



The Western Grebe

Redbud Audubon Society, Inc.,

www.redbudaudubon.org

Volume 45 • Issue No. 2 • October, 2019

Glorified Dinosaurs: The Origin and Early Evolution of Birds



Elliott Dabill

Our October speaker Elliott Dabill will discuss some global findings of the last thirty years that promise to enrich what you know about birds: Fossil finds that show feathers, fossils that connect birds to dinosaurs, and bird behavior and physiology that can now be explained through deep time. We are in the golden age of dinosaur exposition, especially of the dinosaurs that are birds.

Every part of a bird's body that we think of as only for the birds was invented and elaborated by non-avian dinosaurs first. Feathers, claws, beaks and parts you may not have known about allowed the T-rexes and triceratopses to dominate the world for 160 million years. Humans, for comparison, have been around for less than 300 thousand.

The startling scientific findings over recent decades have shown a detailed series of discoveries linking dinosaurs and birds. Dabill will explain how we came to make the connections

that reveal the truth about birds: they are dinosaurs, all of them, and they survived the asteroid that killed off their relatives that couldn't fly.

Elliott Dabill has been interested in dinosaurs for decades. They became a focus of his enduring passion about the subject of evolution. He has driven over 5,000 miles to visit Western U.S. dinosaur museums, for example.

Dabill, a biologist and educator, taught high school for 18 years. He is the current president of Friends of the Arcata Marsh, which works closely with the Redwood Region Audubon chapter in Humboldt County. Dabill leads tours of the marsh at least monthly.

Join us to learn about this story so exciting that all birders will be fascinated by the connections between dinosaurs and birds.

OCTOBER MEETING **Thursday, October 17**

- **Topic:** Glorified Dinosaurs:
The Origin and Early Evolution of Birds
- **Speaker:** Elliott Dabill
- **Refreshments:** 7 pm
Announcements: 7:15 pm
Program: 7:30 pm
- **Location:** Presbyterian Church Social Hall, 5430 Third St., Kelseyville.

President's Message by Roberta Lyons

Take action and live as if it does matter



If you're like me, it is pretty easy to get depressed by the constant bombardment of bad news about the environment. Whether it's from updates from National Audubon (recently the heart-warming news that our North American bird population has declined by the billions) to just daily PBS and mainstream media reports about climate change, it all seems pretty hopeless.

However, that doesn't mean we should just sit back and do nothing. I take an existential view of this whole mess the world is in. I take action and live as if it does matter, even if, in the whole scheme of things, it really doesn't. I will be long gone before I know if any of my small, local efforts have made a difference, but that is ok. I would rather do something than nothing. It does make you feel better. So, if you're feeling depressed about the state of our environment, just start doing little things, like saving dead trees in your yard (as long

as they are far from your house and don't present a fire hazard).

We have a great article in this newsletter about the importance to cavity-nesting birds of saving dead trees when possible. Of course there are lots of other things we can do in our personal lives. Along with leaving dead trees, you can create other wildlife habitat in your own yard by planting native grasses and fire-resistant shrubs to provide food and cover for birds. Providing a fresh water supply is also very important; keep your cat inside. It all makes a difference.

Please provide us with your email

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

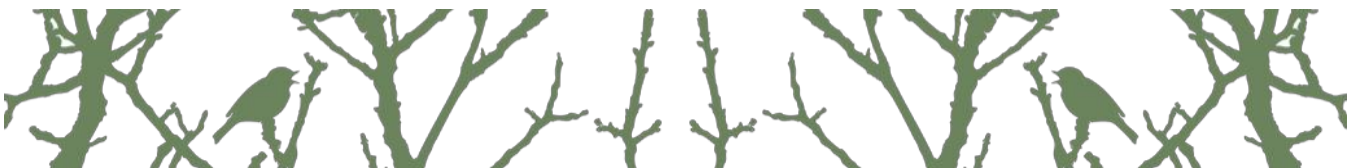
Not only do you help save a tree, you help us save on expenses and energy in sending it to you by regular mail, and it comes to you in color versus the black and white mailed version. If you have been meaning to, but haven't yet done so, take the minute or two out of your time to do so.

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, and, if you wish, let us know in what areas you feel you can help.



Alarming report on bird decline published in Science Magazine; learn more on National Audubon's website

Editor's Note:

Following is a short excerpt from an article on the National Audubon Society website. You can read the whole article by clicking on the following link or entering it into your search bar: <https://www.audubon.org/news/north-america-has-lost-more-1-4-birds-last-50-years-new-study-says>.

Almost anywhere you go, you can find birds. They scurry through the waves on every beach, sing as they wing over every prairie, raise chicks in nests in every wood, and visit every backyard. But while birds remain everywhere, people are actually seeing far fewer of them than just 50 years ago, according to a new study.

It estimates that North America is home to nearly three billion fewer birds today compared to 1970—that's more than 1 in 4 birds that have disappeared from the landscape in a mere half a century.

"This was an astounding result, even to us," says lead author and Cornell Lab of Ornithology conservation scientist Ken Rosenberg.

The study, published today in the journal *Science*, marks the first time experts have tried to estimate sheer numbers of avian losses in the Western Hemi-

(Continued on page 8)

Web Links:

The Study: Nearly 3 billion North American birds have disappeared since 1970 (<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/366/6461/120>)

What We Can Do:
<https://www.3billionbirds.org/>

The Article from Audubon.org:
<https://www.audubon.org/news/north-america-has-lost-more-1-4-birds-last-50-years-new-study-says>.

REDBUD AUDUBON BOARD OF DIRECTORS



OFFICERS

President: Roberta Lyons

Vice President: Open

Treasurer: Nicola Selph

Secretary: Katherine Lindsley

Past-President: Marilyn Waits

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

Bird Observations - Jerry White
Christmas Bird Count - Brad and Kathy Barnwell
Conservation - Roberta Lyons & Evelyn Wachtel
Education - Lisa Prather
Field Trips - Pat Harmon
Grebe Project Manager - Marilyn Waits
Historian - Pat Harmon
Hospitality - Pat Harmon
Member-at-Large - Tina Wasson
Membership Manager - Susanne Scholz
Newsletter Editor - Roberta Lyons
Newsletter Email Distribution - Lisa Prather
Newsletter Production - Jim Scholz
Programs - Marilyn Waits
Publicity - Roberta Lyons
Webmaster and Social Media -
Bonnie Thompson and Donna Mackiewicz

To contact a board member:

Phone 707/ 263-8030

Email: redbud.audubon@gmail.com

Dull and useless does not describe a dead tree says noted arborist

Editor's Note: Following is an excellent article about the importance of dead trees for habitat, not only for birds but reptiles, bugs, and small mammals. Lately I have been communicating with Gillian Martin who is actively involved with the Cavity Conservation Initiative. Please go to their website: www.cavityconservation.com and learn about the initiative and how important this issue is. Many thanks to Gillian and to Brian French, of Arboriculture International for allowing to re-use their material in our Western Grebe Newsletter. (Illustration used with permission of Brian French, Arboriculture International)

Depending on its location and stage of decay, if a dying tree is allowed to remain in place it offers diverse habitat elements over time. This illustration shows features that provide benefits to wildlife such as loose bark and cavities for shelter, denning, nesting or roosting. A bird might use lichen for concealing a nest.

Vertical openings offer a reptile a place to thermo-regulate, a spider to set a trap or a small mammal to store food.

Horizontal spaces are perches for preening, courtship and territorial defense, as well as camouflage against wood. Moss Mats are moist covers and sometimes a source of water for heat-sensitive organisms. They are also nest material.



Dead trees serve as acorn granaries for woodpeckers.

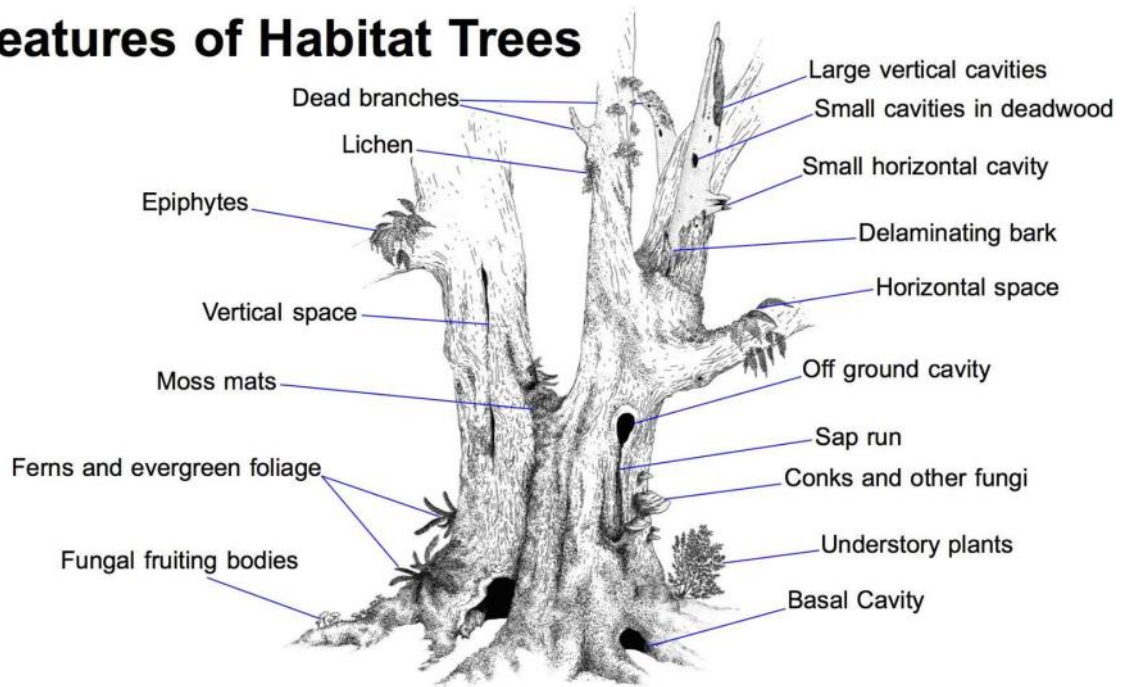


Dead trees provide habitat for many creatures.



Birds feast on termites, beetles and larvae found in dead trees.

Features of Habitat Trees



Brian French, Arboriculture International



Pileated Woodpeckers are in need of cavity nesting habitat, like this majestic creature photographed by Redbud Audubon member, Joyce Anderson.



Brad Barnwell led the Rodman Preserve Redbud Audubon walk in September. He is pictured explaining the history of the area to our group attending.



A great group of folks attended the September field trip at the Rodman Preserve.



Rodman Preserve, owned by the Lake County Land Trust, provides beautiful scenic vistas.

It was an enjoyable morning at Rodman Preserve September walk

The September walk at the always popular Rodman Preserve, the 240 acre preserve owned and operated by the Lake County Land Trust and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife near Upper Lake, was a beautiful morning. Seven folks showed for the walk and enjoyed the morning, despite a slight chill in the air.

Brad and Kathy Barnwell were on hand to lead the walk. Kathy recorded the birds that were seen, including:

Mourning Dove – 9

Anna's Hummingbird – 2

Great Egret – 1

Turkey Vulture – 7

Red-shouldered Hawk – 1

Red-tailed Hawk – 1

Acorn Woodpecker – 12

Nuttall's Woodpecker – 3

Black Phoebe – 3

California Scrub-Jay – 13

American Crow – 1

Common Raven – 8

Oak Titmouse – 2

White-breasted Nuthatch – 7

House Finch – 6

California Towhee - 2

Field Trip Calendar

Following is the field trip calendar for the Redbud Audubon Society for 2019 – 2020. 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 our field trip chair, Pat Harmon at (707) 263-4977 for information. Outings start at 9 a.m. unless otherwise noted.

September 21

Lake County Land Trust's Rodman Preserve
6350 Westlake Rd. Upper Lake, CA

October 19

Anderson Marsh State Historic Park
Highway 53, Lower Lake

November 23

Middle Creek Nature Trail near Upper Lake
(Near the Reclamation area)
Meet at Judy's Junction in Upper Lake

December 14

Christmas Bird Count

January 18

National Wildlife Refuges at Colusa
and Sacramento – carpool from Lower Lake

February 22

Clear Lake State Park – Soda Bay Road,
Kelseyville

March 21

Highlands Springs Reservoir – Lakeport

April

Heron Days

May 23

Eel River, Potter Valley



Audubon field trip will be at Anderson Marsh State Historic Park

This month's Redbud Audubon field trip will be held at Anderson Marsh State Historic on Saturday, Oct. 19 starting at 9 a.m. The park is located on Highway 53 between Lower Lake and the city of Clearlake. The public is invited to join experienced birders for a beautiful morning.

It is likely that numerous songbirds, herons and hopefully the usually present Black-shouldered Kite will be seen. The walk is flat most of the way, depending on which route is chosen. Participants can decide when they gather.

Please meet in the parking lot of the ranch house. All participants must pay the parking fee, which is accomplished at the parking station post on the right as you drive into the lot.

For more information about the Redbud Audubon Society, go to www.redbudaudubon.org.

Alarming report on bird decline published in Science Magazine; learn more on National Audubon's website

(Continued from page 3)

sphere. Typically, conservation studies focus on a specific species, habitat, region, or type of threat. By taking a higher-level view, the study highlights that many birds we still consider common, ranging from Baltimore Orioles to Dark-eyed Juncos to Barn Swallows, are actually posting heavy population losses over time.

Continued next column

Continued from previous column

Altogether, the research team—which included collaborators at the American Bird Conservancy, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, U.S. Geological Survey, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and other institutions—analyzed the breeding population of 529 species by pooling data from the North American Breeding Bird Survey, Audubon’s Christmas Bird Count, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service waterfowl surveys, and 10 other datasets. They also analyzed more recent data collected by weather radar technology that can track large groups of birds as they migrate to estimate their numbers.

The weather radars indicated a 14 percent decrease in nocturnal spring-migrating birds in the last decade alone, helping the authors to verify the longer-term survey trends—especially for those breeding in remote northern habitats that aren’t as well monitored. Using models that incorporated all the data, they estimated the net number of birds lost over time, across various habitats and bird groupings.

Legislative support is 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 representative 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.

Central Valley Birding Symposium 2019 Planned for Nov. 21 – 24 in Stockton

The Central Valley Bird Club will be hosting the 23rd annual Central Valley Birding Symposium (CVBS) Nov. 21-24, 2019, at the Stockton Hilton Hotel in Stockton. The Great Central Valley, in the heart of California and the Pacific Flyway, is uniquely situated for excellent birding

The CVBS kicks off with a delicious hors d’oeuvres buffet and no host bar on Thursday night, followed by a favorite keynote speaker, outstanding photographer, birder, and presenter, Ed Harper, with his program, ***"Simply in Awe of Birds"***.

Friday night's keynote program ***"The Language of Birds"*** will be presented by Nathan Pieplow, author of the Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds.

Saturday night's keynote program, ***"The Genius of Birds"*** will be presented by acclaimed science and nature writer, Jennifer Ackerman. Learn how birds make and use their own

sophisticated tools, teach one another new skills, exercise astonishing feats of memory, create works of art, navigate, communicate in ways that resemble language, and even pass along cultural traditions.

Informative and entertaining workshops include: ***"Subspecies for Birders"*** with Joe Morlan, ***"I Know It When I See It"*** by Jon Dunn, and an update on Central Valley bird conservation and research programs

Field trips, offered Friday, Saturday and Sunday, always turn up exciting birds. Add in the entertaining and educational Bird ID Panel, the wonderful selection of optics, art and gifts at the Birder’s Market plus the camaraderie of hundreds of like-minded folks, and you know you’ll have a good time!

To look over the schedule of events, go to: <http://www.cvbirds.org/events/symposium/>

Registration began Sept. 6, 2019.

Three Billion Canaries in the Coal Mine

**What does it mean for us that birds are dying?
And what can we do about it?**

*By Margaret Renkl, Contributing Opinion Writer,
New York Times, September 29, 2019*

A new study in the journal *Science* reports that [nearly 3 billion North American birds have disappeared since 1970](#). That's 29 percent of all birds on this continent. The data are both incontrovertible and shocking. "We were stunned by the result," Cornell University's Kenneth V. Rosenberg, the study's lead author, told *The Times*.

This is not a report that projects future losses on the basis of current trends. It is not an update on the state of rare birds already in trouble. This study enumerates actual losses of familiar species — ordinary backyard birds like sparrows and swifts, swallows and blue jays. The anecdotal evidence from my own yard, it turns out, is everywhere.

You may have heard of the proverbial canary in the coal mine — caged birds whose sensitivity to lethal gasses served as an early-warning system to coal miners; if the canary died, they knew it was time to flee. This is what ornithologists John W. Fitzpatrick and Peter P. Marra meant when they wrote, in an opinion piece for *The Times*, that "Birds are indicator species, serving as acutely sensitive barometers of environmental health, and their mass declines signal that the earth's biological systems are in trouble."

Unlike the miners of old, we have nowhere safe to flee. Nevertheless, the current administration has been rolling back existing environmental protections faster than environmentalists can respond to the ceaseless bad news.

On the other hand, we've been here before. Not here, precisely, but close enough to have seen what can happen when large numbers of people demand action. Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" — which was published on September 27, 1962, almost exactly 57 years ago — made readers understand the cumulative effects of pesticides on the food chain. The resulting outcry led to a ban on DDT, which in turn was instru-

Web Links:

The Study: Nearly 3 billion North American birds have disappeared since 1970 (<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/366/6461/120>)

*What We Can Do:
<https://www.3billionbirds.org/>*

mental in allowing raptors like bald eagles and peregrine falcons, which exist at the top of their own food chains, to recover. One bit of good news in the new report in *Science* is that both of those species are now thriving.

With climate deniers occupying both the White House and the United States Senate, we seem to be a long way from achieving anything like the kind of bipartisan effort that led to the recovery of the bald eagle. But as avian research-and-advocacy organizations have pointed out, we are not entirely powerless. While continuing to pressure our elected leaders to do right by the planet before it convulses completely, we can also tend our own gardens with an eye toward giving birds a better chance:

Maintain a brush pile so songbirds have a place to hide from predators.

Let dead trees stand as nesting sites for cavity-nesting birds and a food source for insects. The insects will in turn provide protein for birds.

Plant fruit-and-nut-bearing trees and berry-

producing shrubs. Native birds evolved to eat native plants, so make sure everything you plant is native to your area.

Swear off herbicides and insecticides, in your yard and refrigerator. A chemical-free yard provides safe food sources for birds, and organic farms provide the same benefits on an agricultural scale.

Keep fresh water readily available. In a drought, it's easier for birds to find food than clean water.

Use traps instead of rat poison, many forms of which move up the food chain to raptors, like owls and hawks, that eat rodents.

To protect existing forests, buy sustainably sourced wood and paper products, eat less beef, drink shade-grown coffee.

Keep house cats indoors. Even well-fed cats kill birds.

Reduce bird collisions with glass by keeping screens up year-round or installing guards that interrupt reflections.

Eliminate single-use plastics, many of which end up in the oceans where seabirds consume them at lethal levels.

These efforts alone won't save North American birds. A true solution will require concerted effort: the political will to address climate change, conservation strategies that restore habitat, policies that consider wildlife needs as well as human needs. More than anything, it will require a comprehensive understanding that wildlife needs *are* human needs.

None of this will happen without a wholesale shift

in this country's politics, and while that might seem impossible, it isn't.

The Republican Party today may be little more than a political wing of the fossil-fuel industry, but it needn't be that way. The Environmental Protection Agency that President Trump seems intent on destroying was created by President Richard Nixon, a Republican.

Margaret Renkl is a contributing opinion writer who covers flora, fauna, politics and culture in the American South. She is the author of the book "*Late Migrations: A Natural History of Love and Loss.*"



Membership explained

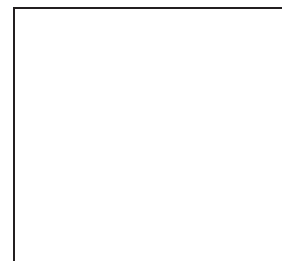
Just a quick reminder that you have a choice between two types of membership. Most of you are members of National Audubon and are assigned by National to our Redbud Audubon chapter.

We offer chapter-only membership whereby you must enroll via the internet. You can 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.org and letting us know.

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

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.
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