



# *The Western Grebe*

Redbud Audubon Society, Inc.,

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

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## *A 27-Year Wildflower Journey: The Making of an Award-winning Book*



*Nita Winter and Bob Badger.*

Spectacular California wildflower photography will be the topic at the January 18 Zoom meeting of the Redbud Audubon Society at 7 p.m. Internationally acclaimed conservation photographers Rob Badger and Nita Winter will share scenes of their 27-year journey photographing wildflowers and super-bloom landscapes throughout California and the West.

This decades-long journey led to the creation of their award-winning coffee-table book, *“Beauty and the Beast: California Wildflowers and Climate Change,”* co-published with the California Native Plant Society. The book, which has won 12 awards, is a celebration of California’s amazing plant diversity. The book’s stories about the wildflowers are to inspire hope and action on climate change, and

*(Continued on page 2)*

### **REDBUD AUDUBON**

#### **JANUARY MEETING**

**Thursday, January 18, 7 PM**

*Speakers: Rob Badger and Nita Winter*

*Topic: Wildflower photography*

To register for this Zoom meeting, click link:

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

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

Or scan the following QR code:





*Calypso Orchid on Mt. Tamalpais.*

## ***California wildflower photography***

*(Continued from page 1)*

the book serves as a companion to their traveling educational exhibit.

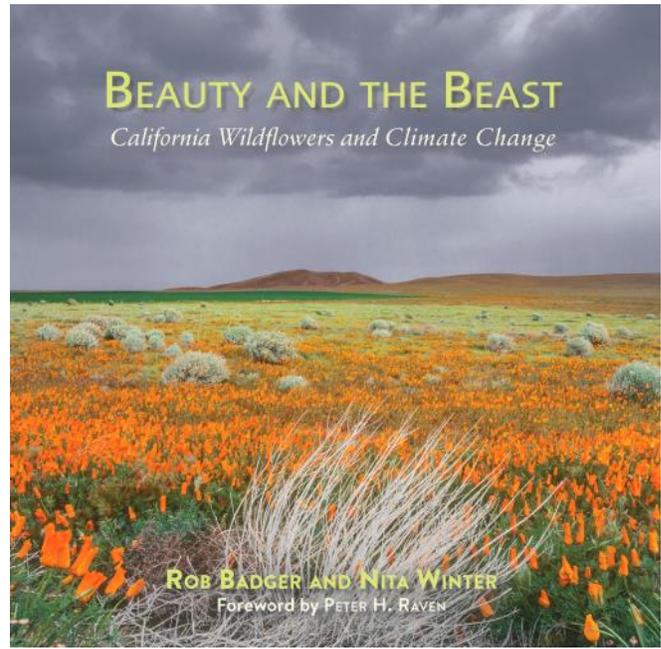
Gorgeous scenery isn't the only thing that makes the "Beauty and the Beast" wildflower photos so special. The photographers show how they create wildflower portraits in the field, lugging 80 pounds of cameras along with their "natural light" studio equipment, from below sea level in Death Valley National Park to 13,000-foot-high mountain passes.

Rob Badger and Nita Winter have been life partners and creative collaborators for more than three decades. Their work has been featured in Time, Mother Jones, and Sierra magazines, the New York Times, Washington Post, San Francisco Chronicle, and the Los Angeles Times.

They are the recent recipients of the Sierra Club's 2020 Ansel Adams Award for Conservation Photography.

The photographs in their book are not intended to show the effects of climate change on wildflowers. Rather, Rob and Nita share what scientists, including some of the authors who contributed to their book, are learning about how climate change is affecting wildflowers and what we can do to protect them.

To register for the program, click on the registration link in this newsletter (if you receive it by email) or on the homepage link at [www.redbudaudubon.org](http://www.redbudaudubon.org). The Zoom link for the program will be sent on the day of the presentation.



*Beauty and the Beast; California Wildflowers and Climate Change book cover.*



*A Scarlet Fritillaria and hummingbird.*



*Wildflowers and snow on the mountains*

# President's Message

by Donna Mackiewicz



Donna Mackiewicz

## Happy New Year!

2024 is the Year of the Dragon in the Chinese Zodiac. What bird would come closest to a dragon? The closest I could come was that the dragon's head looks similar to the head of the Great Eared Nightjar, a Southeast Asian species. Which made me think of the coolest birds of Lake County – our Western and Clark's Grebes.

These grebes have been a longtime favorite of residents and visitors alike, and from 2010-2020 they were the focus of research and outreach by Redbud and two other northern California chapters (Plumas and Altacal). The work was done under a grant that Audubon California obtained from the Luckenbach Trustee Council, which oversees the use of settlements arising from a series of oil spills that harmed grebes in the open ocean.

The project goal was to protect nesting grebes from human disturbance during the breeding season through education and outreach to the public. Clear Lake is just as appealing to humans as to nesting grebe colonies. Speed boats and discarded fishing line can bring potential harm to the eggs and babies in nesting colonies. To prevent harm, chapter volunteers installed, and continue to maintain fishing line recycle bins; they also strategically placed educational signs and speed limit buoys.

To track both the grebes' breeding success and instances of human disturbance, Dr. Floyd Hayes, Professor of Biology at Pacific Union College, led the research team each summer for the project's 10 years.

In the years since the project ended, people have asked how the grebes are doing now. Redbud board members continue to keep an eye out for a grant that might fit into more grebe monitoring, including possible use of drones for data collection and photo monitoring of the colonies.

With 25 fishing line recycle bins around the lake, it would also be great to work out a schedule with individuals or families committed to checking and collecting the discarded line, especially before and after tournaments.

Whatever this year brings, we hope it will be filled with the joy of watching birds (although it's unlikely you will see either a Great Eared Nightjar or a dragon in 2024).



Photo credit: Jason Thompson's Great Eared Nightjar



Board member Marilyn Waits managed Redbud's Grebe Conservation Project.



*Redbud Audubon Society members birding from the Colusa NWR last year.*



*Common Goldeneyes are among the ducks that can be viewed.*



*Thousands of geese and other waterfowl can be seen at the refuges. See more photos on page 5*

## ***Join Redbud Audubon's annual trip to the Sacramento Valley NWRs***

Everyone is invited to join Redbud Audubon for its annual field trip to two Sacramento Valley Wildlife Refuges (NWRs) on Saturday, Jan. 20. This is a wonderful opportunity to see thousands of migrating water birds and observe them up close. Participants are asked to arrange their own transportation and carpooling as the chapter is unable to provide carpooling because of insurance reasons.

Redbud attendees will meet as a group at 9 am at the Colusa Wildlife Refuge viewing platform. We usually begin by spending 30-45 minutes on the Observation Platform, We will then enjoy the auto tour of the preserve, driving along an elevated road. Most of the ponds along the auto tour are flooded, again offering close views of the birds.

The refuge is located at 2180 State Highway 20 East, Colusa, shortly after Williams. It's a little tricky finding the entrance road; it is the second sign about the refuge. PGE transmission lines near the entrance road will let you know you are in the right area. If you have GPS on your phone, you should be fine.

After the Colusa tour, interested participants will travel on to the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge. Drive north on Interstate 5 about 25 miles and exit at the Sacramento NWR sign. The address is 752 County Rd. 99W Willows, CA. Again, a little tricky if you have never been there, but we can caravan from Colusa. There is a nice observation deck along the six-mile auto tour. There is also a walking trail that will be open if not weather-impacted. The Visitor Center restrooms and kiosks are currently being remodeled and are closed to the public, but portable restrooms are provided at the Visitor Center parking lot. There is a \$6 fee at this extensive NWR.

Need more information? Call Donna at (405) 227-6020 or email [redbudaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:redbudaudubon@gmail.com).



*This Bald Eagle image was captured by Brad Barnwell during a 2019 visit to the NWR.*



*Cinnamon Teals are also usually seen.*

## 2023 - 2024 Field Trip Calendar

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

**January 20, 2024** - Colusa and Sacramento National Wildlife Refuges

**February 17, 2024** – Rodman Preserve

**March 16, 2024** – TBA

**April 20, 2024** – TBA

**May 18, 2024** – Highland Springs

Details for each field trip will be published in the preceding newsletter, including directions and start time if different from 9 a.m. The March-April 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 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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**To contact a board member:**

**Phone 707/805-9410**

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

# 2023 Christmas Bird Count Preliminary Results

By Kathy Barnwell

Congratulations to our dedicated and generous birders for participating in Redbud Audubon's 49th Christmas Bird Count held December 16, 2023! The temperatures were cold in the morning, as usual, but warmed up to 65, and it was mostly clear all day. In a few locations the wind picked up midday, making it difficult paddling for our kayakers, but most of us had very good birding weather.

The preliminary species count is 132, with 14,559 birds seen by 12 separate groups and 31 participants. This year's count is the second lowest in 27 years. Although the species count is much better than our lowest year of 117 species in 2021; the total birds seen is only slightly better than the 12,289 birds seen that same year.

Uncommon birds seen this year: **Hooded Oriole** (1) and **Great-tailed Grackle** (8). High numbers are: **Common Raven** (192), **Slate-colored Junco** (17), **White-throated Sparrow** (22), **American Goldfinch** (82), and **House Sparrow** (148). Low numbers are: **Common Merganser** (166), **Ruddy Duck** (64), **Eared Grebe** (102), **Red-shouldered Hawk** (9), **American Coot** (751), **Stellar's Jay** (9), **California Scrub-Jay** (110), **American Crow** (126), **Oak Titmouse** (47), **Bushtit** (32), **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** (42), **Northern Mockingbird** (13), **European Starling** (347), **Phainopepla** (2), **Dark-eyed Junco** (111), **Golden-crowned Sparrow** (111), **Song Sparrow** (13), **California Towhee** (53), **Spotted Towhee** (30), and **Red-winged Blackbirds** (184).

Our official Count Week extended from Dec 13 to Dec 19. Count week (cw) birds are not a part of our official census data for our count day, but birds seen during the days before or after our count day are recorded on our checklist as "cw". No other information about count week birds is recorded in the CBC database, including the numbers observed or the date seen, but recording them helps us to establish some of the birds that were in the circle and missed on count day. This year those birds were: **Merlin**, **Chestnut-backed Chickadee**, **Black-throated Gray Warbler**, and **Swamp Sparrow**.

We are so grateful for the many long term participants in our count, and also truly appreciate the new members to our count this year. The importance of having as many participants and groups covering our count circle is shown by the great bird sightings below. Without all the eyes and ears out there, many of these birds would have been missed. Through tremendous skill, effort and persistence, 8 of our groups were the only ones who reported one or more of the following species:

<b>Greater White-fronted Goose</b> (9)	<b>Horned Grebe</b> (18)
<b>Barn Owl</b> (1)	<b>Varied Thrush</b> (1)
<b>Wood Duck</b> (2)	<b>Green Heron</b> (1)
<b>Northern Saw-whet Owl</b> (1)	<b>American Pipit</b> (4)
<b>Gadwall</b> (9)	<b>Cooper's Hawk</b> (1)
<b>Lewis's Woodpecker</b> (1)	<b>Phainopepla</b> (2)
<b>American Wigeon</b> (15)	<b>Ferruginous Hawk</b> (1)
<b>Red-breasted Sapsucker</b> (2)	<b>Orange-crowned Warbler</b> (1)
<b>Greater Scaup</b> (3)	<b>Virginia Rail</b> (2)
<b>Pileated Woodpecker</b> (1)	<b>Townsend's Warbler</b> (2)
<b>Red-breasted Merganser</b> (1)	<b>Spotted Sandpiper</b> (1)
<b>Hutton's Vireo</b> (1)	<b>Lincoln's Sparrow</b> (1)
<b>Mountain Quail</b> (1)	<b>Short-billed (Mew) Gull</b> (1)
<b>Pygmy Nuthatch</b> (5)	<b>Hooded Oriole</b> (1)
<b>Ring-necked Pheasant</b> (1)	<b>Glaucous-winged Gull</b> (8)
<b>Brown Creeper</b> (1)	<b>Great-tailed Grackle</b> (8)
	<b>Purple Finch</b> (1)

Using preliminary numbers, the top three species this year are:

1. **American Robin: 2,181**
2. **Western/Clarks Grebe: 1,593**
3. **California Gull: 1,409**

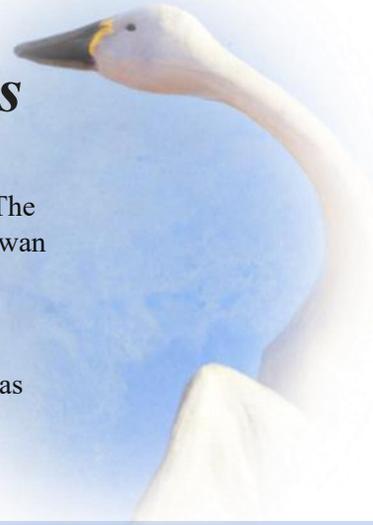
We are so grateful for everyone who participates in the count each year, either in a group, or by birding at your own homes. Your willingness to spend many hours birding in the field and more hours at home putting together all your reporting forms is appreciated so much. Your exceptional efforts result in an accurate and complete account of birds located in our count circle year after year.

We hope all participants had a wonderful day of birding and will plan to join us next year for Redbud Audubon's 50th Annual Christmas Bird Count.

## ***CDFW offers Tundra Swan Tours in the Central Valley***

Celebrate the bird migration on the Pacific Flyway this fall and winter! The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) offers popular, free swan tours on select Saturdays, November through January.

Held in partnership with Mathews Rice Operation, the tours transverse flooded rice fields north of Marysville. This area boasts one of the largest overwintering populations of Tundra Swans in the Central Valley, as well as abundant geese, ducks, shorebirds and raptors. To register, please email [genelle.treaster@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:genelle.treaster@wildlife.ca.gov).



### ***Volunteer Opportunity***

If you have time in the next two months to help the birds of Clear Lake, Robert Patton, lead volunteer of the fishing line collection bins (located at boat ramps around the lake) will be unable to collect used fishing line for that time.

Redbud Audubon needs volunteers to check the bins and collect fishing line. Let us know if you could visit a boat ramp or two in the next couple of months and we will share the locations available and the procedure. Call (707) 805-9410 or email: [redbud.audubon@gmail.com](mailto:redbud.audubon@gmail.com) and leave a message. Someone will get back to you.

### ***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.

## ***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.

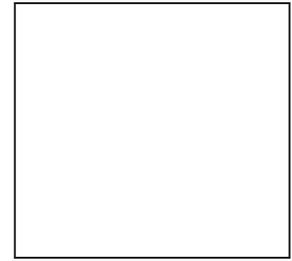
Not only do you help save a tree, you help us save on expenses and energy in sending it to you by regular mail, and it comes to you in color versus the black-and-white mailed version. If you have been meaning to, but haven't yet done so, take a minute or two out of your time to do so.

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.

**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.

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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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