



# *The Western Grebe*

Redbud Audubon Society, Inc.,

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

Volume 41—Issue No. 3—November 2015

## *Birds of the “Big Island”*

This month the Redbud Audubon Society welcomes Hopland resident, Bob Keiffer who will present a program on the Big Island of Hawaii, “Flora and Fauna – Bits and Pieces.” Bob presented his first “Birding in Hawaii,” program last year for Redbud Audubon, this November program will focus on birds of the Big Island. Those who have seen Bob’s programs before know the photography is fabulous and the program is always interesting. We are likely to pick up even more fasci-

### **NOVEMBER MEETING**

**Thursday, Nov. 19**

- \* Big Island—Hawaii:  
Flora and Fauna—  
Bits and Pieces
- \* Refreshments: 7 pm  
Announcements: 7:15 pm  
Program: 7:30 pm
- \* Glebe Social Hall, St.  
Peter’s Catholic Church,  
4085 Main St., Kelseyville

nating information about Hawaii.

Bob will enlighten viewers of past and present successes and failures at preserving unique island species. He had the opportunity to be guided for a day by Jack Jeffrey, a retired USFWS biologist and renowned Hawaiian nature photographer. Bob visited the island in 2014, first attending a vertebrate pest manage-

ment conference and then exploring the island with wife, Beth, for a week. He was able to find the island’s rarest bird – a bird that has an upper bill three times longer than the lower bill!

“The royal Hawaiian robes were made of bird feathers,” Bob notes, and “livestock did not result in a paradise island.” Find out the details at the program!

Bob was born and raised in Mendocino County and has had a long-time interest in natural resources and specifically a long-time interest in birds and mammals of the oak woodland habitats.



*I'iwi's are one of Hawaii's most recognizable species,*



*Royal Hawaiian robes were made of bird feathers.*

He followed his interest in wildlife by obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Management from Humboldt State University in 1979 and he is a certified Associate Wildlife Biologist with the Wildlife Society. Bob was the founder of the Peregrine Audubon Chapter in interior Mendocino County and has been the compiler of bird observations for Mendocino County, reporting to the

*(Continued on page 6)*

# *President's Message*

*by Roberta Lyons*

As you can see from the pictures in this newsletter, we had a great field trip in October at Indian Meadows camp on Bottle Rock Rd., Cobb Mt. We didn't see too many birds, but we had a lot of fun. We were treated to an excellent lunch by Jeannette Knight in honor of her birthday. Thank you Jeannette! Indian Meadows is a beautiful place to bird and fortunately was unaffected by the Valley Fire.

My friend Gillian Parrillo and I attended the Oct. 19 public meeting at Cobb Elementary about the concerns that Cobb residents have over what they perceive as excessive cutting of burned trees on Cobb and in Middletown. District V Supervisor Rob Brown called the meeting to address the concerns and assembled an impressive array of experts and agency heads to talk about the issues.

Cal Fire Division chief, Jim Wright started the program with a good description of how trees can look like they might survive, but really cannot because their cambium (a layer of material between the bark and the woody part of the tree) gets "cooked." It turns brown and gooey. He said it is possible to check trees for this damage and this is what arborists are supposed to base their decision on when marking trees to be felled.

Trees were ordered felled by PG&E, AT&T, the County and Caltrans. All of these agencies have the right to cut trees in their right-of-ways and do so to prevent harm and damage to both infrastructure and people. Trees are also needing to be felled

to allow for clean-up equipment to come in and clear hazardous waste.

Having said all of that, it was clear, that after listening to several reports of over-zealous tree-cutting on private property, that many trees were downed that didn't need to be. Steve Zalusky put it this way: "The issue is, not that people object to cutting trees in the right-of-ways for safety, the issue is that far more trees were cut down than was necessary." Supervisor Brown agreed that this probably did occur.

In the end, Brown promised to work with people and try to come up with solutions to the many issues facing Cobb and Middletown residents following this mega-disaster.

Personally, I felt assured after attending this meeting, that those in charge of the restoration and clean-up are very aware of the concerns of local residents, and are also aware of the need to take wildlife and habitat restoration into consideration.

Both of the environmental groups I am involved with: Redbud Audubon and the Lake County Land Trust, have been pondering how we can play a meaningful role in the restoration effort. As small organizations with limited capacity and funds, we still want to offer what help we can. One thing we are able to do is share information with our members and supporters, which is something we have started to do with this newsletter.



*Redbud Audubon members enjoyed a delicious birthday lunch after the field trip.*



*Happy birthday Jeanette, with husband Carol.*

## *Indian Meadows field trip was an enjoyable day for everyone*

October's field trip was a visit to Indian Meadows off of Bottle Rock Rd. on Cobb Mt. We had a good turn-out and everyone enjoyed the lovely surroundings of this mountain valley area that Kelsey Creek runs through. Birds seen included California Quail, a Cooper's Hawk, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mallards, Mourning Dove, Acorn Woodpecker, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Cedar Waxwings, House Finch and more.

After the event we enjoyed a lovely birthday lunch hosted by Jeannette Knight, long-time Audubon member and a resident on Cobb Mt. Thank you Jeannette for letting us help you celebrate your birthday!



*Getting ready to head out at Indian Meadows.*

## *Welcome new and returning members*

Welcome new and returning members: Tauri Henson, Clearlake; Jess Hollar, Kelseyville; Diane E. McClellan, Lakeport; Mak Smith, Hidden Valley Lake; Carol Huchingson, Hidden Valley Lake; Judith Cox, Witter Springs.



*Checking out the Cedar Waxwings.*

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# *What about the fate of wildlife in the Valley Fire?*

**Editors Note:** Following is an article by UC Agriculture Extension forestry specialist and biologist Greg Giusti. Greg is a resident of Kelseyville and is often the “go to” person when it comes to environmental and forest issues in Lake County. Both Redbud Audubon Society and the Lake County Land Trust have reached out to Greg in an effort to lend what resources we can to the Valley Fire Recovery effort. One of those resources is our ability to communicate, through emails and our newsletters, with a wide variety of Lake County residents who are concerned about the aftermath of this fire and the long-term impacts it will have on the people who live in the burn area as well as the habitat that wildlife depends on.

## **By Greg Giusti**

Most people in tune with California’s wildlands readily accept the role fire has played in shaping the state’s vegetation communities. Plants such as toyon, *Ceanothus*, chamise, mahogany, and even many oaks species sprout after a fire. Of these shrub species most require fire to scarify their seeds necessary for germination.

Species of closed-coned pines require fire and heat to open their cones for seed dispersal and germinate best in soil laid bare from the fire. Though humans often view fire as a destructive force (and it is) many of California’s native plants use fire as a force of rejuvenation.

With all the attention being given to fuels and fire behavior one of the topics often over-looked is the impact of fire on animals.

Obviously fires can be catastrophic for arthropods as insects and spiders simply cannot move quickly enough to escape the flames. If there is a silver lining to this story, hiking is made relatively tick free for years following a fire.

But as with plants, most California native vertebrates have evolved with the presence of fire. Late season fires, such as those experienced this year in Lake County, ignited after the nesting season thereby sparing nests, nestlings and fledglings.

Most birds in late summer and early fall fires can simply leave the area. Foraging may be affected in heavily burned areas as the prey base for insect eating birds are impacted. The following years may inhibit

foraging by some species until the arthropod communities rebuild. Owls and other sight predators can utilize the heavily burned areas for foraging as prey becomes exposed. As trees begin to decline and deteriorate woodpeckers will exploit the standing trees to excavate nesting cavities that can be used by secondary cavity nesters e.g. swallows, Bewick wrens, blue birds and others.

Those species that naturally seek shelter underground; deer mice, ground squirrels (including chipmunks), fence lizards (blue-bellied lizards) alligator lizards, generally survive.

Rodents such as tree squirrels, and dusky-footed woodrats that retreat to their wooden nests, tend to fare poorly particularly in fast moving flames as seen in the Valley Fire.

Large mammals such as deer, bear, coyote, and fox can often stay ahead of the flames. Slower moving meso-carnivores like raccoons, skunks, opossums do the best they can to escape the flames but undoubtedly some perished. Species like deer and elk will exploit the new growth in the coming spring.

Amphibians, such as tree frogs are at risk from fire. However, those species which spend the summer below ground, western toads, salamanders and newts may be safe from the flames but loss of prey can be problematic when they emerge following the rains.

Sediment choked streams can impair breeding success in those species that seek water for reproduction (red-bellied newts and toads).

Fortunately, each of the large fires seen this year in Lake County: Rocky, Jerusalem and Valley fires, each left a mosaic of impacts across the landscape leaving “islands” of untouched or relatively lightly burned acres that can serve as places where species can move back into the heavily burned areas (over time) and repopulate the area.

There is no doubt that some individual animals were killed in the fire but in ecological terms their populations will continue and survive. The surviving animals will exploit the habitat as it becomes available over time.

It’s hard to imagine that anything can persist when we view the devastation brought on by these fires, but fire has shaped the animals and plants we see today. As the forest begins the process of recovery animals will respond with each passing stage of recovery. Time is our greatest asset.

# Audubon follow-up on habitat and bird issues after Lake County wildfires

The Redbud Board of Directors discussed at the Oct. 15 board meeting what steps the Board and the chapter can take in coming months to identify and monitor issues and actions the chapter can take to address the impact of the three recent major wildfires in Lake County.

Our first concern was to contact our Cobb and Hidden Valley members to check on how the fire impacted each of them. That step was accomplished by phone and email in September and early October, and we remain available to help as needed.

From a habitat standpoint, the massive destruction of the forest and trees on Cobb raises questions about the impact on birds of this tremendous loss of shelter, food, and nesting sites. Several steps were agreed to:

Redbud President Roberta Lyons attended the Oct. 19 meeting on Cobb about the procedures for tree cutting by CalTrans, PG&E, AT&T, and other agencies.

Redbud members who have been able to return to their homes in the impacted areas are encouraged to put out bird feeders and birdbaths to provide food and water for local birds.

Redbud birders will regularly monitor ebird reports for Lake County bird sightings, for the purpose of identifying bird population changes. Redbud members are encouraged to enter all their bird

observations on ebird in order to strengthen the database for analyzing changes in bird movements.

The annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on Dec. 19 includes much of the Cobb area in the designated CBC circle, and the 2015 CBC results will be compared with past years to see what changes in winter bird populations have occurred since the wildfires.

Board members talked with Audubon California staff about how the state office and National Audubon scientists can provide information and suggestions to chapters suffering wildfire damage to bird habitats. As a result of Redbud's request, Audubon is setting up a "Wildfire Recovery" site on Audubon Works where chapter leaders can access information and share ideas on how to assist in habitat recovery for birds and wildlife.

The board will use our chapter's Member Planet and gmail systems to send out relevant habitat recovery information to members whose email addresses we have.

The Redbud board will include a Fire Recovery agenda item at all board meetings for the indefinite future to update habitat information and potential action steps for the chapter.

## *Join us at Anderson Marsh State Historic Park Nov. 21*

The field trip for November will be at Anderson Marsh State Historic Park. Meet in the parking lot at 8:45 for a 9 a.m. walk start. There should be songbirds, raptors and wildfowl and we stroll the mostly flat, but scenic trails of the park. Don't be surprised to see Black-shouldered Kites and Red-tailed Hawks.

Bring water and lunch to share in the Anderson Marsh Ranch House yard after the walk. Anderson Marsh State Historic Park is located on Highway 53 between Lower Lake and Clearlake. It is on the west side of the highway off of Anderson Marsh Parkway. Please be prepared to pay the \$4 parking fee if you plan to park in the Ranch House parking lot.

For more information, call Pat Harmon at (707) 263-4977.

## *Field Trip Calendar 2015-16*

Following is the field trip calendar for the Redbud Audubon Society for 2015/16. Prior to each field trip a description will appear in 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.

**Nov. 21** – Anderson Marsh State Historic Park

**Dec. 19** – Christmas Bird Count

**Jan. 16** – Colusa and Sacramento National Wildlife Refuges

**Feb. 20** - Clear Lake State Park, Kelseyville

**March 19** – Highland Springs Reservoir

**April 23** – Laguna de Santa Rosa. Hwy. 12 near Sebastopol

**May** – Heron Festival - TBA

# *Redbud Audubon to participate in annual Christmas Bird Count on December 19*

This year, the annual Clear Lake Christmas Bird Count, held by the Redbud Audubon Society, will be on Saturday, Dec. 19. The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a traditional project of Audubon societies around the country and takes place between Dec. 14 and Jan. 5.

Each December birders gather to record every individual bird and species encountered during the day. Each count group has a designated circle of 15 miles in diameter and tries to cover as much ground as possible within a certain period of time.

The data collected by each count group are then sent to the National Audubon Headquarters in New York and is made available online.

Redbud Audubon invites all birders and nature enthusiasts to join in the upcoming Christmas Bird Count. Birders of all skill levels are encouraged to participate. This is Audubon's longest running wintertime tradition and is the 39<sup>th</sup> year the Count has taken place in Lake County. There will be two main groups that participants might wish to join – one will meet at Anderson Marsh State Historic Park and the other will meet at the Visitor's Center Parking lot at the Clear Lake State Park. Both groups will meet at 8 a.m. and continue through to early or mid-afternoon.

After the count, participants are invited to a pizza dinner at 5:30 p.m. at Kelseyville Pizza on State Street in Kelseyville to join in the count compilation where the tally of the day's sightings is compiled.

Previous to the bird count, at the Thursday Dec. 17, meeting at Glebe Hall (next to St. Peter's Catholic Church, 4085 Main Street, Kelseyville) Brad Barnwell will present an extensive slide show and discussion of distinguishing features of birds that are often seen during the annual count. The meeting is open to the public and visitors are encouraged to attend. It starts at 7 p.m.

If you are interested in participating in the bird count, call (707) 263-8030, leave a message with your phone number, and someone will return your call.

The Christmas Bird Count began more than a century ago when 27 conservationists in 25 localities, led by scientist and writer Frank Chapman, changed the course of ornithological history.

On Christmas Day in 1900, the small group posed an alternative to the "side hunt," a Christmas day activity in which teams competed to see who could shoot the most birds and small mammals. Instead, Chapman proposed to identify, count, and record all the birds they saw, founding what is now considered



*A Red-breasted Sapsucker is a likely bird to be seen during this year's annual Christmas Bird Count.*

to be the world's most significant citizen-based conservation effort – and century-old institution.

Scientists rely on the remarkable trend data of Audubon's CBC to better understand how birds and the environment are faring throughout North America – and what needs to be done to protect them. Data from Audubon's signature Citizen Science program are at the heart of numerous peer-reviewed scientific studies.

With all of the issues, including climate change and habitat loss, facing both local bird species and birds worldwide, there is no time like the present to start getting involved in local bird conservation and educating yourself about the numerous bird species we have right here in Lake County; the annual Christmas Bird Count is a fun way of doing this.

## *Birds of the "Big Island"*

*(Continued from page 1)*

North American Birds publication (Northern California region) for about 25 years.

Bob has been at the University of California's Ag and Natural Resources Division – Hopland Research and Extension Center for over 30 years, mostly as Principal Superintendent of Agriculture. There he has introduced and presented to many visitors, classes, and groups, the topic of oaks and oak woodland habitat, wildlife, range managements, and many other topics.

Please join us for this fascinating program. As always, our programs are free and open to the public.

# Forest Advisor provides info on erosion control on burned acreage

*Editors Note:* Forest Advisor Greg Giusti with the UC Cooperative Extension is providing information to the public regarding important concerns following the devastating Valley Fire.

**By Greg Giusti**

The recent fires in Lake County have resulted in an unprecedented need to address forest resource recovery and protection. There are a number of important topics currently being discussed among a wide array of resource professionals addressing hazard tree removal, water quality, reseeding and reforestation, salvage logging, and soil protection. Many of these topics will take months, if not years, to address as the scale and scope of the burned acreage is taxing local, state and Federal resources.

The immediate need for land and home owners to consider is soil protection as the loosened soil and ash can move quickly under proper storm conditions. Though seeding has often been used in the past it is generally considered ineffective as the seed simply moves and erodes with the soil and ash following an initial rain event. An effective soil erosion prevention method is to leave any tree limbs, logs, trunks, rocks or other solid structures on the soil surface to trap any moving soil.

Though many people may want to “clean” their property allowing woody debris to sit through the winter will serve as an effective way to arrest soil movement. If people are having to harvest hazard trees, positioning them strategically on slopes or near streams and gullies, for the first winter, will provide similar soil protection.

Lastly, there are commercially available materials designed specifically to minimize soil erosion and may need to be considered. However, people addressing soil erosion potential on their properties should take a few minutes to assess what resources they have on hand to protect soils and keep costs low.



## Observations

*By Jerry White (JRW)*

On May 2nd there was a **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** seen on Clear Lake from Highway 20 (JRW). Last year (2014) I had no reports of **LEAST BITTERN**. There were 2 sightings this year; one was seen by Greg Giusti near Lakeside County Park on June 13th and another bird was seen by Brad Barnwell at Rodman Slough on July 24th.

There was only one report of **SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** this fall; 3 were seen and photographed by Doug Prather at the Kelsey Creek outlet on August 23rd. A **LONG-BILLED CURLEW** was seen flying over the southwest part of Clear Lake on July 3rd by Floyd Hayes. This was the 6th record for Lake County. Dave Woodward found a **SOLITARY SANDPIPER** at the Kelsey Creek outlet on August 22nd. A **RUDDY TURNSTONE** (2nd county record) was at the Kelsey Creek outlet on July 30th (JRW). Floyd Hayes found a **PARASITIC JAEGER** (5th county record) flying over Clear Lake on September 27th.

A **COSTA'S HUMMINGBIRD** was first found on August 25th at Clear Lake Riviera by Vicki Miller. This was the first record for this species in Lake County since April of 2000.

The second record for Lake of **NORTHERN PARULA** was a bird heard singing in Corinthian Bay Subdivision on June 16th (JRW). Jon Dunn found a **CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER** (3rd county record) at Rodman Slough Park on October 16th. The bird was seen by Darlene Hecomovich, Pat Harmon, Dave Woodward and others.

## Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, Jan, 15-18

Come to where the birds are at the 20th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival. Located on California's scenic Central Coast, Morro Bay is an important stop on the Pacific Flyway and one of the country's pre-eminent birding spots. The area is recognized worldwide for its diversity of both resident and wintering birds, and at last year's festival, over 200 species of birds were identified!

To register and for more information about the Festival check out our website at [www.morrobaybirdfestival.org](http://www.morrobaybirdfestival.org). Registration starts November 7. The deadline for pre-registration is January 5, 2016 but early signups are encouraged as the most popular events fill up quickly.

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