



# *The Western Grebe*

Redbud Audubon Society, Inc.,

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

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## Grebe monitoring updates and community science in action to be featured this month



*Dr. Scott Butterfield* The Redbud Audubon Society will present a program on the Grebe Monitoring project that is being spearheaded by Dr. Scott Butterfield of Pacific Union College and the Redbud Audubon Society. The program is slated for Feb. 19 and will be held on zoom starting at 7 p.m.

Dr. Butterfield and Donna Mackiewicz, President of the Redbud Audubon Society, are working with local students from Upper Lake and Lower Lake High Schools, along with tribal members to monitor the success of nesting Grebes on Clear Lake using drones and advanced AI.

(Continued on page 2)



*The Grebe Monitoring project tracks grebes nesting on Clear Lake using drones and AI. Photo by Pam Smithstan.*

### REDBUD AUDUBON

#### FEBRUARY MEETING

Thursday, February 19, 7 pm

*Topic: Grebe monitoring updates and community science in action*

*Speaker: Dr. Scott Butterfield*

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:



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*The Grebe Monitoring project is showing grebe populations staying steady, and in some areas, making gains. Photo by Pam Smithstan.*

## ***Redbud Audubon, students and tribal members team up with PUC to help grebes***

*(Continued from page 1)*

The drone training is led by Dr. Butterfield and his collaborators at Pacific Union. These tools should lead to a better understanding of grebe nesting patterns while protecting sensitive habitats. “We’re blending cutting-edge science with grassroots dedication,” noted Mackiewicz.

Stories, photos, and progress of the project will be shared during the zoom presentation.

“We’re thrilled to share the wonderful news from Clear Lake that our beloved Western and Clark’s Grebes are continuing to thrive. Last nesting season brought encouraging signs of success. We saw strong nesting activity and an uplifting sense that grebe populations are holding steady — and even increasing in some areas. Every floating nest and fuzzy chick feels like a little victory for Clear Lake,” Mackiewicz stated.

One of the brightest highlights has been the growing involvement of local students. Since 2024, the chapter’s grebe monitoring has expanded to include enthusiastic high school science classes from Lower Lake and Upper Lake.

To register for the presentation go to [www.redbudaudubon.org](http://www.redbudaudubon.org) and click on the registration link that will take you to a quick and easy form to fill out to register. The link for the zoom program will be sent on the day of the presentation.



*Western Grebe parents with a baby on one's back. Photo by Summalee Oakley-Hansen.*

## *President's Message* by Donna Mackiewicz

*Taking time to observe common birds reveals behaviors we often miss*



*Donna Mackiewicz*

**Dear Friends,**

A special thank-you to **Sumalee and Vicky** for their inspiring presentation last month on the *Zen of Birding Stakeouts*, following Rachel's wonderful Wild Neighbors Database program. Their reminder to slow down and simply watch has already changed the way I bird.

Using the stakeout tools, I spent just 15 quiet minutes observing **Canada Geese** and noticed behaviors I'd never paid attention to before—neck stretched forward as they propelled underwater, then suddenly bursting up and even flipping upside down. One goose's clumsy rollovers nearly made me laugh, but in true stakeout spirit, I stayed quiet and smiled. I also witnessed moments of aggression, with straight necks and raised head feathers.

It was a perfect lesson: even our most common, abundant species hold surprises when we take time to truly observe. This month, I encourage you to pause, sit, and discover something new in the birds around you.

Be sure to visit Sumalee's monthly blog: **Birding Unfettered** at <https://www.birdingunfettered.com/>

Be sure to check out Feathered Photography for Ron Dudley's outstanding capturing of the Canada Geese's bathing habits and more at. <https://www.featheredphotography.com/blog/>

Warmly,

**Donna Mackiewicz,**

**President, Redbud Audubon Society**



## How many birds can you find?

29th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

February 13–16, 2026

[birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org)

Common Goldeneye / *Bucephala clangula*  
Photo: Alex Smilor / Macaulay Library

### ***Great Backyard Bird Count: celebrate birds on Valentine's weekend February 13-16!***

Looking for a fun and meaningful way to spend Valentine's weekend? Join bird lovers across the world for the **Great Backyard Bird Count**, happening **February 13–16**. This annual event is a chance for everyone, beginners, and experienced birders to simply watch birds for at least 15 minutes and help scientists learn more about bird populations. If you have feeders in your yard or simply enjoy watching the birds that visit your yards, this is a fun community science project.

Here in Lake County, there is a special invitation to the Lake County Land Trust's Rodman Preserve. The preserve will be open for its usual Saturday hours from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. but Redbud Audubon birders, Donna and Richard Mackiewicz, will be there from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. to count birds from the back porch. It's a perfect spot to enjoy winter birds in a peaceful setting. The Rodman Preserve is located at 6350 Westlake Blvd., Upper Lake.

Be sure to step inside and explore the new nature center additions.

Bring your binoculars, bring a friend, and fall in love with birds all over again!

Learn more and submit your sightings at: [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

## ***NWR field trip was a fruitful day with some wonderful sightings***

The annual January trip to the Colusa and Sacramento National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs) was absolutely great this year. Despite a rather scary drive from Williams to the Colusa NWR because of fog, the day went from not to promising to a lot of fun with some great sightings. Colusa did not yield very much as the refuge was fogged in too, but after arriving at Sacramento, things improved quite a bit.

The Redbud Audubon group, consisting of three or four cars, motored along the driving tour and were rewarded with a sighting of four Bald Eagles in one tree. A total of seven Bald Eagles were seen during the outing. Other notable sightings included Yellow-rumped Warblers, Long-billed Curlew, Gadwall, Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teal, Marsh Wren, Great Egret, Bittern, Ibis, Harrier, Meadowlark, Pied-bill Grebe, Pintail, to name just some. An exciting find for all was the presence of seven Wilson Snipes on one of the small islands in the wetland. They were hunkered down and seemed to be enjoying a relaxed morning and afternoon. Other wading birds like Yellow-legs and Avocets were also spotted. Half way through the tour there is a stopping point with nice viewing decks and is the spot where participants enjoyed their lunch before moving on for the rest of the motor tour.

This annual field trip is one of the favorites enjoyed by old and new members alike. We encourage all to join in. We no longer arrange carpools for insurance reasons but that doesn't stop you from privately reaching out and engaging a friend or fellow Audubon member to share a ride. *See more photos on page 5.*



*Gadwalls on a log at the Sacramento NWR.*



*A White-faced Ibis feeding on the shore.*



*There were lots of Snow Geese at both Preserves.*



*Marilyn Waits waiting her turn to view the Snipes.*



*Roberta Lyons, (L,) was happy to welcome former Redbud Audubon member Bonnie Thompson who traveled down from Bend, Oregon for the day. Bonnie still volunteers for Redbud as our webmaster.*



*The new viewing deck at the Sacramento NWR was a big hit.*



*Brad Barnwell fine-tunes his scope on the Wilson's Snipes.*



*It was a foggy day at Colusa but that didn't stop Ligia Sequeira (L) Susanne Scholz, Kathy Barnwell and Marilyn Waits from getting out on the viewing deck.*



## *February field trip will be held at the Rodman Preserve*

Redbud Audubon's field trip for February will be held at the popular Rodman Preserve at 6350 Westlake Rd. Upper Lake. If coming from Lakeport, take the Nice-Lucerne Cutoff, then turn left on to Westlake. The preserve is on the corner of Westlake and the cutoff. Don't mistake the County's Rodman Slough Park at the bridge for the Preserve. They are two different areas.

The field trip is set for Feb. 21 and starts at 9 a.m. It will include an easy 1-1/2 mile walk, with some elevation. Wear good waterproof shoes if you have them and of course, bring your binoculars. Usually seen are woodpeckers, sparrows, warblers, and other passerines. There is a report that Bald Eagles are nesting from one of the main viewpoints, so you might not want to miss this field trip.

Meet in the parking lot of the preserve's nature center at 9 a.m. and get ready to enjoy a pleasant walk with friendly people.



*You might have another nature sighting like this Gopher Snake heading down one of the trees in the Blue Oak Forest. Don't worry, he was well off the trail.*



*Golden-crowned Sparrows are at the Rodman Preserve now.*

**The final numbers for Redbud Audubon's 2025 Christmas Bird Count will be published in the March issue of the Western Grebe.**

## **2025-2026**

### **Field Trip Calendar**

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

**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!



*Rodman Preserve offers great views.*

## *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.

## Membership explained

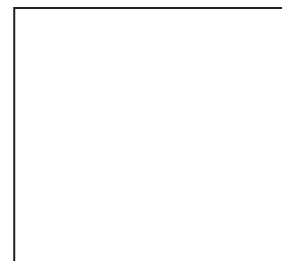
You have a choice between two types of membership. Most of you are members of National Audubon and are assigned by National to our Redbud Audubon chapter. We offer chapter-only membership whereby you must enroll via the internet. You can visit our website at [www.redbudaudubon.org](http://www.redbudaudubon.org) 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](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.

## *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**  
**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  
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