will spend two full days hitting all the hot spots in the area. We will camp at Doran Regional Park Friday and Saturday night. During the day we will work our way around the Bay stopping at Doran Pond (**shorebirds, waterfowl and rails**), Smith Brothers' Road (**shorebirds, gulls, terns, pelicans**), The Rail Ponds ([Virginia Rail](#) and [Sora](#)), Spud Point Marina (**loons and alcids**), Spud Point (**shorebirds and gulls**), Westside Park Boat Launch (**birds floating on the open harbor**), Owl Canyon (**owls and warblers**), "Hole-in-the-Head" (**rails and**

[Swamp Sparrows](#)) and Bodega Head Parking Lot (**shorebirds on the rocks, cormorants, guillemots, Gray Whales and Sea Lions**). We will also pay a visit to the historical Tides Restaurant, famous as the site of the filming of Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds". For more information call or e-mail trip leaders Mike Fisher at 624-4777, fisherml@pacbell.net or Jennifer Patten at 345-9356, jpchico@sbcglobal.net

February 18, Sunday - Butte Basin – Trip leader: Phil Johnson - "Butte Basin" refers to the flat, open lands roughly between Dayton, the Sutter Buttes, the Sacramento River, and Highway 99. Historically, this area was all tule marshes and grasslands. It is the wintertime "[Serengeti](#)" of migratory waterfowl. We will start at the Llano Seco viewing platform and continue along Rd. Z in search of **waterfowl, raptors, rails** and [Black-crowned Night-Herons](#). From there we will hit various spots along the rice fields looking for concentrations of [Sandhill Cranes](#) and other of wintering birds. Meet at the Park 'n Ride (the lot closest to Rte 99) at 7:45 a.m. to carpool. Return at 2:00 p.m. Bring a sack lunch. Rain cancels. For more info, you can contact trip leader Phil Johnson at ptj64@sbcglobal.net or at 570-7139.

March 4, Sunday - [Mendocino National Forest Genetic Resource and Conservation \("Tree Improvement"\) Center](#) - Trip leader: Skip Augur - 8:00 a.m. to noon - Meet at the Chico Park 'n Ride on Rt. 32, in the lot nearest Rte 99. We'll carpool as parking at the facility is limited. Bring binoculars, water, and a snack if you wish. Part of our walk will follow a riparian corridor of sycamores and valley oaks. This year, [Varied Thrushes](#) have been easily seen there; the Christmas Count yielded [Townsend's Warbler](#) and [Purple Finch](#), and finches and sparrows should abound. Rain cancels.

March 17, Saturday – Bear Valley/Greater Roadrunner Search – Trip leader: Jackson Shedd - Meet at the Park 'n Ride, west lot (near Rte 99) at 7:30 a.m. The trip will last until about 1:00 p.m. Carpooling will be encouraged and FRS radios (walkie-talkies) would be useful. We'll head to Glenn County in our hunt for the elusive [Greater Roadrunner](#). While in the neighborhood, we will cruise south into Colusa County to view one of northern California's hidden gems, Bear Valley. The valley, located just west of Williams, boasts a wonderful wildflower display. Roadrunners are possible throughout the Inner Coast Range in this region. Other birds of interest more commonly encountered in our western foothills than our local Sierra foothills are [Golden Eagle](#), [Lewis's Woodpecker](#), [California Thrasher](#) and possibly [Lawrence's Goldfinch](#). Bring water, a lunch, and binoculars. Rain cancels. For more information contact Jackson at 530-342-5144 or jackson_shedd@sbcglobal.net.

March 24-25, Saturday/Sunday - [Honey Lake/Sage Grouse Lek](#) – Trip leader: Phil Johnson - This trip explores the wetlands of the Honey Lake Wildlife refuge for **waterfowl**, the surrounding uplands of the basin for **raptors**, and a known lekking ground of the [Sage Grouse](#). We'll meet at the Chico Park 'n Ride (in the lot nearest Rte. 99) at 7:45 a.m. Saturday, head up highway 32, stop at [Almanor](#) to bird, and continue on to the Honey Lake area for the remainder of the day. Sunday morning we will get up early to arrive at the Sage Grouse lekking grounds by 6:00 a.m. After that we will slowly make our way back to another unit of the refuge, and then will head toward the foothills behind the prison to look for some Native American petroglyphs etched into the walls of the canyon. This trip can be extremely cold depending on weather conditions, so plan accordingly. You will have the option of camping at the refuge or staying at a hotel in Susanville on Saturday night. Due to the logistics of this trip, you must, before going, contact trip leader Phil Johnson at ptj64@sbcglobal.net or 570-7139.

April 1, Sunday - [Sutter Buttes/Peace Valley](#) - Trip leader: Jennifer Patten - On this trip, we will visit an early California cemetery, a Wintun grinding rock site, an old homestead, and a beautiful side canyon deep within the Buttes. We hope to pick up early Spring migrants. We will meet at the Park 'n Ride (the lot closest to the highway) at 6:30 a.m. to carpool to the Live Oak Waffle Shop for breakfast. Then at 8:00 a.m. will meet with Ranger Tim Davis who will lead us into the Buttes and will return at approximately 3:30 p.m. Participants who can't make breakfast should meet by 8 a.m. in Live Oak at the Waffle Shop. Bring hiking boots, binoculars, field guide, lunch, water, and raingear (if needed). There is a twenty-person limit and a \$20 donation. To secure your spot call Jennifer at 345-9356.

April 8, Sunday – Teichert Pond – Trip leader: Scott Huber – Chico's Hidden Wetland - The view from Rte 99 is enticing; a large pond surrounded by [tules](#) and ringed with willows and oaks. But who knows how to access the darn place? Trip leader Scott Huber will direct you through the maze of streets that lead you to the heart of Teichert Pond(s). Once in, you'll delight in the diversity of avian life found in this 'secret wetland' just blocks from downtown Chico. Expect at least three **woodpecker** species, a number of **flycatchers**, numerous **sparrow** species, a few **raptors** (possibly a [Great Horned Owl](#)), at least three **warbler** species, some **ducks, geese and shorebirds** and with any luck some surprise migrants!

Explorers will meet at the Chico Park 'n Ride at 7:00 a.m. (the lot nearest Rte 99) and then carpool (parking at the pond is very limited) for the short drive. Four hours will be more than enough time to indulge in the mystery of this 'accidental wetland' created by gravel excavation during highway 99 construction. The trip is free and open to the public. Spring weather is iffy so bring a rain slicker in case of light rain (heavy rain will cancel). Bring water and binoculars and don't forget the 'OFF!' as the mosquitos could be hungry! This is an easy, slow paced and short walk suited for all age levels. For more information please contact Scott Huber at 899-5957 or Scott@ChicoHomesandLand.com

Banding News

During 2006, an awesome team Randall Peterson, Julie Nelson and enthusiasm) including many assisted with the bird banding [Ecological Reserve \(BCCER\)](#) [\(BCEP\)](#). We captured a total of numbers do not include [Anna's](#) and [Rufous](#)



DawnGarcia

of volunteers (special thanks to and Mike Fisher for their consistency Altacal Audubon Society members, stations at the [Big Chico Creek](#) and [Butte Creek Ecological Preserve](#) 644 individuals of 52 species. These recaptures or unbanded birds such as [Hummingbirds](#).

For passerines, [Hermit Thrushes](#) were the species most captured (104) followed by [Spotted Towhees](#) and [Lesser Goldfinches](#) (57 each). We banded a whopping 65 [Northern Saw-whet Owls](#) during the brief five-week fall migration period. We had numerous recaptures of Hermit Thrush, [Ruby-crowned Kinglet](#), [Fox Sparrow](#) and [Golden-crowned Sparrow](#) returning to their wintering grounds at these sites, as well as resident breeding birds. Our most exciting recapture was the foreign recovery of an [Orange-crowned Warbler](#) originally banded in 2002 in the eastern Sierra Nevada, putting him in his 5th year of life! Many additional species were tallied during our point count (counting individual birds at specific locations) efforts and these data will be provided in an upcoming issue of the *White-tailed Kite*.

The goals of our migration stations are many and include collaboration with the [Landbird Migration Monitoring Network \(LaMMNA\) of the Americas](#) which is aimed at expanding the knowledge of migratory land birds, determining population changes, migratory routes and stopover habitats. The Northern Saw-whet Owl Station in its second year (2006) has provided valuable information to the bigger owl monitoring program, [Project OwlNet](#). We are also contributing to the [UC Davis study of the spread of Avian Influenza](#). On a local level we provide avian baseline and demographic data, offer educational opportunities, and have contributed to fundraising events for the [Snow Goose Festival](#), BCCER, [Sierra Club](#), and [Altacal Audubon Society](#).

I look forward to seeing you at the banding stations in 2007! Write to me at mel.dawn@sbcglobal.net to receive 2007 banding dates and results.

Websites mentioned in article: LaMMNA, see <http://www.klamathbird.org/lammna/>
Project OwlNet, see <http://www.projectowl.net.org/>

Table 1. 2006 Bird Banding Results (alphabetical list of species)

ACWO	Acorn Woodpecker	2
AMGO	American Goldfinch	2
AMRO	American Robin	11
ATFL	Ash-throated Flycatcher	5
AUWA	Audubon's Warbler	5
BEWR	Bewick's Wren	35
BHGR	Black-headed Grosbeak	17
BLPH	Black Phoebe	5
BTYW	Black-throated Gray Warbler	2
BUOR	Bullock's Oriole	4
BUSH	Bushtit	36
CALT	California Towhee	12
COYE	Common Yellowthroat	1
DOWO	Downy Woodpecker	3
DUFL	Dusky Flycatcher	1
FOSP	Fox Sparrow	4
GCSP	Golden-crowned Sparrow	30
GWCS	Gambell's White-crowned Sparrow	4
HETH	Hermit Thrush	104
HOFI	House Finch	6
HOWR	House Wren	1
HUVI	Hutton's Vireo	5
LASP	Lark Sparrow	1
LAZB	Lazuli Bunting	9
LEGO	Lesser Goldfinch	57
LISP	Lincoln's Sparrow	2
NASH	Nashville Warbler	1
NSWO	Northern Saw-whet Owl	65
NUWO	Nuttall's Woodpecker	2
OATI	Oak Titmouse	6
OCWA	Orange-crowned Warbler	21
ORJU	Oregon Junco	20
PSFL	Pacific-slope Flycatcher	1
PUFI	Purple Finch	9
RBNU	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1
RCKI	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	33
RSFL	Red-shafted Flicker	2
SOSP	Song sparrow	3
SPTO	Spotted Towhee	57
SWTH	Swainson's Thrush	4
TOWA	Townsend's Warbler	1
WBNU	White-breasted Nuthatch	2
WESO	Western Screech Owl	2
WESJ	Western Scrub Jay	3
WETA	Western Tanager	14
WIFL	Willow Flycatcher	5
WIWA	Winter Wren	1
WREN	Wrentit	2
WWPE	Western Wood Peewee	1
YBCH	Yellow-breasted Chat	5
YWAR	Yellow Warbler	19
52	TOTALS	644

Sister Society ([Cape Cod Bird Club](#)) News



The season's first nor'easter hit the Cape on Thanksgiving bringing heavy rain and 45 mph winds. The weather produced prime conditions for watching seabirds, sea ducks, and gulls. Some of the birds seen during that period at Corporation Beach (Dennis) and First Encounter Beach (Eastham) were: 70 [Brant](#), 8 [Greater Scaup](#), 400 [Common Eiders](#), 500 [Surf Scoters](#), 160 [White-winged Scoters](#), 120 [Black Scoters](#), 130 [Long-tailed Ducks](#), 140 [Red-breasted Mergansers](#), 185 [Red-throated Loons](#), 15 [Common Loons](#), 9 [Red-necked Grebes](#), 1200 [Northern Gannets](#), 30 [Sanderlings](#), 1 [Dunlin](#), 3 [Pomarine Jaegers](#), 1 [Laughing Gull](#), 88 [Bonaparte's Gulls](#), 15 [Ring-billed Gulls](#), 25 [Razorbills](#), 31 [Black-legged Kittiwakes](#), 2 [Great Cormorants](#), 2 [Black Guillemots](#), 6 [Purple Sandpipers](#), 2 [Atlantic Puffins](#), 1 [Little Gull](#), a [Dovekie](#), and 50 [Snow Buntings](#).

In early December, many folks in the Massachusetts community made a pilgrimage to see the [Bell's Vireo](#) in Woods Hole, the [Rufous Hummingbird](#) in Cotuit, and the [Western Kingbird](#) at Fort Hill in Eastham. With a little persistence, most birders were rewarded with either personal state records, or, for many, life birds.

[The Wellfleet Bay Rescue Program](#) was busy [Kemp's Ridley Sea](#) area beaches and a 75-pulled out of the surf at December 10. A total of season as of December 13. had topped 90. The shore thereafter were slim, continue to pick up dead

Other birds seen in at Herring Cove in [Duck](#) along with a at Wellfleet Harbor and a Pond in Wellfleet.



[Wildlife Sanctuary Sea Turtle](#) during December. Multiple live [Turtles](#) were found cold-stunned on pound [Loggerhead Turtle](#) was Corn Hill Beach in Truro on 60 sea turtles had been rescued this By year's end the sea turtle count chances for live turtles washing on but Wellfleet Bay staff will turtles in the weeks to come.

December included 3 [Iceland Gulls](#) Provincetown, a lone [Harlequin Dovekie](#) and a [Black-headed Gull](#) leucistic [Great Blue Heron](#) at Gull

On New Year's Day a spectacular number of [Razorbills](#) graced the waters off Herring Cove in Provincetown with one count estimated at 900 birds!

Happy New Year and Good Birding to our Sister Society in Chico!

Rex Burress

Diving With Demons

Down by the riverside on the first day of December, I saw a handsome white Egret standing alongside the dark lagoon. It was a peaceful scene with a perfect reflection in the still dark waters, but beneath the surface I knew there were demonic-looking salmon with distorted bodies in their last throes of life.

Like two worlds, one of life and death beneath the water's surface, and the other of life and death in the air, hidden wonders and perils abound in both dimensions. We see the autumn-yellow sycamore leaves reflected in the morning's still waters and are only vaguely aware that there are processes ready to pounce on that vegetative matter and reduce it to invisible particles, just as the scavengers are at work on dead salmon.

Out in the main channel, Goldeneye ducks were diving for breakfast, plying the rapids where thrashing salmon were expending the last of their energy. The gallant fish were scarred and tattered by their long journey from the ocean, the skin discolored and pale on bodies grown grotesquely humped with snaggy teeth like some Edgar Allan Poe monster.

Still, I could see those determined ducks diving side by side with the dwindling, scary-looking salmon, snatching tiny fish that in turn were seizing salmon sediment. Certainly the salmon didn't want to dine on duck since they digest nothing once they leave the ocean, however, if a duck got tangled up in one of those monstrous, toothy mouths it could spell trouble.

The Goldeneyes probably hadn't seen anything like this before, but their eyes were on food that they could eat with little interest in salmon. Not so the vultures and gulls. They had made long journeys just for the holiday feast of fish and were reluctant to be denied one of their greatest joys. They were dragging those putrid fish carcasses out onto the rocky beach where they were stripped of flesh, and the bony, gruesome head was left to harden in the sun. The duck's way and the vulture's way are exceedingly different.

The Common Mergansers are out there in the wintertime waters, too, expertly plying the depths for food and riding joyously on the rapids. Minnow-size fish were the target, but I saw a handsome red-beaked male emerge with a large steak-sized chunk of rotten salmon, and when pestered by a herring gull, gobbled the whole thing down in one gulp!

The **Goldeneye**, both the [Common](#) and [Barrow's](#) species, are migratory diving ducks, capable not only of long flights, but their swimming methods are quite unique and efficient. The legs are positioned near their tail end to give them underwater thrust and streamlined passage through the water. They are birds of the bubbles and also airways but there is difficulty for them to walk on land. The other type of ducks, the dabblers like the Mallards and Pintails, have more balanced positioning of legs to allow them easy walking.

The foot is all-important in what a bird can do. The Goldeneye's feet are webbed with a tough elastic skin, not so unlike the fins of a fish, giving them the capability they need to maneuver through the water and interact with the denizens and demons of the deep.

"If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water."

– Loren Eiseley

Bird Walk and Birding Trip Reports

December 17, Sunday - Chico Christmas Bird Count – Coordinator: Phil Johnson - Thanks to all who came out to count. About 18 counters, comprising eight different groups spent the day in cold but clear weather. We started the day out with a [Varied Thrush](#) at the Chico Creek Nature Center, which was a good omen of things to come. At 5:00 p.m., we assembled in a nice, warm house to count up the days work. Thanks to Scott and Nina Campbell for hosting the compilation dinner (great chili and cornbread!) Here are some results:

- 106 species total
- Off-of-the-list species: [Townsend's Warblers](#) (2 at different locations), [Wild Turkeys](#) (10 on the 12-hole at Canyon Oaks golf course), [Peregrine Falcon](#) (hunting at the Oxidation Ponds), [Cattle Egret](#), [Osprey](#) (this should be put on the list)
- First [Black-crowned Night-Heron](#) in 13 years
- First [Redhead](#) since 1997
- Record low number of [Song Sparrows](#) (probably does not mean anything)
- Andy got a [Barn Owl](#) before going to bed on Sunday night
- Lin Jensen counted his yard on E. Sacramento Ave. and got 20 species. He added [Pine Siskin](#) to the list.

Habitats included Foothill Chaparral (Toyon, Manzanita, Ceanothus); Oak Woodland (Blue Oak, Gray Pine, Live Oak, Bay Laurel); a small apron of Grassland Savanna at the base of the Sierra Nevada foothills; Riparian Woodlands (Valley Oaks and Sycamores) interspersed with neighborhoods and orchards (almonds and walnuts). The remaining part of the circle was Basin Lands (formerly tule marsh, but now rice farms).

For more detailed information on individual species numbers, go to:
<http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html>

December 30, Saturday - Oroville Christmas Bird Count – Coordinator: Phil Johnson - We had 16 eager bird counters show up on this sunny, clear day in Oroville. Seven different groups scoured the diverse habitats of the Oroville area. The grand total for the day was 114 species. Of note was a record high for [Canvasbacks](#) (5601) seen on the Afterbay, 31 [Hooded Mergansers](#) (just shy of the 33 record), the third occurrence of [Yellow-headed Blackbird](#) (in a 38-year count history) and [White-faced Ibis](#) reached a record high of 2639 (the only other occurrence was 200 in the year 2000). Other off-of-the-list birds were [Peregrine Falcon](#) (near Bidwell Bar Bridge), [American Dipper](#) (often missed), and [Common Raven](#) (Ravens have slowly made a small population in this area since the count began).

The Oroville count encompasses a diverse amount of habitat: Foothill Chaparral, Blue Oak Woodland, Rock-faced Canyon Lands, Deep Water (Lake Oroville, Afterbay), Mixed Foothill Ranch Lands, River Riparian, Oxbow Ponds, Urban, Valley Oak Woodlands, Vernal Pools, Short Grassland, Flooded Rice Lands, Orchards and Oxbow Ponds.

For more detailed information on individual species numbers, go to:
<http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html>

Two housing developments are slated for the area West of Thermalito. One is in prime Vernal Pool Lands, the other has some vernal pools, Both are good raptor areas. Continued pressure from development in this general area will ultimately cut down on open space habitats for raptors and other species.

January 3-5, Wednesday-Friday, [Morro Bay](#) – Trip leader: Scott Huber - The Huber's were delighted to be joined by Randall Peterson for birding in Morro Bay. Randall, on the early days of his 2007 BIG YEAR hoped to rack up a number of coastal birds and that's just what he did, ticking off 65 species on January 3rd. Among the many beautiful bird species observed that day, some of the highlights included [Red-throated Loons](#) at the mouth of the bay, a [Peregrine Falcon](#) scoped on [Morro Rock](#), a [Ruddy Turnstone](#) and a [Red-breasted Merganser](#) at the Cayucos headlands and a [Prairie Falcon](#) near Los Osos.

After Randall's departure, Liam and Scott continued birding and in the ensuing days accumulated a total trip list of 131 species. The highlight was a drive to the Carrizo Plain inland from Morro Bay. While there they got photos of [Burrowing Owl](#), [Mountain Bluebird](#), [Ferruginous Hawk](#) and found a life bird for them: [Sage Sparrow](#) (seven of them in fact!). Back at the bay, Scott photographed a [California Thrasher](#) at the Elfin Forest Spring Wetland in Los Osos as well as a day of birding Scott managed to the hard to find (and harder to Flaco Lake near Nipomo. Scott, Huber finished their birding with where they were deluged with [Plover](#), [Semi-palmated Plover](#) as well as finding a [White-](#) with the [Surf Scoters](#).



Snowy Plover Photo by Scott Huber
January 5, 2007

Reserve, and at Sweetwater encountered a whole flock lone [Merlin](#). On the final get a number of photos of photograph) [Sora](#) at Oso Liam, Alita and Kaley a kayak trip to Morro Dunes plovers including [Snowy](#) and [Black-bellied Plover](#) [winged Scoter](#) mixed in



Blue-winged Teals Photo by Scott Huber, January 5, 2007



Sora Photo by Scott Huber, January 5, 2007

Avi-Fact

The [Snowy Owl](#) (*Bubo scandiacus*) is a large owl (the heaviest in North America) of the typical owl family Strigidae. It is also known in North America as the Arctic Owl or the Great White Owl. Until recently, it was regarded as the sole member of a distinct genus, as *Nyctea scandiaca*. *Nyctea* came from the Greek, meaning “nocturnal” (even though the Snowy Owl is not strictly nocturnal) and *scandiaca* was a Latinism, meaning “of Scandinavia” and indicating the type locality. However, recent (2002) DNA studies show that it is very closely related to the horned owls in the genus *Bubo*, hence, the switch. The Snowy Owl is found represented in the cave paintings of Europe, and also as Hedwig, Harry Potter’s owl in J. K. Rowling’s series of fantasy books.



Opportunities and Events

Tenth Annual Great Backyard Bird Count to Combine Fun of Bird Watching With Conservation

What mid-winter activity is fun, easy, free, and helps bird conservation? What can parents and teachers do with children that connects them to a whole new world of natural wonders? This February, the tenth annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), sponsored by [National Audubon Society](#) and the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#), will give everyone a chance to discover the birds in the neighborhood and "Count for the Record."

During **February 16-19** people of all ages, from beginners to experts, are invited to join this event that spans all of the United States and Canada. Participants can take part wherever they are - at home, in schoolyards, at local parks or wildlife refuges. Observers simply count the highest number of each species they see during an outing or a sitting, and enter their tally on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site at www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

Participants who want to hone their bird watching skills can learn more from the Great Backyard Bird Count web site, which offers identification tips and access to photos, sounds, maps, and natural history information on more than 500 bird species. People can also submit photos to an online gallery showcasing the dazzling array of winter birds found during the GBBC. Competitions add another element of fun, including a photo contest, rankings for most numerous birds, and the coveted "checklist champ" title for towns, states, and provinces with the highest participation.

Remember! It's easy-to-do, it's fun, it's free and you will be participating in doing Citizen Science for a worthwhile cause.



Godwit Days, 2007



U.S. Fish and Wildlife

April 20-22, Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival, Arcata, CA – [We went last year and found it to be an excellent birding festival with many expert guides leading field trips (including a pelagic trip) Ed.] Go to <http://www.godwitdays.com> for event details and to register. Festival personnel are available for question-answering and phone registrations at 1-800-908-WING or (707) 444-2938. This year's keynote speaker will be Dr. Scott Sillett, Research Scientist with the [Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center](#). His talk is titled: Wonders and Intricacies of Bird Migration.

The pelagic tour will again go out on the HSU research boat, Coral Sea, and will sell out quickly so be sure to save your spot soon.

Sightings

(If you have any interesting sightings in January and February, you can send them to the Newsletter Editor at tim.ruckle@sbcglobal.net by March 7 for possible inclusion in the next newsletter.)

November 20 – John and Ann Oswald saw a flock of four [Wild Turkeys](#) several times just where Cohasset and Keefer Roads meet. There's no telling if they're still around, but look for the Santos mail box on the right hand side on Keefer. Bring a camera because they are so tame they come right up to the car. They then saw a flock of 16 farther down Keefer on the right-hand side. Look for mail box 3369.

December 25 - Birding on Christmas Day, Jeff Price found an [American Dipper](#) in the stream outside his bedroom window in Paradise and a leucistic [Sandhill Crane](#) in the crane flock on Nelson-Shippee Road. He suspects this [leucistic](#) Sandhill Crane will cause more than one observer to claim a Whooping Crane. It is all white (though not as bright as a Whooping Crane) with only a few gray wing feathers. Easy field marks to use in identifying it as a Sandhill is that the bird is the same size as the other birds and the head pattern is that of a Sandhill and not of a Whooping Crane.

Late December- Early January – Jennifer Patten saw a [Varied Thrush](#) in her neighbor's backyard toward the end of December; six [Green-winged Teals](#) from the back viewing platform at Llano Seco, December 28; a [Burrowing Owl](#) in Upper Park along the North Rim Trail, New Year's Day; and a [Golden Eagle](#) at Gray Lodge on the west side of parking lot 16, Sunday, January 7

Peregrinations

[A new column, *Perigrinations* reports on birds seen on trips outside the Butte/Glenn/Tehama counties area except for those sponsored by the Altacal Audubon Society or other local birding groups]

While visiting family in Cape Cod, MA over the holidays Tim Ruckle saw 57 species of birds including the following that were life birds for him: [Common Eider](#), [Red-bellied Woodpecker](#), [American Tree Sparrow](#), [White-throated Sparrow](#), [Great Black-backed Gull](#), [Northern Gannett](#), [American Black Duck](#), [Carolina Wren](#), [Dovekie](#), [Long-tailed Duck](#) and [Mute Swan](#).

On January 13, Tim Ruckle, Scott Huber and Liam Huber went to see a reported [Snowy Owl](#) in the Delta. Scott wrote: "Wow! What a great day Saturday was...terrific views of the Snowy Owl (via a bone chilling 5 hour round trip boat ride) followed by a trip to Mace Blvd. near Davis where Liam found a [White-throated Sparrow](#). Soon after we were treated to views of the [Ovenbird](#) (seen from the bridge looking down into the vegetation on the west side of the bridge). My impression of an Ovenbird is that it is further proof that the [A.O.U.](#) has a terrific sense of humor by including it with the warblers! More like a cross between a hermit thrush and a golden crowned sparrow!"

Submission of Articles

(Notices or articles submitted for publication consideration should be sent by e-mail message to the newsletter editor as Microsoft Word (if possible) attachments by the 7th of the month prior to the next issue of the newsletter (i.e., Jan, Mar, May, Jul, Sep and Nov 7th) - tim.ruckle@sbcglobal.net – Thanks, Ed.)

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Board meetings are held at 5:00 p.m. on the 1st Thursday of each month (except July and August). The usual meeting place is the Altacal Audubon Society/Snow Goose Festival office at 635 Flume St., Chico. The public is welcome to attend.

Local Chapter Membership Application

Please join us! Your membership will help Altacal Audubon Society continue its important work.

Altacal Audubon Society (AAS) is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. In addition, AAS is a separately incorporated non-profit organization. With a local chapter membership, 100% of your membership dues goes to support local projects and activities. AAS is an all-volunteer organization that conducts all of its programs with no paid staff. We offer regularly scheduled field trips focused on birds and bird habitats, our own website, www.altacal.org/, a bi-monthly newsletter (*White-tailed Kite*), monthly membership meetings which include lectures and media presentations on birds and other natural history-related topics, and advocacy to protect and conserve local habitats as well as special projects and programs. Other AAS activities include:

- sponsoring and participating in the annual Snow Goose Festival
- sponsoring and participating in the annual Endangered Species Fair
- founding and providing continued support to the Chico Creek Nature Center
- owning and managing the Arneberg Sanctuary as a wildlife habitat and research area
- helping to monitor the bird populations at the Del Rio Wildland Preserve near the Sacramento River
- paying to maintain public access and a wildlife viewing blind at the Chico Oxidation Ponds
- leading annual Christmas Bird Counts in Chico and Oroville for the past 50 years

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Welcome to the Altacal Audubon Society! Please indicate your choice of membership options:

<input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Basic Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Sponsor	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Patron
<input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Family	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Sustaining	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Benefactor

Important: Membership in Altacal Audubon does *not* include membership in the National Audubon Society. We encourage you to also support National Audubon in their important education and lobbying efforts. To join the National Audubon Society contact them at their website www.audubon.org/

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