



# *The Western Grebe*

Redbud Audubon Society, Inc.,

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

Volume 48 • Issue No. 6 • February, 2023

## Learning how to identify visually similar waterfowl is February program topic



*Mike Carion* Have you ever had trouble identifying a duck flying overhead at your favorite lake or river? Can you ID flocks of birds as you scan an open waterway at the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge? If you'd like to learn more about identification of our local waterfowl, you won't want to miss this month's Redbud Audubon Zoom program on Thursday, February 16 at 7 p.m.

The speaker is Mike Carion, a retired Chief of Law Enforcement for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and a former board member of the Wintu Audubon chapter in Redding.

Mike's presentation will cover how to identify the species of ducks and geese most likely to be found in Lake County and at the Central Valley NWRs. He will discuss helpful identifying characteristics of these waterfowl to narrow down the possibilities that birders encounter in the field. Even experienced birders will learn something new from Mike's talk.

Mike received his degree in Wildlife Management from Humboldt State and spent 32 years as a game warden at various ranks, training all the wardens in many areas including waterfowl enforcement.

He retired in 2014, then assisted Hawaii Department of Wildlife in the development of a

*(Continued on page 2)*

## REDBUD AUDUBON

**FEBRUARY MEETING**  
**Thursday, February 16, 7 PM**

**Topic: Learning how to identify similar waterfowl**

To register for this Zoom meeting, click link:

[Redbud Audubon Program Registration](#)

Or visit [RedbudAudubon.org](http://RedbudAudubon.org) and click on the registration link

Or scan the following QR code:





*Do you know how to tell the difference between the Lesser Scaup and the Ring-necked Duck? We will discuss the bill differences and the black back of the Ringneck versus the white speckled back of the scaup! These and many other tips will be discussed during the presentation. (Above) Ring-necked Duck. Photos by Mike Carion.*



*The Lesser Scaup. Photos by Mike Carion.*

## Learn to identify similar looking waterfowl at February meeting

*(Continued from page 1)*

training academy for wardens and began working for Ducks Unlimited until July 2020, when he officially retired again and moved to Hawaii with his wife Nicole and started an Audubon group there.

Please register for the meeting by going to [www.redbudaudubon.org](http://www.redbudaudubon.org) and click on the registration link on the home page; or, if you receive this newsletter by email, click on the link at the bottom of the first page. After you register, the Zoom link for the program will be sent on the day of the presentation.

# President's Message

by Roberta Lyons



Roberta Lyons

I'm looking forward to our Saturday, Feb. 25 field trip to the Reclamation Area near Upper Lake. Please note that we are changing the date from the usual third Saturday to the 25<sup>th</sup>, to accommodate trip leader's schedules.

We're hoping to see Great Blue Herons beginning to nest in the tree-tops along the banks of Rodman Slough. After a flat walk of about one-half mile, we should be able to get a good look if there is any GBH activity in that area. Last year around this time Kathy Barnwell and I counted about 50 nests and 100 Great Blues.

This area is property of the County of Lake and is located on a dirt road off of Highway 20. The road is passable with regular sedans, but of course if we have a deluge we will probably postpone this visit. Since it is a little tricky to find, we'll meet at the Upper Lake County Park (see field trip article for more info) and caravan from there. For insurance reasons, Redbud Audubon can no longer "arrange," carpooling but feel free to do that yourselves with friends.

Check out our final Christmas Bird Count numbers in this month's newsletter. Again, many thanks to Kathy and Brad Barnwell for continuing to organize our CBC and reporting the findings. It is a very important effort and is much appreciated.

Recently I've been seeing hundreds of Common Mergansers on the lake near my home in Jago Bay. It is always exciting to see high numbers of waterfowl on our lake, especially after a seeming decline over the last few years. I'm looking forward to our waterfowl identification program scheduled for this month on Feb. 16 on Zoom. I would love to learn how to tell a Scaup from a Ring-necked Duck! Wouldn't you?

## 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

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 Mail Distribution - Jim Scholz

Programs - Marilyn Waits

Publicity - Roberta Lyons

Webmaster - Bonnie Thompson

Social Media - Donna Mackiewicz

**To contact a board member:**

**Phone 707/805-9410**

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



# Data compiled for Redbud's 2023 CBC

By Kathy Barnwell

The data for the 48<sup>th</sup> Redbud Audubon Christmas Bird Count has been compiled and reviewed, and the total species seen on Saturday, Dec. 17, 2022 remains at 131, with 26,804 birds seen. Comparing our data with records back to 1997 (26-years), this number is a little below our average of 135 species. Our high species count of 153 in 2007 still holds the record, with last year holding the record for our lowest count at 117.

The day started cold and clear, with little to no wind. The low and high temperatures reported were 20 and 61 respectively. We had 32 participants, continuing our downward trend, but our effort (birding hours) was good. We had a total of 87.5 hours, which is close to our 26 year average of 88.425 hours.

In addition to the high numbers listed in last month's newsletter, we reported our highest number of Ring-necked Duck (705), Green-winged Teal (74), and Common Raven (184). Canada Geese (423), Lesser Scaup (181), Hooded Mergansers (27) and Common Mergansers (1970) were the second highest numbers reported over the last 26 years.

Other low counts include the Ruby-crowned Kinglet (42) as lowest, Pied-billed Grebe (75) as second lowest, and Western Meadowlark as the third lowest numbers in 26 years.

We truly appreciate all the participants and their support and efforts in making the bird count as accurate and complete as possible. Please join us next year for the 124th Annual Christmas Bird Count, which will be held Saturday, December 16th, 2023.

## Lake County final Christmas Bird Count tally

Greater White-fronted	3	California Quail	193	Red-shouldered Hawk	21
Snow Goose	3	Ring-necked pheasant	2	Red-tailed Hawk*	33
Cackling Goose	4	Wild Turkey	47	Ferruginous Hawk	1
Canada Goose	423	Common Loon	4	Buteo Sp.	1
Mute Swan	1	Pied-billed Grebe	75	American Coot	1565
Wood Duck	10	Horned Grebe	10	Killdeer	65
Gadwall	17	Eared Grebe	375	Spotted Sandpiper	5
American Wigeon	15	Western Grebe	3720	Greater Yellowlegs	2
Mallard	660	Clark's Grebe	324	Least Sandpiper	219
Blue-winged Teal	1	Aechmophorus sp.	1396	Long-billed Dowitcher	4
Northern Shoveler	96	Double-Cr Cormorant	454	Wilson's Snipe	21
Green-winged Teal	74	American White Pelican	68	Bonaparte's Gull	55
Canvasback	1	Great Blue Heron	43	Short-billed Gull (Mew Gull)	1
Redhead	7	Great Egret	44	Ring-billed Gull	39
Ring-necked Duck	705	Snowy Egret	11	California Gull	1652
Greater Scaup	18	Green Heron	1	Herring Gull	506
Lesser Scaup	181	Black-cr Night Heron	24	Iceland Gull=Thayers	4
Scaup Sp	3	Turkey Vulture	94	Glaucous-winged Gull	2
Bufflehead	384	Osprey	2	Gull sp.	98
Common Goldeneye	92	White-tailed Kite	2	Rock Pigeon	14
Hooded Merganser	27	Northern Harrier	3	Band-tailed Pigeon	38
Common Merganser	1970	Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Eurasian Collared Dove	42
Red-breasted Merganser	2	Cooper's Hawk	1	Mourning Dove	58
Ruddy Duck	5606	Bald Eagle	5	Western Screech Owl	2

Continued on page 5

## Lake County final Christmas Bird Count tally *Continued from page 4*

Great Horned Owl	6
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1
Anna's Hummingbird	37
Belted Kingfisher	13
Lewis's Woodpecker	1
Acorn Woodpecker	273
Red-breasted Sapsucker	5
Nuttall's Woodpecker	17
Downy Woodpecker	8
Northern Flicker	53
American Kestrel	8
Merlin*	2
Black Phoebe	44
Say's Phoebe	4
Steller's Jay	23
California Scrub-Jay	197
American Crow	274
Common Raven	184
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	3
Oak Titmouse	51
Bushtit	71
White-breasted Nuthatch	51
Pygmy Nuthatch	2
Marsh Wren	3

Bewick's Wren	13
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	42
Wrentit	15
Western Bluebird*	97
Townsend's Solitaire	1
Hermit Thrush	10
American Robin	558
California Thrasher	4
Northern Mockingbird	48
European Starling	581
American Pipit	4
Cedar Waxwing	12
Phainopepla	8
Yellow-rumped (form ?)	59
Yellow-rumped (Myrtle's)	4
Yellow-rumped (Audubon's)	1
Townsend's Warbler	2
Lark Sparrow	10
Fox Sparrow	6
Dark-eyed Junco - OR	130
White-crowned Sparrow	247
Golden-crowned Sparrow	275
White-throated Sparrow	2

Bell's Sparrow	1
Savannah Sparrow	25
Song Sparrow	34
Lincoln's Sparrow	2
California Towhee	87
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	1
Chipping Sparrow	cw
Spotted Towhee	58
Western Meadowlark	40
Hooded Oriole	1
Red-winged Blackbird	553
Brewer's Blackbird	535
Brown-headed Cowbird	9
House Finch	89
Lesser Goldfinch	137
Lawrence's Goldfinch	1
American Goldfinch	16
House Sparrow	103
<b>TOTAL BIRDS</b>	<b>26804</b>
<b>TOTAL SPECIES</b>	<b>131</b>

## *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 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.

# The Great Backyard Bird Count



*Here are some birds you  
might see on the Great  
Backyard Bird Count*



*White-breasted Nuthatch*



*Western Bluebird. To see more birds you might find  
during the bird count, turn to page 7.*

## ***Everyone is invited to join in the 2023 Great Backyard Bird Count***

Join the world in connecting to birds – February 17-20. Spend time in your favorite places watching birds and report your findings to the Great Backyard Bird Count. In as little as 15 minutes, notice the birds around you. Identify them, count them, and submit them to help scientists better understand and protect birds around the world.

Participating is easy, fun to do alone or with others, and can be done anywhere you find birds.

- Step 1: Decide where you will watch birds.
- Step 2: Watch birds for 15 minutes or more, at least once over the four days, February 17-20, 2023.
- Step 3: Identify all the birds you see or hear within your planned time/location and use the best tool for sharing your bird sightings:

<https://www.birdcount.org/>

There is a webinar February 15 from 10-11 a.m. PST. Sign up at [www.birdcount.org](https://www.birdcount.org/).



*Watch for these birds during the Great Backyard Bird Count*



*Northern Flicker.*



*White Crowned Sparrow*



*Spotted Towhee*





*The Colusa NWR is the first stop for the annual Redbud Audubon Society field trip to the National Wildlife Refuges in the Sacramento Valley, including Colusa and Sacramento.*



*The ponds were flooded and full of Snow Geese and many wading birds, mainly Black-necked Stilts.*

## ***Field trip to NWRs in January was great!***

The annual Redbud Audubon Society field trip to the Sacramento Valley's National Wildlife Refuges was a lot of fun as usual. About 10 people came in their own cars or with friends to see what was present in the flooded ponds of the refuges.

Snow Geese and White-fronted Geese were the main residents along with the usual Gadwalls, Widgeons, Pintails and many Black-necked Stilts. All in all, it was a lovely day with sunshine and a little wind.

The highlight may have been at the Sacramento NWR where several Moorhens were seen swimming in the pond area off of the large viewing deck. Moorhens are usually more secretive so it was a real treat for everyone to see them. Bald Eagles were also spotted – always an exciting sighting.

***See more photos on page 9***





*Brad and Kathy Barnwell are always helpful to have on hand for their expertise in identifying ducks and waterfowl.*



*Everyone needs a bird book now and then!*



*Kathy Barnwell has a Green-winged Teal in her scope.*

## *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.



*Catching a glimpse of the elusive black skimmer, a special sight to behold at Austin's Beach.*

## ***Black Skimmer at Austin's Beach in Clearlake***

***By Susanne Scholz***

I had heard about the Black Skimmer being seen in the Clearlake Oaks area, but was unclear as to where or how rare it was for Lake County. So, when Nikki White called to say it was at Austin's Beach in Clearlake – a place I know well – I was dismayed that I was over in Colusa at the wildlife refuges for our Annual Field trip and could not just go over and try to find it. I told my car mates, Jim Scholz, Ligia Sequeira and Nicola Selph about it, and we decided it would be worth a side trip on our way home. I figured it was a real long shot to think that it would still be there so many hours later and sort of forgot about it, thinking it just one more in a long line of unusual sightings that I would not get to see. But, as we turned onto Hwy 53 to get back to Lower Lake Jim said "Are we going to see the Skimmer?" The consensus in the car was to try for it.

When we arrived at Austin's Beach there were lots of people around enjoying the nice day and lots of gulls at the shoreline as well. I again thought that we

surely wouldn't see it but I would scan the beach anyway, and voila, there in my binoculars was this magnificent large tern-like bird just sitting there. Its huge black and orange bill was unmistakable. So, we all were able to see it as it just sat there.

Others on the beach asked what we were looking at because they said there had been people coming and going from the beach all day. We shared what we were seeing.

Because it was not moving, or reacting to the gulls and other birds coming and going, I thought perhaps it was sick. Maybe it couldn't feed well here in such a different environment. After all, it is a coastal bird that uses its much longer lower bill to scoop small fish and crustaceans from the surface of the water. Further research revealed that it is a night feeder that rests on sandy shorelines during the day, so its behavior was normal. This was good news, and there was no sign of it the next day when I checked the beach, so I choose to presume it went fishing at night and found a different spot to rest in the morning.





*A heron rookery nestled amidst the cottonwood trees. Field trip attendees may get lucky and see some nesters.*

## ***Join us for a field trip to the Reclamation Area Feb. 25***

All are welcome to join Redbud Audubon for a field trip to the Reclamation Area near Upper Lake on Saturday, Feb. 25. Please note the date change from the usual third Saturday. Attendees are asked to meet at the Upper Lake Park, at 575 East Highway 20, west of the Running Creek Casino at 9 a.m. Please don't be late. After meeting, the group will caravan to the Reclamation Area.

The walk will be on flat ground (for the most part) and there is a possibility that Great Blue Herons will be nesting in the cottonwoods along Rodman Slough.

## ***2023 Field Trip Calendar***

Field trips will start at 9 a.m. unless otherwise announced in the newsletter.

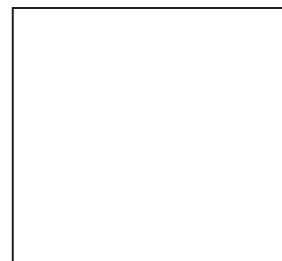
**February 25, 2023**

Reclamation Area near Upper Lake

**April 22 and May 20, TBA**

**Details for each field trip will be published in that month's newsletter, including directions and start time if different from 9 a.m.** The April and May field trips have yet to be determined but will be announced in upcoming newsletters. Put these dates on your calendar and plan for a fun day of birding with friends!

**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.

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*