



# *The Western Grebe*

Redbud Audubon Society, Inc.,

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

Volume 46 • Issue No. 5 • January, 2021



## **REDBUD AUDUBON MEETING**

### **JANUARY CHAPTER MEETING**

**Thursday, January 21**

**Topic: Northern Saw-whet Owl  
Monitoring Project**

**Presenter:** Ken Sobon, director of the  
Northern Saw-whet Owl Research and  
Education Project in Northern California  
**Program starts at 7 PM**

To register for Zoom meeting, click link:  
<https://forms.gle/2tDTM1gpp4CsvtwJA>

[Redbud Audubon's Saw-whet Owl  
Program Registration](#)



*(Above left) The elusive and interesting  
Saw-whet Owl. (Above) This tiny owl seems ok  
with handler Ken Sobon.*

## **Join us Jan. 21 for a look at the monitoring of the fascinating Saw-whet Owl**

What do you know about Saw-whet Owls? If you're like most of us, probably not much. But these little birds are all around us, year-round, fighting out their fierce lives in our forests and

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# President's Message

by Roberta Lyons

## Chaparral isn't just fuel, it is a unique ecosystem that provides valuable habitat for many species



Chaparral, which covers much of Lake County, is a unique ecosystem. As author Richard Halsey says: "California chaparral is one of the most pristine and beautiful Mediterranean-type shrub

lands on earth . . . chaparral is pure California."

It covers the hills like a green carpet and provides much of the scenic beauty that is appreciated by both residents and visitors to Lake County.

Chaparral is home to many species of birds and mammals, including the elusive Wrentit. This small passerine that flits among the shrubs mates for life and does not leave its home area of just a few square hundred yards. According to Halsey, author of *Fire, Chaparral, and Survival in Southern California*, chaparral should be designated as California's State Ecosystem.

But, because most people remain ignorant and unaware of the value and beauty of this habitat, it is gravely endangered. Most people, especially during this time of rampant wildfires, view it simply as "fuel," and seem to blindly follow the myths of the "dangerous and overgrown brush lands" that have been perpetrated for years by government agencies and individuals.

A good example of this is the updated CalFire Vegetation Treatment Program (VTP) which was rushed through and approved in 2019. It calls for "fuel management activities" that will target 60,000 acres of wildlands per year for habitat clearance, which would eventually affect an area of more than 23 million acres.

Calls for control burns and thinning abound, but

there is poor consideration or none of how burning or thinning should responsibly be practiced across the spectacularly diverse ecosystems of California.

Redwood forests, mixed coniferous and deciduous woodlands, chaparral, natural native grasslands - and many other ecosystems - need to be managed individually. There is no "one size fits all" management strategy that will result in healthier and more fire-resilient ecosystems. Statements claiming that chaparral is "adapted to fire," or "fire-dependent," are thrown around with no consideration of what this really means. Chaparral is a simple name for a shrub ecosystem that can be composed of many different plant species and provides food and shelter for wildlife in challenging, rocky, dry areas where woodlands can't establish. This ecosystem is highly variable north to south, east to west, and on different soil types.

Many of the species that comprise chaparral are able to re-grow relatively quickly after fire; many shrub species re-sprout vigorously, others rely on an increase in seed germination after fire, and numerous annual or short-lived perennial plants appear in abundance after a burn. But, these plant populations persist for only a few years as the shrubs re-establish. This does not mean that chaparral "needs to burn." Too frequent burning or constant mechanical clearing will not allow the shrub species to reach reproductive maturity, but instead creates disturbed open areas where non-native grasses readily take over. These non-native grasses are highly flammable every summer, and are mostly responsible for carrying fire into woody vegetation.

We need to take care of our biodiverse ecosystems in California. Chaparral can elegantly survive fire and the species it supports are adapted to recover from the fire frequencies that naturally occurred for millennia until recently. We need to find responsible

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## Chaparral isn't just fuel

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ways of managing our woody plant communities to burn at frequencies that maintain healthy ecosystems that are more resilient to disturbances like fire. Exterminating our woody plant communities is not an acceptable approach.

To get a deeper understanding of the importance of chaparral, visit The California Chaparral Institute's webpage at [www.californiachaparral.org](http://www.californiachaparral.org). Or purchase Halsey's book: *Fire, Chaparral, and Survival in Southern California* at [www.sunbeltbooks.com](http://www.sunbeltbooks.com).

## *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 a 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.

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.

## REDBUD AUDUBON BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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**Phone 707/ 263-8030**

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



*Val Nixon writing down some bird tallies. Tess McGuire and Val kayaked from Jago Bay to Konocti Bay on the CBC count day. The two counted over 50 species.*

# 2020 Christmas Bird Count Preliminary Results encouraging

**By Kathy Barnwell, CBC Coordinator**

Congratulations to our 38 intrepid birders for participating in Redbud Audubon's 46<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count held December 19, 2020. The weather was beautiful this year, with a high of 61, no wind to speak of, and mostly sunny. With Covid-19 restrictions, including a curfew from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., separate cars for all non-household participants, social distancing and masking requirements, the 15 groups were able to identify one hundred twenty-seven (127) bird species.

Since 1997, the highest count was 153 species in 2007, and the lowest was 122 in both 2003 and 2018. This year is the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest species count since 1997. Despite the lower species count, the participants counted a total of 61,995 birds. Although this tally is

below the 68,266 birds seen in 2017, it is the third highest number since our biggest year in 2004, when our count was 135,312.

A few of the birds we missed this year are: **Canvasback, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Lewis' Woodpecker, Spotted Sandpiper, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch** (missing for the third year in a row), and **Golden-crowned Kinglet**.

The following birds were seen by only one of the 15 groups:

- Greater White-fronted Goose (2)**
- Cackling Goose (9)**
- Ring-necked Duck (149)**
- Red-breasted Merganser (1)**

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# 2020 Christmas Bird Count

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**Ring-necked Pheasant** (2)  
**Red-necked Grebe** (1)  
**American Bittern** (1)  
**White-tailed Kite** (1)  
**Cooper's Hawk** (1)  
**Ferruginous Hawk** (2)  
**Virginia Rail** (1)  
**Thayers Gull** (3)  
**Western x**  
**Glaucous-winged Gull** (3)  
**Rock Pigeon** (10)  
**Band-tailed Pigeon** (4)  
**Barn Owl** (1)  
**Northern Saw-whet Owl** (1)  
**Red-breasted Sapsucker** (2)  
**Merlin** (1)  
**\*Loggerhead Shrike** (1)  
**Pygmy Nuthatch** (5)  
**Brown Creeper** (1)  
**Lark Sparrow** (8)  
**Bell's Sparrow** (1)  
**Rufous-crowned Sparrow** (1)

\*The **Loggerhead Shrike** is a new bird for our count this year.

Congratulations to the participants who found all these birds! Without our dedicated birders, many of these birds would not be included in our count.

Using preliminary bird numbers, the top species were:

1. **Western/Clark's Grebes** at 33,294
2. **Ruddy Duck** at 11,950
3. **California Gull** at 2,512
4. **Double-crested Cormorant** at 1,452

We truly appreciate and thank all the participants for their support and efforts in making the bird count as accurate and complete as possible. We hope that all participants had a good time and will join us next December for National Audubon's 122<sup>nd</sup> Annual Christmas Bird Count. Happy Birding!



*Tess McGuire birding in her kayak during the CBC.*

## *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](http://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](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.



*Western Bluebirds are common in Lake County and often make use of nest boxes.*



*Even children can help in monitoring of nest boxes.*

# Redbud Audubon introduces official Bluebird Recovery Program Coordinator

*Monitoring of nest boxes and nests will begin at the Rodman Preserve*

Have you heard of a bluebird trail? A bluebird trail consists of a number of nesting boxes spaced 100 yards or more apart and so located that they can be conveniently monitored regularly throughout nesting season by going from box to box.

Several different species of cavity-nesting birds call nest boxes “home”, including Western Bluebirds, Oak Titmouse, Bewick’s Wren, Black-capped Chickadees and Tree Swallows. By looking at the nests and eggs inside the boxes, it can be determined who is living there, and for how long. This data is then analyzed to find population patterns. “Climate change adds to the pressure on many cavity-nesting bird species,” says Donna Mackiewicz, Lake County’s CA Bluebird Recovery Program Coordinator and Redbud Audubon Vice President. “With Lake County’s recent wild fires, nest boxes are more important than ever to the long-term future of species dependent on nesting in tree cavities.”

Redbud Audubon is partnering with the Lake County Land Trust. Donna will be adding more nest boxes to the already existing boxes at the Land Trust’s Rodman Preserve. She will be monitoring the boxes and create an official Bluebird Trail.

Her project will also include monitoring nests found at the preserve. All data will be submitted to Califor-

nia Bluebird Recovery Program ([cbrp.org](http://cbrp.org)) and to NestWatch.

NestWatch is a nationwide nest-monitoring program designed to track status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds. Participating in Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s NestWatch is easy and anyone can do it. To participate simply go to [www.nestwatch.org](http://www.nestwatch.org).

1. Take the online quiz to get certified
2. Find nests
3. Record data
4. Submit online on with the mobile app.

You can also find nest and egg ID and see construction plans, tips and more on the website.

Individualized trailing upon request is available by our chapter. Our volunteers will also share the bird species on your property and give ideas for proper placement on the nest box as well as answer any nesting questions.

If you would like more information on nests or to donate a bluebird box in your family’s name or friend’s honor, contact us at [www.redbudaudubon.org](http://www.redbudaudubon.org). You will receive updates and photos on your nest box activity and an invitation to open the box in the nesting season to see the eggs and nestlings once hatched.

Bluebird happiness to all!



*One of the nest boxes at the Rodman Preserve with new flashing installed around the post to prevent predators.*



*Richard Mankiewicz installs a new nest box at the Rodman Preserve.*



*Ken Sobon checking and banding a Saw-whet Owl.*

### ***Join us Jan. 21 for a look at monitoring of the fascinating Saw-whet Owl***

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woodlands. Come learn about these neighbors from Ken Sobon, director of the Northern Saw-whet Owl Research and Education Project in Northern California.

Ken Sobon is an avid birder, field trip leader, Vice President of Altacal Audubon Society, and is now the Northern California representative on the Audubon California Board of Directors. For the past five seasons he has been the Director of the Northern Saw-whet Owl fall migration monitoring project. In addition, Ken has been a science teacher to middle school students in Oroville since 1995. He has shared his love of science and birding with his students both in the classroom and in field.

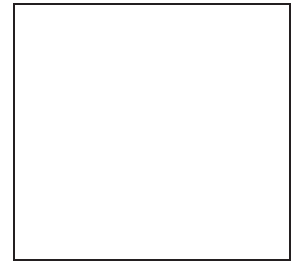
To join us on Zoom please register for this program using the link on page one of this newsletter, or, go to [www.redbudaudubon.org](http://www.redbudaudubon.org), click on this newsletter and use the link in the newsletter to connect to the registration form. After the form is completed our meeting host will send you the link to the meeting.

## ***Legislative support 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 representatives 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.

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

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☐ I would also like to make a donation 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***  
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