



The Western Grebe

Redbud Audubon Society, Inc.,

www.redbudaudubon.org

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Karla Bloem and Alice the Great Horned Owl.

REDBUD AUDUBON JANUARY CHAPTER MEETING

Thursday, February 18

Topic: Great Horned Owls

Presenter: Karla Bloem,
Founder and Executive Director,
International Owl Center

Program starts at 7 PM

To register for this Zoom meeting, click link:
[The Great Horned Owl Soap Opera](#)

Or scan the following QR code:



Real life Great Horned Owl soap opera

*Karla Bloem, Founder and
Executive Director, International
Owl Center to speak*

The Feb. 18 monthly Zoom program meeting for the Redbud Audubon Society will feature Karla Bloem, Founder and Executive Director of the International Owl Center. Karla will also feature a live Great Horned Owl in her program.

A real-life soap opera has played itself out over the past 15 years with over 25 captive and wild Great Horned Owls that have formed the basis of an in-depth vocal study on the species. You'll experience owl dating, divorce, territorial defense, and more as you learn about their wide variety of vocalizations, and what they mean. Ruby the Great Horned Owl will make a live appearance in this one-of-a-kind entertaining and educational program.

Karla Bloem acquired Alice the Great Horned Owl to use in educational programs in 1998 and began studying Great Horned Owl vocalizations in 2004. Karla is now the world authority on their vocalizations and has given presentations in The Netherlands, Germany, Argentina, Italy, Portugal, and South Africa. Alice's popularity led Karla to create the Inter-

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President's Message

by Roberta Lyons

What will be the long-term impacts of cannabis cultivation in Lake County?



Roberta Lyons

As Conservation Chair for the Redbud Audubon Society I receive numerous "Requests for Reviews," as part of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) regulations that require applicants (through the County) for use permits or grading permits to

notify a variety of agencies (including Redbud) to review their plans.

For many years the RFRs I received were mainly for Vineyard Development. In cooperation with Victoria Brandon, the Conservation Chair for the Sierra Club, we would often meet with applicants to express our concerns about their plans. Often we were able to come up with solutions without requiring public hearings that would most likely have resulted in the same outcome, but with more controversy and lack of a good faith effort and compromise.

In recent years, since the legalization of cannabis and the development of the legal cannabis grow ordinance for the County most of the RFRs I receive are for cannabis grows. Many require construction of large greenhouses and require completely fenced areas. Although not on the same scale as vineyards, the increase in the number of these requests for permits is nevertheless startling. Because they often do

not require a grading permit, the cannabis permits are not specific about how much native vegetation or oak trees will be removed.

A vineyard developer must apply for a grading permit if they intend to clear more than 10,000 square feet of native vegetation – be it oak trees or chaparral. The current cannabis ordinance doesn't address a grading permit requirement. Plus, it only "suggests" that removal of oak trees should be avoided. This hardly seems adequate. It also doesn't appear that the County has addressed the issue of "cumulative impact," which at the rate the cannabis grows are being developed could certainly become a problem.

Very soon our countryside will be dotted with huge greenhouses and unattractive "opaque," fences. People from out of the county are astounded at the large amounts of acreage they can purchase relatively cheaply, and "investors," are coming to this area to buy up old family ranches and plant as much cannabis as is allowed.

What does this mean for the future of this county? I know the Board of Supervisors and others are attracted by the tax and permit money that is becoming available. There is currently millions of dollars in county coffers as a result of cannabis permits.

Let's hope the County of Lake can step back a little and take a look at what extensive cannabis development is going to mean for the long-term positive development of our beautiful county.

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.



*Learn all about Great Horned Owls
from expert Karla Bloem.*

Real life Great Horned Owl soap opera

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national Festival of Owls, the first full-weekend, all-owl event in North America that has served as the inspiration for similar festivals in Italy, Nepal, and India. Karla and Alice testified before the Minnesota House and Senate environment committees to successfully gain protection for Great Horned Owls in 2005. She has assisted several authors and filmmakers and has appeared on Animal Planet and the CBC Network's "The Secret Life of Owls."

As with last month's Zoom program, we are asking participants to register so the host can send you the link for the meeting. To register for the program, go to the link on page one of this newsletter, or, go to www.redbudaudubon.org, click on this current newsletter and use the link in the newsletter to connect to the registration form.

After the form is submitted, our meeting host will send you the link to the meeting two days beforehand. This is a very simple and easy process, so please join us!

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Hérons of Lake County

By Brad Barnwell, Photos by Brad and Kathy Barnwell

The heron family includes not only herons, but also bitterns and egrets, and here in Lake County we have 9 species. Of those 9, the Little Blue Heron and the Cattle Egret are listed as “Accidental,” meaning they are extremely rare. All the others can be found in the county year-round, with the exception of the Least Bittern, which is normally seen during the summer and fall birding seasons.

In this first article I thought I would give you a little different look than you would normally find in your typical field guide, with some close-up photos of the Great Blue Heron, American Bittern and Least Bittern.



Least Bittern

One of my favorite birds, the Least Bittern is one of the hardest to locate. Not only are they well camouflaged, they are the smallest of the herons in the county, weighing in at just 1.5 to 3.4 oz. This bird had been hunting just inside the edge of the tules when my wife spotted him. We sat motionless in our kayaks until he emerged from the tules to give us a look and my wife the time she needed to get this photo. This photo shows the brown and white stripping on the chest, the dark brown head cap, a glimpse of the dark brown back and the evil “I’m looking to eat you” stare.

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American Bittern

In late September of 2010, I was kayaking on Clear Lake on the edge of a large patch of water primrose when I spotted this American Bittern as he popped his head above the primrose and then ducked back down to continue his hunt. While his head was down I slowly paddled toward him through the ever-thickening mat of primrose, stopping and freezing each time he raised his head above the primrose. This continued until I could no longer paddle my kayak through the thick mat of primrose. There I sat with my paddle across my lap and my camera ready to shoot. I was only one kayak length away when he popped his head up and I took this photo. When he spotted me we exchanged glances and he just walked away, disappearing into the thick vegetation. I share this photo so you can study the long strong Great Blue Heron like bill, the long thin nasal opening, the ear opening just behind the eye and the intense bittern stare.

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Hérons of Lake County (Continued from page 5)

Great Blue Heron

This photo of an adult Great Blue Heron (GBH) was taken July 14, and although it may not be technically a good photo, it does show a few things not normally seen in your typical field guide. First, the tongue, something the casual observer may not see and only the camera truly catches. This GBH had just caught and swallowed a small fish. He dipped his beak back into the water and shook his head, then raised his head to the position in the photo. Then, with a quick almost undetectable motion to the human eye, he “licked his lips” which this photo captured. Second, the nictitating membrane partially covering the eye. The membrane acts as a third eyelid which both moistens and protects the eye. You’ll typically see the membrane covering when the GBH thrusts his head underwater. Third, what I believe to be white mineral deposits from constant and repeated emersions in the water, on the upper bill.

Lake County final Christmas Bird Count Tally

Greater White-fronted	2	Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Loggerhead Shrike	1
Cackling Goose	9	Cooper's Hawk	1	Hutton's Vireo	1
Canada Goose	560	Bald Eagle	15	Steller's Jay	22
Wood Duck	22	Red-shouldered Hawk	24	California Scrub-Jay	198
Gadwall	13	Red-tailed Hawk	34	American Crow	259
American Wigeon	3	Ferruginous Hawk	2	Common Raven	134
Mallard	513	Virginia Rail	1	Oak Titmouse	85
Northern Shoveler	171	Sora	6	Bushtit	154
Green-winged Teal	21	American Coot	1181	White-breasted Nuthatch	61
Ring-necked Duck	149	Killdeer	13	Pygmy Nuthatch	9
Lesser Scaup	10	Spotted Sandpiper	0	Brown Creeper	2
Scaup Sp.	3	Wilson's Snipe	19	Marsh Wren	16
Bufflehead	270	Bonaparte's Gull	79	Bewick's Wren	19
Common Goldeneye	123	Ring-billed Gull	95	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	8
Hooded Merganser	17	California Gull	2512	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	125
Common Merganser	943	Herring Gull	109	Wrentit	20
Red-breasted Merganser	1	Iceland Gull=Thayers	3	Western Bluebird	202
Ruddy Duck	11750	Western x Glaucous-winged	3	Hermit Thrush	8
California Quail	234	Gull sp.	456	American Robin	196
Ring-necked Pheasant	2	Rock Pigeon	10	Varied Thrush	3
Wild Turkey	30	Band-tailed Pigeon	42	California Thrasher	4
Common Loon	4	Eurasian Collared Dove	152	Northern Mockingbird	50
Pied-billed Grebe	155	Mourning Dove	67	European Starling	502
Horned Grebe	203	Barn Owl	1	American Pipit	23
Red-necked Grebe	1	Western Screech Owl	2	Cedar Waxwing	7
Eared Grebe	1154	Great Horned Owl	4	Phainopepla	10
Western Grebe	27156	Northern Saw-whet Owl	1	Yellow-rumped (form ?)	125
Clark's Grebe	3008	Anna's Hummingbird	57	Yellow-rumped (Myrtle's)	11
Aechmophorus sp.	3130	Belted Kingfisher	40	Yellow-rumped (Audubon's)	6
Double-Cr Cormorant	1452	Acorn Woodpecker	296	Townsend's Warbler	2
American White Pelican	231	Red-breasted Sapsucker	2	Lark Sparrow	8
American Bittern	1	Nuttall's Woodpecker	28	Fox Sparrow	8
Great Blue Heron	47	Downy Woodpecker	4	Dark-eyed Junco - OR	175
Great Egret	72	Hairy Woodpecker	3	White-crowned Sparrow	333
Snowy Egret	20	Northern Flicker	66	Golden-crowned Sparrow	405
Green Heron	4	Pileated Woodpecker	6	White-throated Sparrow	0
Black-cr Night Heron	43	American Kestrel	11	Bell's Sparrow	1
Turkey Vulture	119	Merlin	1	Savannah Sparrow	98
Osprey	6	Black Phoebe	63	Song Sparrow	19
White-tailed Kite	1	Say's Phoebe	5	Lincoln's Sparrow	5
Northern Harrier	4				

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Top 10 Reasons You Don't Want an Owl for a Pet

(Reprinted with permission from the International Owl Center, Houston, Minnesota. Redbud's speaker this month Karla Bloem is the founder and Executive Director of the Center.)



10. Taking a vacation or going on a business trip is difficult. You can't just take the owl with you (especially since in the United States permits are usually needed every time you cross state lines.) It takes a trained person to take care of an owl, and if you have a human-imprinted owl, they may be aggressive with anyone else who comes to take care of them. Owls also like routine, so disruption to the normal scheme of things is very stressful for them.



9. Owls can be very destructive. They have a natural killing instinct that can be applied to blankets, pillows, clothing, stuffed animals, and just about anything else that can be shredded. Talons are also really bad for woodwork. They bring out the natural grain of the wood really well as they strip off the finish.



8. Mating season involves a lot of all-night racket. Remember, most owls are active at night, so that's when they'll be hooting and calling during mating season. If you have neighbors nearby, they won't be very happy about the noise. If the owl is imprinted on humans, it will expect the person it perceives to be its mate to hoot with them regularly.



7. Most owls don't like to be petted and cuddled. Captive owls still retain their natural instincts, and traditional "petting" doesn't fit into the owl scheme of things for many species.

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Great Backyard Bird Count February 12-15

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at birdcount.org. Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the National Audubon Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Birds Canada learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. Recently, more than 160,000 participants submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

The 24th annual GBBC will be held Friday, Febru-



ary 12, through Monday, February 15, 2021. Please visit the official website at birdcount.org for more information and be sure to check out the latest [educational and promotional resources](#).

Lake County final Christmas Bird Count Tally

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California Towhee	109
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	1
Spotted Towhee	62
Red-winged Blackbird	447
Western Meadowlark	102
Brewer's Blackbird	487
Blackbird Sp.	100
House Finch	62
Purple Finch	4
Pine Siskin	27
Lesser Goldfinch	173
American Goldfinch	57
House Sparrow	147
TOTAL BIRDS	62165
TOTAL SPECIES	127

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 for which 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.

Top 10 Reasons You Don't Want an Owl for a Pet

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6. Owls are high maintenance. They require daily feeding, cleaning, and attention, especially human-imprinted owls. Owls that are capable of flying need to be flown regularly, or housed in very large cages where they can get adequate exercise.



5. Owls are long-lived. A Great Horned Owl could live 30 or more years in captivity if things go well. Small species could live 10 years. Taking on the care of an owl is a long-term commitment.



4. Beaks and talons are sharp. If an owl doesn't like what you're doing, it's going to let you know. And you might wind up bleeding because of it. It's also easy for an owl to scratch you even if they aren't trying if they step up onto your gloved fist but stand off the side of the glove on your bare arm.



3. Owls need specialized care. Most veterinarians don't have the necessary training to properly care for owls, so you'd need to find a vet who's comfortable working with an owl. And you as a caregiver need to know quite a bit about owl health also, including what "normal" poop looks like and what very subtle behaviors might indicate health problems. You must provide proper perching surfaces, a healthy diet, appropriate housing, and regular talon and beak maintenance. There is a LOT to know, which is why proper training is normally required before permits are issued.

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Top 10 Reasons You Don't Want an Owl for a Pet

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2. Feathers, pellets, and poop! Owls molt thousands of feathers every year, and they wind up everywhere. Owls throw up pellets of fur and bones wherever they happen to be at the time. And poop happens. A lot. In addition to "regular" poop (like most birds), owls also empty out the ceca at the end of their intestines about once a day. This discharge is the consistency of runny chocolate pudding, but smells as bad as the nastiest thing you can imagine. And it stains something awful. *Keeping owls involves non-stop cleaning.*



1. FOOD. You can't just go down to the local grocery store and buy Owl Chow. Owls are strict carnivores and require diets of whole animals for proper health. The Owl Center has chest freezers stocked with pocket gophers, rats, rabbits, and mice. Each day food is thawed and staff remove the stomach, intestines and bladders from the food animals before serving them to the owls. Leftovers from the previous day must be located and removed, as owls like to cache (or hide) leftover food for later. If you're not prepared to thaw and cut up dead animals every night of your life for 10 years or more, you aren't up for having an owl.

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 a minute or two out of your time to do so.

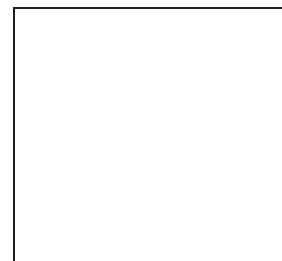
Even if you still prefer to receive the mailed version of the "Grebe", we would like to have your email for our records. Once in a while, we send out emails to our members about important events or bird sightings that may be of interest. You are also welcome

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.

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.

Redbud Audubon
PO Box 5780
Clearlake, CA 95422



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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.

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You have the option of joining just the Redbud Chapter by enrolling online at 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

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