



# *The Western Grebe*

Redbud Audubon Society, Inc.,

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

Volume 43 • Issue No. 5 • January, 2018

## *How the struggle for survival has shaped birds and their behavior*

The upcoming Jan. 18 Redbud Audubon program at the Methodist Church Social Hall in Lower Lake will be presented Dr. Roger Lederer, Professor Emeritus of Biological Sciences at California State University, Chico. Refreshments will be served and the program will start at 7:15. Dr. Lederer will focus on how the struggle for survival has shaped birds and their behavior.

### **JANUARY MEETING**

**Thursday, Jan. 18**

- **Topic:** Struggle for survival and its effects on birds and their behavior
- **Speaker:** Dr. Roger Lederer
- **Refreshments:** 7 pm  
**Announcements and Program:** 7:15 pm
- **Location:** Methodist Church Social Hall, 16255 Second St., Lower Lake

But in reality, things are much different. Birds' lives are very precarious," Dr. Lederer notes.

Birds have to be on task every moment of every day, he explains. They have to use

*(Continued on page 8)*

"We think of birds as happy-go-lucky animals – "free as a bird" as they say, not having a care in the world. Singing, flitting from branch to branch, it appears that they just enjoy life.



*Dr. Roger Lederer to speak at the Jan. 18 meeting.*

## *Please note meeting place change*

Starting in January, Redbud Audubon will meet at the Methodist Church Social Hall, 16255 Second St. in Lower Lake as we have been doing for the last few years. If you are coming through Lower Lake, turn left on Lake Street and then right on Second St. The church social hall is on the right. Sadly, the beautiful Methodist Church was destroyed in last year's Clayton Fire but the Social Hall where we meet was spared. We have felt that moving our meetings to the south end of the county for half of our season is a way to accommodate all of our Redbud Audubon members county-wide. Hope to see you there!

# President's Message

by President Roberta Lyons



During the 2017 Christmas holidays, one of my favorite “gifts,” was the view of massive numbers of birds from my living room window!!! We are lucky to live on the lake in Jago Bay and this year has not disappointed. I have

given up trying to count the many small ducks and gulls, but I can confidently say that we have been seeing thousands of some of the small ducks, like Eared Grebes, Ruddys, Coots and Buffleheads, as well as the same numbers of Common Mergansers, Western and Clarks Grebes and Double-crested Cormorants. Also in the mix have been Golden Eyes, Scaups and even Green-winged Teals, which I haven't seen in Jago Bay before. Then of course there are the White Pelicans and the Bonapartes Gulls.

It is so fun when the White Pelicans come at almost the same time every evening. They sit on the water in a group, then all of a sudden lift up and fly over to another spot, their wings making a wonderful splashing sound on the water.

I've included two of my amateur photos to give an idea of what I'm treated to. No wonder I don't want to go anywhere! It isn't because I'm old and



no longer adventuresome and like my comforts of home – it's the birds!

I hope everyone had a bird-rich holiday and has started the New Year with hope and eagerness to continue to do what we can as individuals in our own County to improve the life and environment for all living beings. Remember, we have the right and the responsibility to look after our lake and beautiful hillsides.

## Your Membership 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 now offer chapter-only membership whereby you may enroll via the internet. You can visit our website at [www.redbudaudubon.org](http://www.redbudaudubon.org) and click on JOIN US 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.org](mailto:redbud.audubon@gmail.org) and letting us know.

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

# *21st Annual Great Backyard Bird Count February 16-19*

The 21<sup>th</sup> Annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will start on Friday, Feb 16 and extend through Monday, February 19. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) and report their sightings online at **birdcount.org**.

Each checklist during this event helps scientists at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share.

Last year, more than 180,000 checklists were submitted online from more than 100 countries, creating an instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations. More than 6,200 species were recorded.

In Lake County, Citizen Scientists submitted 96 checklists recording more than 93 species.

Be sure to check out the “**Explore a Region**” tool in eBird to get an idea of what you can expect to see in your area during the next GBBC.

Please visit the official website at **birdcount.org** for more information and the latest education resources. We hope to see more checklists submitted online this year.

*For questions and comments,  
please contact:*

**Cornell Lab of Ornithology**

[gbbc@cornell.edu](mailto:gbbc@cornell.edu)

or (800)843-2473

**National Audubon Society,**

[citizenscience@audubon.org](mailto:citizenscience@audubon.org)

Or Redbud Education Co-Chairs:

**Joyce Anderson**

[joyce.anderson@dominican.edu](mailto:joyce.anderson@dominican.edu)

and

**Lisa Prather at**

[lisap@lakeportk12.ca.us](mailto:lisap@lakeportk12.ca.us)

## **REDBUD AUDUBON BOARD OF DIRECTORS**



### **OFFICERS**

*President:* Roberta Lyons

*Vice President:* Tina Wasson

*Treasurer:* Nicola Selph

*Secretary:* Beth Shaver

### **CHAPTER LEADERSHIP**

Bird Observations - Jerry White

Christmas Bird Count – Brad and Kathy Barnwell

Conservation - Roberta Lyons & Evelyn Wachtel

Education - Joyce Anderson and Lisa Prather

Field Trips - Pat Harmon

Hospitality - Pat Harmon

Membership Manager - Susanne Scholz

Newsletter Editor - Roberta Lyons

Newsletter Production - Jim Scholz

Publicity - Roberta Lyons

Grebe Conservation—Marilyn Waits

Program Committee—Marilyn Waits

**To contact a board member:**

**Phone 707/ 263-8030**

**Email: [redbud.audubon@gmail.com](mailto:redbud.audubon@gmail.com)**

## Redbud Audubon to host field trip to Colusa and Sacramento NWRs

The Jan. 20, field trip hosted by the Redbud Audubon Society will be to the Colusa National Wildlife Refuge and the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge in the Sacramento Valley.

Carpooling is available. Participants leave Lower Lake around 8 a.m. and meet on the east end of the Main Street to park in a place that won't interfere with merchants in town. Don't miss this great opportunity to view a wide variety of migrating wildfowl with expert Audubon birders.

For more information and to make reservations, contact Pat Harmon at 263-4977. Information about the Redbud Audubon Society is also available at [www.redbudaudubon.org](http://www.redbudaudubon.org).

### *19th Annual Snow Goose Festival planned for Chico*

The 19<sup>th</sup> annual Snow Goose Festival will be held Jan. 24-28 in Chico. There will be over 70 field trips and numerous workshops and presentations.

Jon L. Dunn is scheduled as the keynote speaker for the banquet. For details and registration, go to: [www.snowgoosefestival.org](http://www.snowgoosefestival.org). Or call 530-592-9092.

### *Field Trip Calendar 2017-2018*

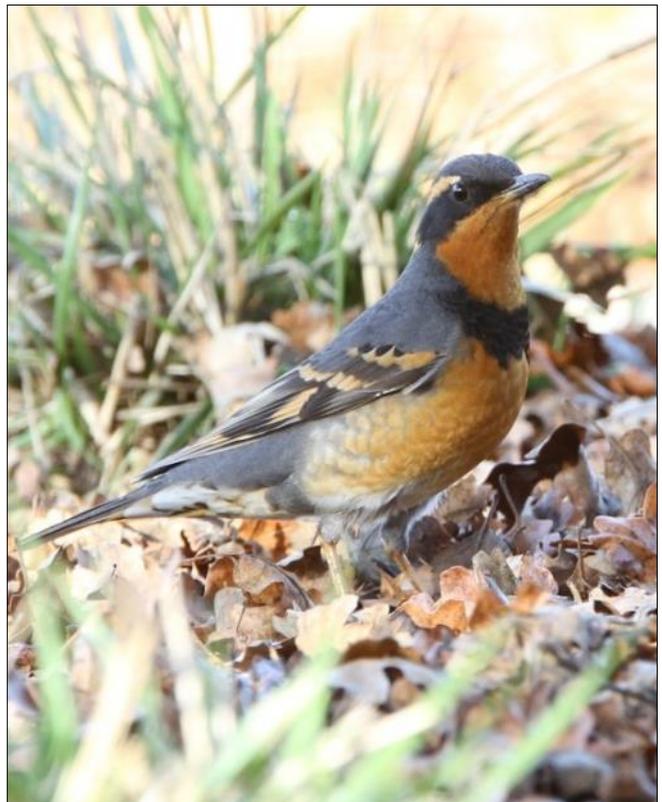
Following is the field trip calendar for the Redbud Audubon Society for 2017-2018. Prior to each field trip a description will appear in our newsletter, the *Western Grebe* and on our website with more information about the upcoming outing. You can also call Pat Harmon at (707) 263-4977 for information. Outings start at 9 a.m. unless otherwise noted.

**January 20**  
Colusa and  
Sacramento National  
Wildlife Refuges

**March 17**  
McKerricker State Park  
Highway 1, Fort Bragg

**February 17**  
Clear Lake State Park,  
Soda Bay Road,  
Kelseyville

**April and May (TBA)**



*Both the Varied Thrush and the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher were seen on the recent Redbud Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count.*

## *Early report on the 43rd annual Christmas Bird Count Results*

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on Dec. 16 was Redbud Audubon's 43<sup>rd</sup> year of participating in this fun and interesting day. A full report on the count will be in an upcoming newsletter, as soon as all the numbers are finalized.

However, some general information is that approximately 129 species were seen and 60,000 birds counted all together; there were 37 participants. The highlight birds this year were the Black-headed Grosbeak seen by Greg Guisti at his bird feeder in Kelseyville; the Short-eared Owl, seen by Jerry White, and a Surf Scoter seen by Gae Henry and Henry Bornstein in Anderson Marsh.

The annual Christmas Bird Count in Lake County is held either on the third or second Saturday in December. This year, as usual, the group met at Kelseyville Pizza the evening of the count to enjoy pizza and fellowship as well as to start adding up the numbers. Thank you to everyone who attended!

## *Save the Date! Olympic Birdfest set for April 13-15*

Olympic Birdfest, April 13-15, 2018. Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours, live auction, raffle, gala banquet, and more. Our featured speaker: Claudio Vidal will talk about Patagonia & Chile: Birds & Mammals at the End of the Americas. Join the festival pre-trip: a three-day, two-night birding/sightseeing cruise of the San Juan Islands, April 10-12, 2018 or extend your festival with the Neah Bay post-trip on April 16-17, 2018: two days exploring northwest coastal Washington. To learn more and register, visit [www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org).

## *Please provide us with your email*

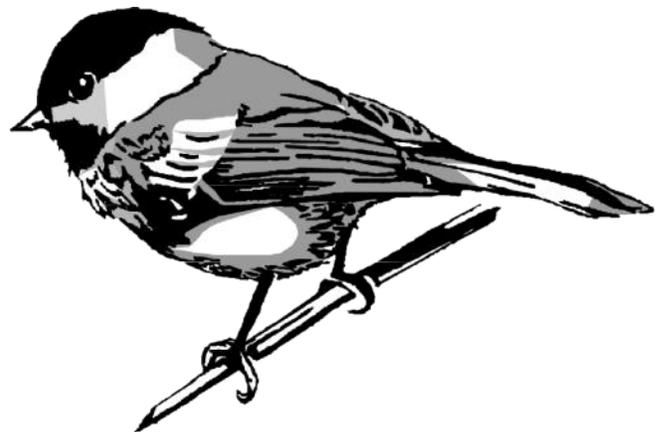
A number of our members have emailed us at [redbud.audubon@gmail.com](mailto:redbud.audubon@gmail.com) to opt to receive our newsletter, "The Western Grebe" by email as opposed to receiving it by mail.

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 the 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](mailto:redbud.audubon@gmail.com), and, if you wish, let us know in what areas you feel you can help.





*An adult Virginia Rail in the tules. One of the calls the Virginia Rail makes sounds similar to the oink of a pig.*

# BIRD OF THE MONTH

## *Virginia Rail*

*By Brad Barnwell*

Classified as “uncommon” or “fairly common” in the “Birds of Lake County seasonal checklist, the Virginia Rail can be heard at almost any time of year, as long as you are patient and you are in a wetland habitat. The best time to see the rail on Clear Lake is when the lake level has dropped to expose mudflats. The rail comes out of the tules and feeds on the mudflats by sinking his bill into the soft mud. The photos in this article were taken in the months of August and November, while I was kayaking Clear Lake State Park and Rodman Slough.

Here is some basic information on the Virginia Rail:

**Length:** 8 ½ to 10 ½ inches

**Weight:** 2.5 to 3 oz.

**Wingspan:** 13 to 14 ½ inches

**Description:** The adult has a brown back, light rust

*(Continued on page 7)*



*A juvenile Virginia Rail. Juveniles are similar in appearance to adults, but are darker overall, with brown eyes.*

*(Continued from page 6)*

colored breast, black and white barring on the flanks, charcoal gray cheeks with a darker head crown, red almost pinkish long downward curved bill and dark reddish brown eyes with a distinct black pupil. The juvenile is similar but has an overall darker almost sooty coloring (patchy) and brown eyes. The young chicks are black.

**Feeding:** Similar to the Sora, the Virginia Rail hunts the mudflats and marsh vegetation searching for aquatic insects, larvae, worms, beetles, slugs, caterpillars, seeds of marsh plants and occasionally small fish (California's Wildlife 1990 and Audubon 1980).

**Nesting:** Normally a small 6" to 7" diameter nest is built in the dry or shallow areas of the marsh or wetland and hidden deep in the vegetation. The nest is a few inches above the water and is built of sedge and or tule.

The 5 to 13 eggs, which are pale or nearly white with some brown spotting, are laid one per day with incubation starting after most of the eggs are laid. Incubation is normally 18 to 20 days, with rails sometimes producing a second brood (Peterson Field Guide 1979).



*Adult Virginia Rail. Photos by Brad Barnwell*

**Habitat:** Like the Sora, the Virginia Rail loves the marshes and wetlands of the county. The mudflats at or near the entrance to Rodman Slough and the mudflats at Clear Lake State Park are both excellent for watching both the Virginia Rail and the Sora. This rail can be very noisy with his calls. My wife and I call him the pig bird because one of his calls sounds similar to the oink-oink of a pig!

**Migration:** Year round resident.



*Some birds have adjusted to human cities quite well. This American Crow surveys the block from his perch.*



*Predators are always a threat (Peregrine Falcon)*

## ***How the struggle for survival has shaped birds and their behavior***

*(Continued from page 1)*

their senses, find food, migrate, face the weather, avoid predators, deal with competitors and interact with an environment modified by humans. Over the past 200 million years or so, birds have evolved physical abilities and behavioral strategies which have allowed them to survive day to day. Only the most well-adapted birds go on to the next stage in their life, reproduction.

“Unlike humans, the age of most birds doesn’t affect their chance of dying; most birds have an equal chance of dying at all times of their life – they don’t



*Weather can be harsh for some birds. Tree Swallows huddle together on a branch in a snow storm.*

really age, but live a perilous life. Sickly or injured birds are rarely seen in the wild as any decline in their health or injury puts them at immediate risk of death, so you only see healthy birds on your bird walks,” Lederer explains.

With ornithological science as the background, Dr. Lederer will explore the common and unusual ways birds put into operation their physical and mental adaptations and tell fascinating stories along the way. He will explain how birds use their ability to see ultraviolet, probe for food and find it without seeing or touching it, fly thousands of miles non-stop, change their songs in noisy cities, and other stories of the amazing things birds have to do to simply make it to tomorrow.

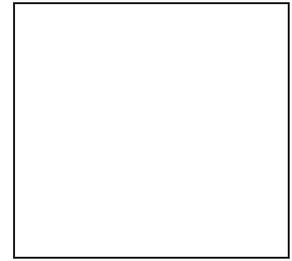
Dr. Roger Lederer’s expertise is ecology, science education, and ornithology. He has published over 30 scientific research papers and eight books, including *Ecology and Field Biology*, *Pacific Coast Bird Find-*

*er*, *Amazing Birds* (in seven languages), *Birds of New England*, *Latin for Bird Lovers*, and *Beaks, Bones, and Bird Songs*. Dr. Lederer taught at the university level, served as the Dean of Natural Sciences, consulted governments, private organizations and schools on environmental issues, and presented hundreds of public presentations to a wide variety of audiences.

He has been contacted by BBC, National Geographic, National Public Radio, National Canadian Television, Vanity Fair, the New Yorker, the Guinness Book of World Records, Real Simple Magazine, the Detroit Free Press, Voice of America, ABC News, and many other organizations and individuals for authoritative information on wild birds via his popular website, Ornithology.com.

Dr. Lederer has traveled to 100 countries and has been a guest speaker and naturalist on several cruise lines across the world since 2001, speaking on ecology and natural history.

**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.

---

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

I would also like to make a contribution 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*