

The Hoot Owl



Female Wilson's Phalarope
Taken by Jim Gain at Ceres WTP

DID YOU KNOW?

Female Wilson's Phalaropes begin migration right after laying their eggs!

August Migration

Summer is coming to an end and fall migration is just around the corner. Be on the lookout for shorebirds flying through the county in August.

[Read More](#)

Upcoming Events



Scroll to page three to read about the wonderful events and field trips sponsored by the SJAS.

[Read More](#)

Dragonflies!

When summer heat makes birding a challenge, try chasing dragonflies instead! Kathy Biggs invites you to discover these dazzling aerial hunters in her engaging article.

[Read More](#)





More Stories



California Thrasher
Kiln Canyon '25
Mark Elness



Black-chinned Hummingbird
Mohler Tract, Ripon '25
Philip Fiorio



Rufous-crowned Sparrow
Kiln Canyon '25
Mark Elness

Bald Eagles in July

Philip Fiorio had the pleasure of watching three bald eagles lingering along the Stanislaus River in South Manteca. He writes about the thrill of watching them feed on salmon as they lingered for twelve days.

[Read More](#)

Rare Bird Sightings

Read up on the latest rare bird sightings and pictures as well!

[Read More](#)

Species Spotlight Quiz

By Ralph Baker

This species can be seen throughout the county and is a year-round resident. Patterned boldly in black-and-white, with a long tail, this large (16.5 inches) bird is unmistakable (and telling you the bill color might give it away). It can be found in small flocks, often walking along the ground as it forages, but may form much larger flocks when going to roost.

[Click Here for the Answer](#)



From the President

Greetings my fellow nature lovers,

I am honored to have been elected as the president of the San Joaquin Audubon Society (SJAS) for the next two years. I have always enjoyed casually observing and identifying birds, starting as a student in South Africa and then living in several west coast states (BC, WA, OR and CA). My birding moved to the next level when I discovered eBird in 2020 and started attending SJAS events. I met many amazing people that have been observing and working for the benefit of birds for years and even decades. They taught me so much and I made many friends.

I love seeing birds in my garden, on a casual hike or on a SJAS field trip. A recent highlight for me was my first birding trip with three SJAS friends to SE Arizona. One of the things that draws me to birds is that, as I learn new facts about them every day, I realize the amazing living beings that they are.

However, I often feel guilty about how little I do to give back to the birds. I do provide food, water and shelter for them in my garden; but there is much more that I could do. They face so many challenges and the populations of most species are declining.

My wish is that this position will motivate and enable me to do more for the birds. I have started my conversations and involvement with other organizations in the county and beyond, like the North San Joaquin Chapter - California Native Plant Society.

There is so much that we can do in our own gardens and communities. For example I only recently learned about the importance of native host plants as food for caterpillars since introduced plants are toxic to them. These caterpillars in turn are a crucial food source that birds feed to their young. Therefore, we converted all our lawn to mostly native shrubs last fall. I'm grateful to the people that took the time to share this information with me.

Other opportunities I see are advocating for birds with our legislators, being involved in restoration projects, placing and monitoring nest boxes, etc. A big part of the effort will be to get the word out so that more people can be involved.

I hope that when my two year term is over we can look back at some positive actions and results that benefited our feathered friends.

I'm excited to meeting more of you at our field trips and general meetings! We post these to our website, our Facebook and Instagram pages and to Eventbrite. Please let us know if there are any additional events you would be interested in.

Respectfully,

Henry Koertzen
sjasfieldtrip@gmail.com



Recurring Field Trips

Introductory Birding at Lodi Lake

1st Saturdays

Join leader Cavan Allen along Laurel Avenue at Lodi Lake. Birders of all skill levels are welcome, but the focus will be on birding fundamentals. Extra binoculars and field guides will be available.



Cosumnes River Walk

2nd Saturdays

Join leader Jim Rowoth for the monthly River Walk bird count through the varied habitats of the CRP. Meet at the visitor center on Franklin Blvd.

Woodbridge Wilderness birding

3rd Saturdays

Join leader Cavan Allen for our monthly census of this small riparian area on the banks of the Mokelumne River. Meet at the north end of Meadowlark Lane in Woodbridge.

Birding the Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery

3rd Sundays

Join leader Liz West for our monthly census of this lovely riparian area on the Mokelumne River below Camanche Dam. Meet in the fish hatchery parking lot below the dam.

Beginner Birding South County

4th Saturdays

Join leader Henry Koertzen for a beginner friendly bird walk. Binoculars and field guides will be available. The location varies by month.



For more information on our field trips, please check out our [facebook page](#) or [website!](#)

Upcoming Field Trips

Saturday, August 2, 2025	Monthly Lodi Lake Bird Walk
Saturday, August 9, 2025	Birding the Cosumnes River Preserve
Saturday, August 16, 2025	Birding the Woodbridge Wilderness Area
Sunday, August 17, 2025	Birding the Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery
Saturday, August 23, 2025	Beginner Birding in South County
Saturday, September 6, 2025	Monthly Lodi Lake Bird Walk
Wednesday, September 10, 2025	Bodega Bay Field Trip
Saturday, September 13, 2025	Birding the Cosumnes River Preserve
Saturday, September 20, 2025	Point Reyes Field Trip
Sunday, September 21, 2025	Birding the Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery
Saturday, September 27, 2025	Beginner Birding in South County
Saturday, October 4, 2025	Monthly Lodi Lake Bird Walk
Sunday, October 5, 2025	Hawk Hill Field Trip
Saturday, October 11, 2025	Birding the Cosumnes River Preserve
Saturday, October 18, 2025	Birding the Cosumnes River Preserve
Sunday, October 19, 2025	Birding the Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery
Saturday, October 25, 2025	Beginner Birding in South County

SJAS Fieldtrip Spotlight

Calaveras Big Trees State Park May 25th, 2025 Written by Ralph Baker



Mountain Chickadee
photo by Ralph Baker

Sunday, May 25, I guided a small group to Calaveras Big Trees State Park for San Joaquin Audubon.

We birded along the east edge of the meadow near the campground and the North Grove Trail, then we headed out toward the river to have lunch and finished the day at the Dardanelles Overlook and the adjacent fire road.

We saw/heard 32 species in the park: Band-tailed Pigeon, Downy, Hairy, White-headed and Pileated Woodpecker, Western Wood-Pewee, Hammond's, Dusky and Western Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Steller's Jay, Common Raven, Mountain and Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Pacific Wren, Western Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, American Robin, Purple Finch, Dark-eyed Junco, Spotted Towhee, Brewer's Blackbird, MacGillivray's, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Gray, Townsend's and Hermit Warbler, Western Tanager and Black-headed Grosbeak.

After everyone else headed home I continued up to Bear Valley Ski Resort to do some solo birding and I drove a short distance up Black Spring Road to check it out. At Bear Valley I added Northern Flicker, Tree, Violet-green and Cliff Swallow, Cassin's Finch, Pine Siskin, White-crowned and Lincoln's Sparrow, Green-tailed Towhee and Wilson's Warbler to my day list. And on Black Spring Road I heard a "Thick-billed" Fox Sparrow and saw a pair of Mountain Quail.

It was a pretty good day.

Recent Rare Bird Sightings

Bird Sightings April 1st to June 30th.

By Liz West

The San Joaquin Audubon field trip found a female Calliope Hummingbird at Kiln Canyon on April 9th. The Black Sage in the canyon was in full flower.

On April 11th, David Yee reported three Short-billed Dowitchers in with the Black-bellied Plovers on a levee road at the Lodi Waste Treatment Plant.

Emily Strauss photographed a Common Tern at Westgate Landing on April 17th.

On April 29th, David Yee heard a Flammulated Owl at his home in Stockton.

Ralph Baker photographed three Brewer's Sparrows along Waverly Rd. on April 20th. At least one was present April 22nd. Cavan Allan also found two Grasshopper Sparrow on Flood Rd., April 21st. One was still there April 24th.

On May 2nd, Cavan Allan reported a Willet at the Lodi Waste Treatment Plant. On May 7th Phillip Fiorio saw one at the Ripon Waste Treatment Plant. On May 8th, he found a Marbled Godwit there.

Cavan Allan reported two Black Swifts flying over his house in Lodi, May 9th.

On May 24th, Ralph Baker found a Gray Flycatcher at Flood and Waverly Rds.

Chris Henry reported a juvenile Brown Pelican at the Stockton Waste Treatment Ponds on June 21st.

Recent Rare Birds

San Joaquin County



Marbled Godwit
Philip Fiorio, Ripon Ponds



Grasshopper Sparrow
Srimi Raman, Flood/Waverly



Brewer's Sparrow
Ralph Baker, Flood/Waverly



Gray Flycatcher
Ralph Baker, Flood/Waverly



Species Spotlight

By Ralph Baker

Photo by Philip Fiorio
Mohler Tract, Ripon

Yellow-billed Magpie, *Pica-nuttalli*

“Mag” comes from Maggie which is a nickname for Margaret. In Europe, Maggie referred to a very talkative, gossipy person. “Mag” refers to the birds’ raucous, chattering calls. “Pie” comes from pied or piebald, which means patched.

The only bird species endemic to mainland California, in an area about 500 miles. It is a permanent resident in open oak woodlands, grassy oak savanna and riparian areas. Has adapted to some human modified habitats including parks, some urban areas and orchards. Gregarious and roosts communally. There may be a cluster of communal roosts in one general area made up of a central roost containing many birds and several outlying roosts with fewer. from north to south and less than 150 miles wide.

Yellow-billed Magpie flocks are known to engage in funeral-like behavior for their dead. When a magpie dies, a group congregates around the deceased bird where they call out loudly for 10–15 minutes. Omnivorous; feeds on insects and other invertebrates, carrion, small vertebrates, including rodents, reptiles and the young of other birds, eggs, fruit and seeds. Sometimes uses bill to flip over cow pies, wood chips and other debris to look for prey and has been seen picking ticks off of large mammals such as deer and horses. Will also steal food from each other and from other animals and sometimes caches food. Nest, a bulky, domed structure, is large and conspicuous and is usually placed 40-60 feet above the ground. Dome, base and walls are made of sticks and twigs, surrounding a mud bowl lined with rootlets, fine plant stems and hair. Nests in small colonies but may form large flocks of 100+ in winter. Lays 5-8 eggs which are incubated solely by the female. She is fed by her mate during brooding. Courtship involves male feeding female. 9



August Migration

Written By
Elizabeth Olin

We're nearing the end of another sizzling summer in the Central Valley. Many of us have been dragging through the summer doldrums - a period of dampened bird activity - while daydreaming about the upcoming migration that promises to inject excitement back into our birding lives. Peak fall migration in the lower 48 states is generally September through October, but did you know that August is when shorebirds are on the move?

These next several weeks are the perfect time to be scanning water sources to welcome back familiar friends from their breeding adventures. Shorebird rarities or short-term visitors will be popping up throughout the county. Look out for phalaropes spinning around in dizzying circles as they swirl up their food in the resulting vortex. Grab your scope and scan the groups of peeps (small sandpipers) to see if a Baird's or Semipalmated Sandpiper can be plucked out of a flock. Take an extra moment to review Spotted Sandpipers in case the similar Solitary Sandpiper is actually the one bobbing along the water's edge looking for food.



**Semipalmated Plover,
Ripon Ponds, Jim Gain**



**Pectoral Sandpipers,
Ripon Ponds, Jim Gain**

A useful tool to help predict upcoming bird migrants is eBird's bar chart feature. Available for hotspots, counties, and even your own personal location, bar charts collect eBird data and display bird frequencies for your selected location. [Use this link for the San Joaquin County bar charts](#) (keep in mind that rarities are captured in the bar charts and do not necessarily represent expected species for the area). You can also review a nocturnal migration dashboard on [BirdCast](#), which provides live and historical data during the spring and fall migration periods. Check out these resources, brush up on your shorebird ID, and brave the last heat of the summer as the final migration of 2025 gets underway!



Grants

San Joaquin Audubon Grant Opportunities

San Joaquin Audubon Society provides grant funds for organizations and schools working to conserve our local environment. We encourage groups to apply that are interested in birding, conservation, restoration, and environmental literacy.

This year, we funded the following projects:

Linden High School

Sent three students to Nature Bridge, an outdoor and environmental education camp in Yosemite National Park

Bought four sets of binoculars

John McCandless STEM Charter School

Built two new raised garden beds

Provided seven solar powered fans for the school greenhouse to improve ventilation

Lathrop High School

Sent 50 eleventh and twelfth grade students to the Youth Environmental Literacy

Summit at Knights Ferry.

The Webster Foundation gives San Joaquin Audubon \$6,000 per year. The funds are used to help support San Joaquin County citizen scientists, conservation organizations, and schools that have conservation projects and environmental literacy activities. Applications are limited to \$1,500 so that multiple projects can be funded each year.

If you are interested in applying for funds, the application is available on the San Joaquin Audubon Society website. We will accept applications for the 2025-26 year from August to October 2025.

Written by Michele Marta



Grants

A Thank You

To the San Joaquin Audubon Society,

As the Lathrop High School teacher who had the privilege of accompanying students to the Youth for Environmental Literacy (YEL) Summit this year, I want to thank you for sponsoring our bus transportation. Your support made it possible for our students to participate in a truly meaningful day of environmental learning, and I'm glad to pass along a quick report on how it all went.

The summit brought together students from four different schools—grades 7 through 12—grouped into seven mixed teams. Held at the historic Knights Ferry area along the Stanislaus River, the day was packed with hands-on activities that gave students a close-up look at California's ecosystems and the ways we can protect them.

On our nature hike through the riparian corridor, students observed acorn woodpeckers darting through the cottonwoods and discussed the importance of cavity nesters in maintaining healthy forest systems. We also spotted turkey vultures soaring overhead, which sparked a great conversation about decomposition, nutrient cycling, and the ecological roles of scavengers.

One of the most engaging sessions was a macroinvertebrate study in the river, where students partnered with a fly fishing group to collect and examine aquatic insects. This gave them a deeper understanding of how water quality affects food webs—something that ties directly into habitat health and Audubon's conservation mission.

Students also took part in a nature journaling and art activity using jeweler's loupes to closely observe natural objects like leaves, feathers, and seed pods. They used oil pastels to create drawings inspired by these tiny details. The Department of Forestry also led a station with furs, skulls, and pelts, giving students a tactile way to explore adaptations and wildlife diversity.

Overall, the summit hit its mark: students were curious, engaged, and left with a stronger connection to nature. It was a solid reminder that getting kids outside and giving them time to observe, ask questions, and reflect really works.

Thank you again for making this trip possible for our students. Your investment helped give them a learning experience they won't forget—and as someone who spent the day in the field with them, I can say it was well worth it.

-Jennifer Myers

sanjoaquinaudubon.org

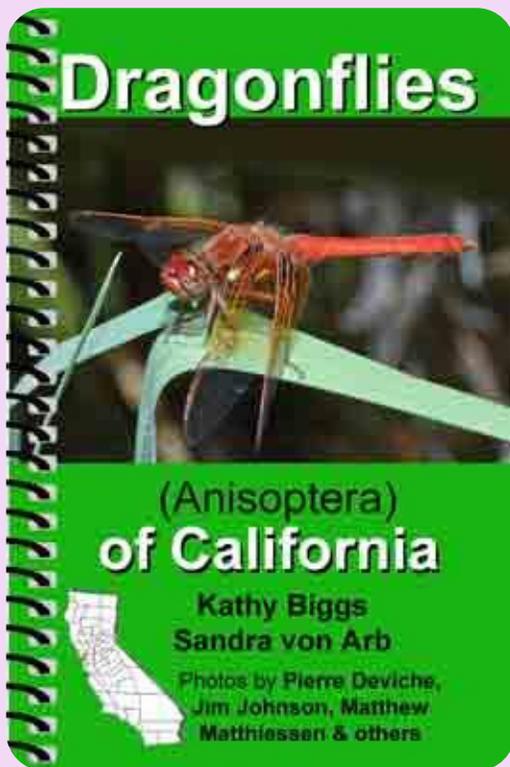


American Rubyspot

Photo by Phil Fiorio

Dragonflies, for a Change of Pace

by Kathy Briggs



Summer is fading, the birds are getting ready to migrate, but you're anxious to be out in Nature, finding creatures. Dragonflies are the perfect solution! They are active in the warm Autumn sunshine and you have already developed the skills necessary for making identifications. San Joaquin Valley has 52 of California's 114 species of Odonates (the preferred name for the two suborders: 1 dragonflies, 2 damselflies).

There are Cardinal Meadowhawks, Flame Skimmers, Blue Dashers, green Western Pondhawks, Common Whitetails and more. Dragonflies come in all the colors of the rainbow and have interesting and unique and quite advanced anatomy and biology, especially when you consider that they have been on the planet since before the dinosaurs! In fact, some people believe that birds learned to migrate following the Odonates.

Kathy Biggs' prior pocket guide, now quite out of date at age 25, Common Dragonflies of California, has grown up and she has partnered with field biologist Sandra von Arb to publish the new, more extensive Dragonflies (Anisoptera) of California.



Flame Skimmer

Photo by Phil Fiorio

The new 5.5 X 8” guide contains large full color photos of both the male and the female of each dragonfly species with descriptions of the necessary marks to make identifications, distribution maps, habitat preferences, a photo of the nymph for each genus, behavior and ovipositing techniques, and a similar species list with descriptions. Size measurements are given and also a line is shown in the predominant color of each species shows the average length.

Flight seasons are listed and there are sections on how to distinguish dragonflies from the sub-order damselflies.

Quick Guides are provided for each family. It is easy to record your sightings using the checklist at the end of the book.

The study of dragonflies is barely past its infancy and your contributions can add to the knowledge base. More species may yet be found in the San Joaquin area.

This guide is printed in two forms – one is spiral bound so it will lay flat while in use and another, available on Amazon.com, is in the standard perfect bound form with a spine to show on bookshelves.

Buy from Amazon.com or from Kathy and Sandra directly at <https://tinyurl.com/2v97apmk>.

Bald Eagles in July

**My last few days with this
Rare Summer Treat
in San Joaquin County
text and photos by Philip Fiorio**



For twelve consecutive days in July, I've had the privilege of watching Bald Eagles along the Stanislaus River, just downstream of Caswell Memorial State Park. It's unusual to see them in the Central Valley during summer, and this experience has been nothing short of magical.

On my second day, I saw both an adult and a juvenile perched together, overlooking the river. Soon after, a second adult arrived, clutching a large fish in its talons—clear evidence that salmon are on the menu.

One day, I carefully worked my way through a willow-lined stretch of river and waded into a shallow area to get closer. A juvenile flew in and perched nearby. Minutes later, an adult appeared, flying low and fast upstream. It flew directly toward me, just feet above the water. It passed overhead, wheeled around, and perched beside the other eagle.

[Click here for the eBird Trip Report](#)



The Author's Kayak at "Beaver Bay"

With the eagles constantly on my mind, I returned the next day with my kayak, determined to see more. Launching from the muddy banks of Beaver Bay—thick with vegetation—I floated downstream, scanning every perch. Though the current was strong, I drifted quietly with my anchor ready to drop. After passing a half-eaten Chinook salmon, the air thick with its smell, I came upon a shaded cottonwood stand—and BAM! The juvenile burst from the branches directly over my head, circled, and perched nearby. Moments later, an adult flew in, vocalizing as it came. It banked into the wind and sunlight, gave me my best look yet, and made eye contact just as I captured the shot. It then perched beside the juvenile, completing a moment I'll never forget.

I paddled a bit upriver, hoping to give them space to return and feed on the salmon, but I think the juvenile quietly returned to feed on another carcass out of sight. Not wanting to disturb them, I eventually made my way back upstream. Hauling the kayak up the bank, over the levee, and back to my truck was no small feat—but worth every step. I stopped by almost every day to check on them and see what they were up to. It was especially exciting to witness Bald Eagles feeding on salmon in this stretch of river. With their remarkable comeback in recent decades, I hope sightings like this become a regular occurrence again—just like in times long past when they were far more numerous.

These daily visits have me convinced I've been watching a family group: likely two adults and their offspring. Bald Eagles in California typically nest in late winter, with young fledging by early summer. The juvenile's plumage and behavior, sticking close to the adults, suggests it's a recent fledgling still learning the ropes.

Bald Eagles may be iconic, but they're still a rare treat on the valley floor in July. These sightings have been a gift—and a reminder that wildness still pulses through the heart of the San Joaquin Valley.

[Click here for the eBird Trip Report](#)

Bald Eagles

Photos taken in the Stanislaus River
by Philip Fiorio in July 2025



1st-year Eaglet Landing
7/14/25



Adult Scanning the River
7/15/25



Chinook Salmon 7/14/25



Adult Bringing Lunch
7/14/25

Feeding Time!

Photos by Phil Fiorio 2025



**House Finches
Ripon Backyard**



**Lesser Goldfinches
Ripon Backyard**



**Forster's Terns
San Joaquin Delta**



**Yellow-billed Magpie
Mohler Tract, Ripon**

Montane Birds

Photos by Mark Elness
Eagle Meadows 2025



Western Tanager



Wilson's Warbler



MacGillivray's Warbler



Green-tailed Towhee

Montane Birds

Photos by Philip Fiorio
Siskiyou County 2025



Evening Grosbeak



Red Crossbill



Pileated Woodpecker



American Dipper

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A California Chapter of the National Audubon Society serving the communities of Stockton, Lodi, Tracy, Manteca, Escalon, Ripon and Lathrop. All of San Joaquin County. Read our [Bylaws](#).

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