



The Western Grebe

Redbud Audubon Society, Inc.,

www.redbudaudubon.org

Volume 46 • Issue No. 5 • January, 2022



*Two females at a communal nest. The bird at the hole is about to feed acorn pieces to the young.
Photo by Bruce Lyon.*

Cooperation and conflict in the communal world of the Acorn Woodpecker explained

The Thursday Jan. 20 program meeting for the Redbud Audubon Society will feature Dr. Walt Koenig, an expert on Acorn Woodpeckers and a scientist who has been studying these

fascinating birds for years. The program will be on Zoom and starts at 7 p.m. To register, go to www.redbudaudubon.org and click on the

(Continued on page 5)

REDBUD AUDUBON

JANUARY CHAPTER MEETING

Thursday, January 20, 7 PM

Topic: Cooperation and conflict in the communal world of the Acorn Woodpecker

Presenter: Dr. Walt Koenig

To register for this Zoom meeting, click link:

[Redbud Audubon Program Registration](http://www.redbudaudubon.org)

**Or visit RedbudAudubon.org
and click on the registration link**

Or scan the following QR code:



President's Message

by Roberta Lyons



These first few weeks of January have been dreary with fog and drizzle, but no real downpours. I keep asking: where are those California rains I remember from

my childhood?

To make matters worse, “my” winter birds are not here! Oh, the Golden-crowned sparrows have returned, and a very nice flock of Juncos, but the lake birds are lacking. I know they must be on Clear Lake somewhere, but I have not seen mergansers, buffleheads, or many grebes here at my lakeside home in Jago Bay. To say nothing of the large feeding flocks of American White Pelicans.

This is the second winter with a “lack of birds,” and it is concerning. I have heard similar reports from other folks so I don’t think it is just my area. Plus I have a good view across much of the south end of the lake and it is empty.

A few years ago I wrote a president’s message about how great it is that my front yard (the lake) is just as good as the National Wildlife Refuges! That status has changed over the last three years.

Having said all that, and in an attempt to cheer myself up, (and my dear readers) here are some other thoughts: Events in nature can be cyclical and this has happened before. My husband and I are thinking that it is perhaps a lack of bait fish, especially Threadfin shad. We haven’t noticed the millions of tiny fry swimming in schools like we have in the past. This is a question I will forward to our local outdoor writer, Terry Knight.

Other questions include: Could it be the drought? Could it be the massive recent fires? (I’m not sure how smoke and fires in forests can affect waterfowl, but who knows.) It could just be that right now there is a better food source somewhere else and eventually the birds will return.

You will also notice that our Christmas Bird



White egrets on pier in Jago Bay, January 2019.



Feeding pelicans in Jago Bay, January 2019.

Count (CBC) numbers were down this year. National Audubon released a report a couple of years ago noting that bird numbers have fallen world-wide by 3 billion birds. We could be seeing that affect here. The reasons mainly involve habitat destruction, disease, and yes, house and feral cats. Cats kill millions of birds every year in the United States alone.

So, what is to be done? As individuals, we can do something. Encourage “habitat patches,” in your yard. We obviously don’t want shrubbery next to our homes, but if you have the space, leave plants and shrubs and trees for cover for your songbirds. Water for songbirds is very important, and supplementing natural food with seed, suet, and fruit also helps. Please keep your cats inside. It is a lot to ask, I know, but it can be done successfully and it is much safer for your cat as well.

We have to maintain hope and do what we can, even on an individual level, to improve and protect

(Continued on page 3)

President's message

(Continued from page 2)

our environment. Donate to local, State, and national environmental groups, even if it is a small amount. Every little bit helps and every individual action can make 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 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, and, if you wish, let us know in what areas you feel you can help.

Welcome new members

Mike Parode, Clearlake; Franz Waltenspuhl, Cobb; J. Begun, Cobb; Ellen Barrett, Kelseyville; John Haedtke, Kelseyville; Valerie Nixon, Kelseyville; Annette Hopkins, Lakeport; KC Patrick, Lower Lake; John Page, Middletown; Michelle Lee, Middletown; Bill Schneider, Hidden Valley Lake; Claudia Ellis, Upper Lake; and Judith Cox, Witter Springs.

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 & Kathy Barnwell

Conservation - Roberta Lyons & Donna Mackiewicz

Education - Lisa Prather

Field Trips - Donna Mackiewicz & Roberta Lyons

Historian - Pat Harmon

Membership Manager - Susanne Scholz

Newsletter Editor - Roberta Lyons

Graphic Design - Robin Winniford

Newsletter Email Distribution - Donna Mackiewicz

Newsletter Distribution - 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

2021 Christmas Bird Count Preliminary Results

Congratulations to our steadfast birders for participating in Redbud Audubon's 47th Christmas Bird Count held December 18, 2021. Although the weather was foggy in the morning, it turned into a mostly sunny afternoon, with no wind to speak of. Jeannette Knight reported the highest temperature at 59°. The 14 groups were able to identify one hundred eighteen (118) bird species.

Since Redbud Audubon began participating in the bird count in 1975, the highest species count was 153 species in 2007. Since 1975, we had three years with 118 species, our lowest number; this year, 1985 and 1982. In addition to the low species count, the participants counted only 12,308 total birds. Since 1997, the bird total that comes closest to this year's is 18,007 in 1998. All other years are more than twice the number of birds seen this year.

A few of the birds seen last year and missed this year are: **Wood Duck, Ring-necked Pheasant, Green Heron, Virginia Rail, Sora, Wilson's Snipe, Bonaparte's Gull, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, Varied Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, and Pine Siskin.**

Extremely low counts include the **Ruddy Duck** at 163, **Wild Turkey** at 16, **Eared Grebe** at 47,

Western Grebe at 19, **Clark's Grebe** at 3, **Double-crested Cormorant** at 102, **American White Pelican** at 25, **Black-crowned Night Heron** at 2, **Anna's Hummingbird** at 15, **American Kestrel** at 6, and **American Robin** at 24.

The following birds were seen by only one of the 14 groups:

Greater White-fronted Goose (1)	Northern Saw-whet Owl (1)
Green-winged Teal (1)	Merlin (1)
Lesser Scaup (12)	Loggerhead Shrike (1)
*White-winged Scoter	Hutton's Vireo (1)
Red-breasted Merganser (35)	Pygmy Nuthatch (9)
Red-necked Grebe (1)	Brown Creeper (1)
Black-crowned Night Heron (2)	Rock Wren (1)
White-tailed Kite (2)	Bell's Sparrow (1)
Golden Eagle (1)	Savannah Sparrow (11)
Cooper's Hawk (1)	Lincoln's Sparrow (1)
Mew Gull (1)	*Hooded Oriole (1)
Western Gull (2)	Great-tailed Grackle (5)
Barn Owl (1)	Purple Finch (1)

*The **White-winged Scoter** and **Hooded Oriole** are new birds 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. Herring Gull at 3,266**
- 2. American Coot at 965**
- 3. California Gull at 554**
- 4. European Starling at 382**

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 123rd Annual Christmas Bird Count. Happy Birding!

Cooperation and conflict in the communal world of the Acorn Woodpecker explained

(Continued from page 1)



Walt, more years ago than he cares to remember, at an Acorn Woodpecker nest. Photo by Galen Rowell

Registration Link on the home page of the website or click on the link in this newsletter if you are receiving it by email. The link to join will be sent to you the day of the program. Acorn Woodpeckers, best known for their unique habit of storing acorns by the thousands in special structures known as “granaries,” exhibit one of the most complex social systems of any bird. Family groups of this species, sometimes numbering a dozen or more birds, contain multiple breeders of

both sexes, a rare phenomenon called “polygynandry,” along with young from prior years that serve as “helpers-at-the-nest.” Based on a study of this species at Hastings Reservation in Monterey County, Dr. Koenig will explain some of the strikingly cooperative and surprisingly competitive behaviors of this species that he and his colleagues have discovered during their 50+ year field study.

After studying Acorn Woodpeckers for his Ph.D., Walt Koenig was a Research Zoologist at Hastings Reservation, a field station located in the upper Carmel Valley run by the Museum of Vertebrate Zoologist at UC Berkeley, from 1982 to 2008. He subsequently was a Senior Scientist at the Cornell Lab of

Ornithology in Ithaca, New York, from 2008 to 2016. He retired in 2016 and returned to upper Carmel Valley, where he currently studies acorn production by California oaks and continues to contribute to the Acorn Woodpecker study.

Please join us for this fascinating program.



Acorn Woodpecker at a granary tree. Photo by Brad Barnwell

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.



The trail at the Stonehouse facility.

A hidden gem in the hills Of northern Lake County

By Donna Mackiewicz

Recently I birded on winery and vineyard property less than five miles from where I've lived for three years, but was unaware of. Stonehouse Cellars and Bed and Barrel Bed and Breakfast is located at 500 Old Long Valley Road in Clearlake Oaks. From the Keys in Clear Lake Oaks we took Highway 20 east turning left onto the curving road that took us to a quiet area of vineyards, chaparral and oak woodlands.

As soon as I stepped from the car, I noticed this was going to be a unique experience of fresh air, peace, beautiful skies – the Lake County I moved here for.

I planned to stop, see the place, and leave; but spent

two hours meandering trails and bird watching.

The first birds I saw were in the oak trees before I even got to the door of the tasting room. Acorn Woodpeckers, Western Bluebirds, Oak Titmouse and Scrub Jays all flitting about in the branches. Roberto Reyes, the General Manager, welcomed me and graciously gave the layout of the property and a brief history and then off I went for a “short” leisurely stroll through the grounds.

The Coyote Bush was in bloom with tiny native bees and flies. Manzanita leaves following the sun, and beautiful stands of Chamise graced the hills and

(Continued on page 7)



A stunning view of the Long Valley area.

A hidden gem in the hills Of northern Lake County

(Continued from page 6)

trail. In the towering Grey Pines, Blue Oak and even some Interior Live Oak, the Yellow-rumped Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Oak Titmouse and Acorns Woodpeckers could always be spotted. Golden-crowned Sparrows were everywhere and on one of the two ponds Bufflehead, Common Mergansers and Double-crested Cormorants rested until they spotted us.

The vineyards, although fenced, had California Quail, Killdeer, Golden-crowned Sparrows and lots of Western Bluebirds. All in all I counted at least 128 birds.

The rock outcroppings, looking majestic were great viewing areas for Spotted and California Towhees, California Ground Squirrels, Western Grey Squirrels and, of course, Western Fence Lizards.

I will have to apologize to owner, Greg Stratmann, for not paying more attention to the accommodations, tasting room and wine-making part of the operation. On the next visit I'll promise to be more mindful of all the hard work he's put into the property, making it a premiere destination for the wine tasters and B&B visitors making memories.

For me, the natural beauty of this place will keep me coming back for years!

If you would like more information about this lovely spot, email info@stonehousecellars.com, phone 707-998-3378, or got to their website: <http://www.stonehousecellars.com>.

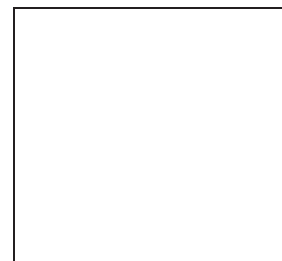


The Stonehouse tasting room and vineyards are a lovely spot to visit.



Grey Pine and Chamise are great habitat for birds and creatures of all variety.

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