



The Western Grebe

Redbud Audubon Society, Inc.,

www.redbudaudubon.org

Volume 47 • Issue No. 2 • October, 2021

“Cultural attitudes toward owls around the world through history” is October topic for Redbud Audubon



Karla Bloem

“The Oct. 21 program for the Redbud Audubon Society will once again feature Karla Bloem, Executive Director of the International Owl Center in Houston, Minnesota. Bloem’s presentation to Redbud last February was met with such enthusiasm that it was decided to ask her to return with a new topic. The program will be a Zoom presentation. Register by clicking on the link either in your emailed newsletter or on the home page of Audubon’s website: www.redbudaudubon.org.

The title of Bloem’s presentation is: “Cultural attitudes towards owls around the world through

history,” and she will discuss how attitudes about owls in different cultures around the world affect efforts to conserve this species. As before, Alice the Great Horned Owl will make a live appearance in this one-of-a-kind entertaining and educational program.

Owls are found all around the world, and cultures throughout time have had very strong opinions about them. In this program, learn how owls were and are viewed, travel back in time to the very first owl cave carving, and find out how people are changing negative stereotypes about owls around the world today.

Owls are creator beings. Owls are omens of death. Owls are creator beings. Owl eggs can cure serious diseases. These are all views that

(Continued on page 4)

REDBUD AUDUBON

OCTOBER CHAPTER MEETING

Thursday, October 21, 7 PM

Topic: Cultural attitudes toward owls around the world through history **Presenter: Karla Bloem,**
Executive Director of International Owl Center

To register for this Zoom meeting, click link:
[Redbud Audubon Program Registration](#)

Or scan the following QR code:



President's Message

By Roberta Lyons

Lower lake levels offer great time to see the Grigsby Riffle and wading shore birds



Roberta Lyons

Every month when I start putting together our monthly *Western Grebe* newsletter for Redbud Audubon, I review what I did the same month the year before. I'm sure everyone remembers what was going on in October of 2020!

We had decided, of course, not to have any "in-person," meetings, and we also were not planning any "Zoom" meetings, as the whole Zoom phenomenon was still a bit new and scary. The only thing we definitely planned on doing was the Christmas Bird Count (CBC). As the months went on, we had a successful CBC, began "Zooming," and continued to meet as a board to carry out chapter business. Of course, we couldn't hold our annual Heron Days event; even now we are unsure if it will take place in 2022, not only because of Covid but also because of the continuing drought.

Speaking of the drought, everyone agrees that it is scary and even depressing. Our community pier is almost completely out of the water, most of the boat ramps are closed, and Cache Creek -- the main outlet for Clear Lake -- is slowly disappearing.

If you have ever wondered what the "Grigsby Riffle," is, or where it is, now is the time to see it. A riffle is a shallow naturally-raised area across a stream that in years of low water flow stops upstream water from flowing downstream. The Grigsby Riffle is just west of the Old Highway 53 Bridge near the confluence of Seigler and Cache Creeks.

The famous riffle is what keeps water in Clear Lake, for good or for bad. During extreme flood years, it becomes a choke point in the creek making it impossible for enough water to flow out to reduce dangerously high lake levels. It is not the dam on Cache Creek that holds back the water during extreme floods, it's the riffle. Having noted that, we need to realize the benefits of the riffle keeping water in the lake. Back in 1939, following a bad flood in 1937-38, the riffle was being excavated by the Army Corps of Engineers to increase the capacity of the creek. The creek channel was also being widened.

This brought on the ire of two sisters in the Capay Valley who sued because the rushing waters of Cache Creek during the flood year of 1937-38 had damaged their property. The sisters won their lawsuit and so was born the Bemmerly Decree, one of three decrees that rule the water levels of Clear Lake. The Corps was forced to cease attempting to remove the riffle and widen the channel. But, they didn't give up!

The Army Corps' devotion to widening the Cache Creek channel appeared again in the late 1990s, following four disastrous flood years on Clear Lake (1983, 1986, 1995, and 1998). The Army Corps planned to dig a channel through Anderson Marsh State Historic Park, around the riffle and then back into Cache Creek which would increase the flow of water out of the creek and through the dam. "Wait a minute," a few astute citizens observed, what if the old Cache Creek dam (built in 1915-16) actually fails someday? Wouldn't Clear Lake drain completely? The Corps had to admit that was true. So, along with that annoying little fact and an unfavorable cost/benefit analysis, the widening of the Cache Creek channel did not happen.

To switch from this interesting history to today's situation of the lake's low level, there is one positive thing about the drought for avid birders and kayakers. Now that the lake is so low, we have mudflats in several areas all along the lake shore. And what do mudflats bring? Wading shorebirds! I'm getting reports from our kayaking

(Continued on page 3)

President's Message

(Continued from page 2)

friends that they are seeing Yellowlegs, Avocets, Stilts, Sandpipers and other species foraging in these mudflats. Where to see them varies by day as the birds are continually on the move, but some kayakers have seen them off shore of Lakeport. There are some areas accessible by foot (if you, like me, are not a kayaker,) but again, you'll have to do some exploring on your own. Perhaps at Clear Lake State Park, the County's Lakeside Park, or Rodman Slough Park (not Rodman Preserve). Just get out and explore; you never know what you'll find.

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 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



OFFICERS

President: Roberta Lyons

Vice President: Donna Mackiewicz

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
and Donna Mackiewicz

Education - Lisa Prather

Field Trips - Donna Mackiewicz
and Roberta Lyons

Historian - Pat Harmon

Membership Manager - Susanne Scholz

Newsletter Editor - Roberta Lyons

Newsletter Email Distribution - Donna Mackiewicz

Newsletter Production - Jim Scholz

Programs - Marilyn Waits

Publicity - Roberta Lyons

Webmaster - Bonnie Thompson

Social Media - Donna Mackiewicz

To contact a board member:

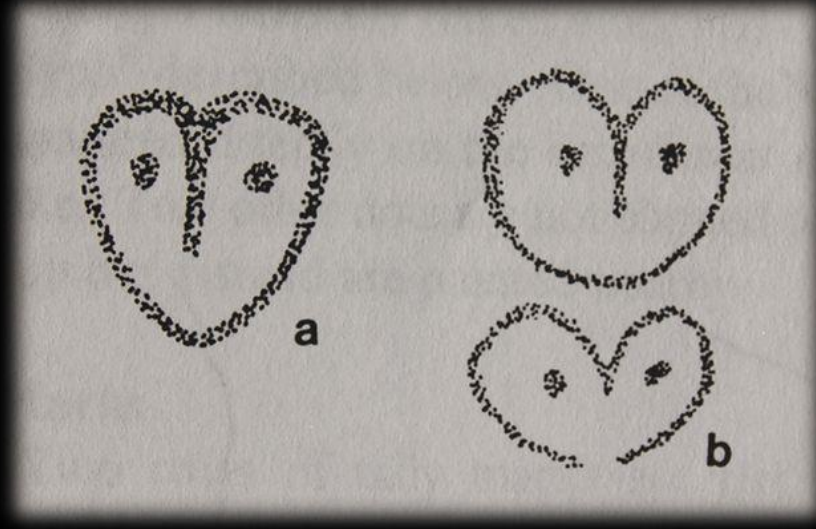
Phone 707/ 263-8030

Email: redbud.audubon@gmail.com

**Barn Owl
Petroglyphs
In lava tubes**

**Lower
Columbia
River**

Washington



“Cultural attitudes toward owls around the world through history” is October topic for Redbud Audubon meeting

(Continued from page 1)

are currently held in different cultures on different continents.

Why is it important to understand these different cultural beliefs? Because conservation efforts depend heavily on cultural attitudes. Where people have positive attitudes towards owls, it is much easier to promote actions that are beneficial to owls. If people fear them, they will be more likely to want to kill owls than conserve them.

Education and personal gain have both been successfully used by several innovative individuals to make the world a better place for owls. This presentation will take you on a tour around the world throughout history to see how owls have been viewed, and hear inspiring stories of people who are creatively changing negative views.

Karla Bloem is the Founder and Executive Director of the International Owl Center. She 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 International 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."*



An American Coot, or mud hen.

American Coots will soon be descending on Clear Lake

By Donna Mackiewicz, vice-president

Fall migration is upon us and soon Clear Lake will be teeming with American Coots again. You might know the Coot as a “marsh hen” or “mud hen” due to the similar way they bob their heads when swimming.

A group of American Coots (*Fulica americana*) called a “commotion” is often mis-called a duck. American Coots are noisy members of the rail family. The Coot is a medium-sized diving bird with a white bill, yellow legs, and lobed toes.

The feet look oversized for this bird. The body is dark gray to black with a blackish head and neck.

Some of the under-tail coverts are white and visible, especially during display.

Coots are omnivores and highly opportunistic feeders that consume everything from plant matter (such as stems, leaves, and seeds of various wetland vegetation) to fish, tadpoles, worms, and crayfish. In fact, Coots are so opportunistic, recent studies have observed instances of kleptoparasitism. Kleptoparasitism describes an animal that steals food already acquired by another individual. Watch closely and you will see robberies, not only from other coots, but also

(Continued on page 7)



A colorful little Coot chick Photo by Mike Baird.



Notice the large feet on this dainty bird!

American Coots will soon be descending on Clear Lake

(Continued from page 5)

from other species. The Coots' call is hardly melodic and sounds like scratchy clucking noises and a series of "kuk-kuk-kuk" notes.

If only they would stay here all year so we could see the adorable chicks. The Coot chick's downy plumage is a colorful orange on the head and neck.

Field trip situation update

In last month's newsletter we announced we would be leading guided field trips on a monthly basis. After making that announcement and further discussion, it was decided that field trip leaders are still not comfortable gathering in large groups, even outside.

This may seem like an over-abundance of caution, but our leaders are all over 60 and with the recent surge in Covid infections, even among already vaccinated people, it was decided to go back to what we were doing last season, which was no guided field trips.

We encourage everyone to get out there and look for birds anyway. Great places are both of the State Parks; Rodman Preserve, which is open every Saturday morning from 9 a.m. to noon; Rodman Slough County Park; Highland Springs, Lakeside County Park; and even your own back yard.

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.

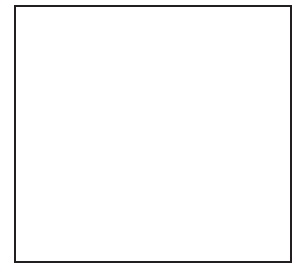
Also, as a reminder, if you are receiving this newsletter by regular mail and are open to receiving it by email, you can save the chapter significant printing and mailing costs by emailing us at redbud.audubon@gmail.org and letting us know. If you prefer to receive the newsletter by mail, please consider donating \$10 - \$15 to Redbud Audubon.

...

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.
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 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
Connecting People with Nature since 1974