



The Western Grebe

Redbud Audubon Society, Inc.,

www.redbudaudubon.org

Volume 51 • Issue No. 5 • January, 2026

Learn about wildlife rehabilitation during Redbud Audubon's January program



Rachel Avilla The January 15 zoom program for Redbud Audubon will feature a program on wildlife rehabilitation, presented by Rachel Avilla who is a wildlife rehabilitator with over 20 years of experience and a degree in Environmental Science. The program will start at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 15. Please register by either clicking on the link in this newsletter, if you receive it by email, or go to www.redbudaudubon.org and click on the registration link on the homepage.

Avilla's program will focus on her work with the Wild Neighbors Database Project (WNBP), and what their information can tell us about bird populations. She will share some of her

(Continued on page 2)



Wildlife rehabilitator Rachel Avilla treating parrots.

REDBUD AUDUBON

JANUARY MEETING

Thursday, January 15, 7 pm

Topic: Wildlife rehabilitation efforts

Speaker: Rachel Avilla

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:



REDBUD AUDUBON BOARD OF DIRECTORS



OFFICERS

President: Donna Mackiewicz

Vice President: Roberta Lyons

Treasurer: Nicola Selph

Secretary: Cindy Jasser

Members-at-large:

Katherine Lindsley and 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 - Cindy Jasser

Publicity - Roberta Lyons

Webmaster - Bonnie Thompson

Social Media - Donna Mackiewicz

To contact a board member:

Phone 707/805-9410

Email: redbud.audubon@gmail.com



January's presenter has helped wildlife all around the world

(Continued from page 1)

general rehabilitation experience in California and will have a PowerPoint presentation to accompany her talk that shows her work with wildlife rehabilitation, especially with parrots.

Avilla has worked and volunteered globally in wildlife rehabilitation and nonprofit management, and has collaborated with partners including UC Davis, University of Pennsylvania, NOAA, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and wildlife agencies in California, Washington, Arizona, Florida, and Pennsylvania. She served on the board of directors for the California Council for Wildlife Rehabilitators for six years, including five years as President.

She is the Executive Director and co-founder of the Wild Neighbors Database Project (WNDP) and the Operations and Outreach Coordinator for the Clear Lake Environmental Research Center (CLERC). Grounded in hands-on wildlife rehabilitation, her work focuses on improving care outcomes and using tools such as the Wildlife Rehabilitation Medical Database (WRMD) and Wild Alert to translate rehabilitation data into actionable wildlife health monitoring and environmental decision-making.

President's Message *by Donna Mackiewicz*

Looking ahead with gratitude, grit and a whole lot of birds



Donna Mackiewicz

As we turn our binoculars toward the months ahead, I'm feeling deeply grateful, wonderfully hopeful, and—let's be honest—pretty excited about all the feathers, festivals, and friends that make our Audubon community so special. ..

First and foremost: thank you, thank you, THANK YOU to everyone who responded so generously to our Annual Appeal last month. Your donations are more than dollars—they are nest boxes checked, fishing line removed, kids inspired, habitats protected, and birds given a fighting chance. Every contribution helps keep the Audubon mission soaring right here at home, and we truly could not do this work without you.

Looking forward, there are many ways to spread your wings with us, and we'd love your help!

Bluebird Nestbox Monitoring

There is something magical about opening a nest box and finding a carefully built nest—or a fuzzy, wide-mouthed chick staring back at you. Volunteers are needed to help monitor bluebird nest boxes, providing crucial data and care that supports successful nesting. It's hands-on conservation and pure joy all rolled into one.

Fishing Line Collection (Clearlake & Kelseyville areas)

Discarded fishing line is a hidden hazard for birds and other wildlife. We're looking for volunteers to help collect fishing line around Clearlake and the Kelseyville area. It's simple, impactful work that makes an immediate difference—your efforts quite literally untangle lives.

Educational Outreach at Community Festivals

Love birds and people? Come help us share our chapter's story at local events like Shigom Days and the Tule Festival. Volunteers assist with outreach, activities, and engaging conversations that spark curiosity and conservation-minded thinking in our community especially with young birders in the making! And we can't forget about the exciting Grebe Monitoring beginning Spring 2026 with the local high school students from Lowe Lake High and Upper Lake High – come along and help us monitor our grebes.

Newsletter & Webpage Support

If words, photos, or web updates are your jam, we'd love help with membership and webpage. Sharing stories, announcements, and birdy brilliance keeps our flock connected and informed.

As always, whether you volunteer your time, donate, spread the word, or simply pause to admire a grebe dancing across the water, you are part of this mission. Together, we are building a future where birds—and people—continue to thrive.

With heartfelt thanks and hopeful wings, *Onward we fly, Donna*

Please provide us with your email

A number of our members have emailed us at redbud.audubon@gmail.com to opt in 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.



Kathy Gaynor and others at the CBC get together.



Pam Smithstan captured this Great Egret on bird count day.

2025 Christmas Bird Count preliminary results

A huge thank you to our devoted birders for participating in Redbud Audubon's 51st Christmas Bird Count held December 20, 2025! The temperatures ranged from 47° to 60°, one of the warmest count days we've had in many years. Unfortunately, the forecast for rain to start at 4:00 p.m. didn't hold: showers began around 1:30, with steady rain beginning around 2:30. Not a total washout - but a pretty wet afternoon!

The preliminary species count is 128, with 31,307 total birds seen by 14 separate groups and 36 participants. Considering the poor weather conditions, the total birds seen is a good number, and our participation numbers were up this year.

Uncommon birds seen this year are: Long-tailed Duck (1), Ross's Goose (1), Redhead (1), Barrow's Goldeneye (1), Tree Swallow (25), and Bullock's and Hooded Orioles (1 of each). This is the first time in 51 years that a Long-tailed Duck and Ross's Goose have been seen on the count! **High numbers are:** Wood Duck (60), Ruddy Duck (6,468), Great Blue Heron (52), Great Egret (98), Black-crowned Night Heron (37), California Thrasher (13) and Lincoln's Sparrow (9). **Low numbers are:** Osprey (0), Common Merganser (5), and Western Meadowlark (29).

Our official Count Week extended from Dec 17 to Dec 23. 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, which are not seen on 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: Sora, Peregrine Falcon, Pygmy**

(Continued on page 6)



Participants gathered at Kelseyville Pizza on Sunday, following the count, to help tally number and species of birds seen.



Egrets gather on a neighbor's beach in Jago Bay where one counter got 32 species.

CBC wouldn't be a success without the participants

(Continued from page 4)

Nuthatch, House Wren, Lark Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, and Western Tanager.

We are so grateful to each and every participant, from the brand new beginner to the experienced, decades long participants. The importance of having as many people out in the field covering our count circle is shown by the great bird sightings below. Without all of you, many of these birds would have been missed. Through tremendous skill, effort and persistence, **9 of our groups were the only ones who reported one or more of the following species:**

Greater White-fronted Goose (12)

Great Horned Owl (4)

Ross's Goose (1)

Brown Creeper (1)

Canvasback (2)

Pacific Wren (1)

Redhead (1)

Marsh Wren (1)

Barrow's Goldeneye (1)

American Pipit (1)

Common Merganser (5)

Orange-crowned Warbler (1)

Long-tailed Duck (1)

White-throated Sparrow (2)

Ring-necked Pheasant (2)

Bell's Sparrow (1)

Common Loon (1)

Rufous-crowned Sparrow (7)

Golden Eagle (1)

Hooded Oriole (1)

Least Sandpiper (1)

Bullock's Oriole (1)

Iceland Gull (2)

Tricolored Blackbird (1)

Band-tailed Pigeon (12)

Brown-headed Cowbird (5)

Barn Owl (2)

Great-tailed Grackle (5)

Western Screech Owl (1)

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

1. Ruddy Duck: 6,468; 2. Western/Clark's Grebes: 4,836; 3. Western Grebes: 4,587

The success of the bird count is a result of everyone who participates 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 your reporting forms is appreciated so much. Your extraordinary efforts result in an accurate and complete count of birds located in our count circle year after year.

We hope all participants had a nice day of birding, despite the wet conditions, and will plan to join us next year for Redbud Audubon's 52nd Annual Christmas Bird Count on **Saturday, December 19, 2026.**



Richard Mackiewicz counting birds during the CBC.

2025 Christmas Bird Count



CBC participants tallying bird counts.



Pelicans and cormorants during the CBC.



Checking on the Stilts and Yellowlegs.



Brad Barnwell points out a Pintail and other ducks at the Colusa Wildlife Refuges.



Nicola Selph and Brad Barnwell at last years' field trip to the NWR.

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. 17. 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 should be open to the public, and portable restrooms are provided at the Visitor Center parking lot. There is a \$6 fee at this extensive NWR. Bring a lunch if you like as we usually gather for lunch at the main visitor center.

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



There is always something interesting to see at the NWRs.



The Colusa Wildlife Refuge is usually full of birds of all kind.

2025-2026

Field Trip Calendar

Please Note: field trips will start at 9 a.m. unless otherwise announced in the newsletter

January 17 – Sacramento and Colusa National Wildlife Refuges

February 21 – Lake County Land Trust's Rodman Preserve

March 21 – Clearlake Oaks Boat Ramp/Clark's Island/Wetlands/Rookery

April – TBA

May – Annual Picnic

Details for each field trip will be published in the preceding newsletter, including directions and start time if different from 9 a.m. Field trips are weather dependent and will be cancelled if there is severe weather or weather issues make accessibility difficult. Put these dates on your calendar and plan for a fun day of birding with friends!



Male Bullock's Oriole.



Female Hooded Oriole.

Unusual presence of Bullocks and hooded Orioles in Clear Lake Oaks are noted

For the past month, a **male Bullock's Oriole** and a **female Hooded Oriole** have been making regular visits to a home in Clearlake Oaks Keys. Early in the morning, they can be seen at the Welches Grape Jelly and sugar-water feeders—which are cleaned and refilled daily—making for an unexpected and delightful sight in Lake County at this time of year. Their consistent presence allowed both birds to be **counted and photographed** as part of the annual Christmas Bird Count, adding a notable highlight to this year's census.

Seeing either species in mid-winter here is unusual. Bullock's Orioles typically depart Northern California in late summer to fall, while Hooded Orioles are even less expected this far north during winter. Their regular, day-to-day use of feeders suggests they are finding reliable resources and suitable microhabitat despite seasonal norms.

Why these two orioles are lingering remains an open question. Milder winters, changing migration patterns, and the availability of supplemental food may all play a role. Whatever the reason, their presence offers a vivid reminder that bird movements are dynamic—and that careful observation by local birders can capture meaningful changes in real time.

For now, these winter orioles continue to brighten the days, turning a backyard feeder into a front-row seat for a rare Lake County moment.



Membership explained

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. 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 to help protect wildlife

Some of our members who are also members of National Audubon may receive emails 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 Society needs you to volunteer!

About 35 years ago I was very concerned about environmental issues happening all around me, especially in our own Lake County. I wanted to do something but wasn't quite sure what that "something" was. After seeing an article about a Redbud Audubon program, I thought, "well, maybe that is a good organization to get involved with." So, I called up someone listed in the newsletter and said I wanted to get involved.

And so, after 35 years, I am still involved with Redbud Audubon, and it has been incredibly fulfilling. I often wonder if there are others who, like me back then, feel compelled to address their concerns but are uncertain about where to start. If you find yourself in that position, I encourage you to do what I did: volunteer for Redbud Audubon!

Opportunities to Make a Difference

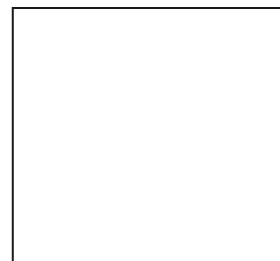
In this newsletter, our president, Donna Mackiewicz, has outlined the many projects currently undertaken by our organization. There is a wide variety of activities, and each one offers a fun and rewarding way to get involved. Even if you can spare just an hour a week, your contribution will have a meaningful impact. Volunteering will not only give you a sense of fulfillment but also introduce you to some wonderful people.

How to get involved

If you are interested in volunteering or would like more information, please email us at redbud.audubon@gmail.com or call (707) 805-9410. Leave your contact information and mention your area of interest. Someone will reach out to you.

Roberta Lyons, past president

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