

CHIRP-N-CHATTER

The Newsletter of the Wintu Audubon Society

**Chapter of the National Audubon Society serving Shasta
and eastern portions of Trinity County, California**

December 2022



Mike Azevedo and Georgette Howington have been studying cavity-nesting birds for decades, leading to nest-box experience with nearly twenty species. Nest boxes aren't a hobby, but a critical component of habitat. Mike and Georgette will talk about the organization for which they volunteer, the California Bluebird Recovery Program, and why the work of replacing the homes that development has destroyed is so important.

Wintu Audubon Society is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Bluebirds: Nest Boxes and Habitat Restoration

TIME: DEC 14, 2022 07:00 PM PACIFIC TIME (US AND CANADA)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86565232063>

Meeting ID: 865 6523 2063

Dial by your location

+1 669 900 6833 US

DECEMBER ACTIVITIES

Note: All participants, ages 5 and older, must provide proof that they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours and sign a waiver prior to all field trips.

Caldwell Park and Lake Redding Park - December 8th @ 9:00 am



Join Wintu Audubon Society for a bird walk on the Sacramento River Trail as it crosses through Caldwell Park and Lake Redding Park. We will cover about a mile and back of waterfront as we identify “Winter Waterbirds of Redding,” the theme for this month’s adventure in our city parks. This will be the third in a series of eight walks, one per month from October through May.

Wintu Audubon Education Chair

Tricia Ford will lead the easy and accessible one and a half hour trip along the cement walkway. Meet at 9 am on Thursday, December 8th, in the parking lot behind North Valley Art League, located at 48 Quartz Hill Road. Restrooms and drinking fountains are available at the boat launch. For more information, email triciathebirdnerd@gmail.com.

TRIP REPORTS

Birding Red Bluff Recreation Area on November 5th



Dan Bye led a group of four intrepid birders around his home patch at the Red Bluff Recreation Area on a rainy Saturday morning, November 5th. Along the 2.5 mile walk through riparian forest, grassland, and oak woodland the group encountered 45 species. The rain kept the raptor numbers down, but Picidae were well represented with five species and we had great looks at shorebirds including a Great Egret, Green Heron, Killdeer,

Spotted Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs and Wilson's Snipe. Waterfowl seen included Green-wing Teal, Bufflehead, Canada Geese, Pied-billed Grebe, Common Merganser and a lone female Shoveler. Thank you Dan for the tour!

Cascade Community Park Bird Walk on November 10th



Northern Mockingbird in a pyracantha bush stumped the group of ten birders for a bit.

Fall River Valley Birding on November 12th



Although we were surprised by the lack of ducks and geese on the backwaters of the Sacramento River, a variety of oak woodland birds turned up in the big oaks and other trees at the back of this neighborhood park. Out of the 26 species seen on this trip, the highlight was a Great Horned Owl spotted by Kacie. Flocks of Bushtits, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Lesser Goldfinch kept us on our toes and a

distant eagle which turned out to be a sub-adult Bald.

Five hardy birders began the morning in freezing temperatures to view over forty bird species in several locations in the Fall River Valley. Best birds of the day were Bald Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Merlin, Common Loon, Evening Grosbeak, Mountain Bluebird, Red-breasted Merganser, and a Northern Shrike found by Dan Bye! Shout out to Tim Kashuba for the photo of the local "brain trust" trying to get a positive ID on a VERY

Clear Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant on November 26th

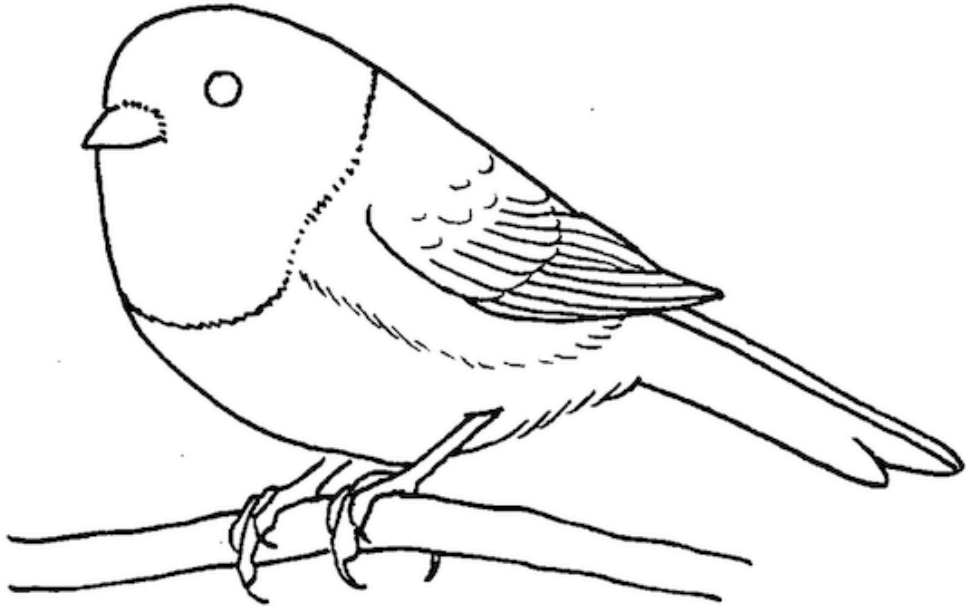


A clear fall day greeted five birders for a walk around the Clear Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant. The woodland along the south side of the plant was relatively quiet, with White-crowned Sparrows the most plentiful. The ponds that were filled with treated water were void of waterfowl, the dry ponds also harbored many White- and Golden-crowned Sparrows. The Sacramento River was a little more lively, but many of the waterfowl were very

skittish and we had to work hard with the scope to get our species. Mid-morning breezes came up and the oak leaves were snowing down on us as we finished up our walk with 51 species.

THE EDUCATION CORNER from Tricia Ford

TO DOWNLOAD ANY OF OUR COLORING PAGES GO TO THIS LINK
[HTTPS://WWW.WINTUADUBON.ORG/EDUCATION/](https://www.wintuadubon.org/education/)



Dark-eyed Junco

Coloring instructions:

Pinkish yellow - the bill

Black - the head, eye, and breast

Brown - the back, wings, inner tail feathers, legs, and feet

White - the belly and outer tail feathers

Length: 5 ½"

Habitat: Common winter bird in woodlands and hedgerows

Field marks: Small sparrow with black head and throat. White edges on tail are seen as junco flies away.

Dark-eyed Juncos are most common in the winter. They are one of the many bird species that move into the Sacramento River Valley to spend the winter and then leave in early spring to move both north and up into higher elevations. Juncos form small flocks of 10 to 30 birds during the winter. These winter flocks each have their own territory. Each flock might separate into smaller flocks during the day but they all stay within their flock's territory. The flocks even tend to follow the same route around their territory from day to day. If you see a flock flying away from you, you will see the field mark of white outer tail feathers. This flashing field mark helps keep the flock together. Stragglers can easily see the rest of the flock up ahead. Each flock has a dominance hierarchy, which is also called a pecking order. If one junco gets too close to another junco, that junco will display to the other and drive it away. Watch for a junco facing another junco and raising and

lowering its head or raising and fanning out its tail and wings or rushing toward the other bird, even pecking it if the other bird does not back off. The bird that drives away the other one is dominant. All the birds within the winter flock have a ranking within this hierarchy. For example, the fourth bird in the hierarchy would back away from the three birds at the top of the hierarchy but could dominate and drive back all the other birds within the flock. This dominance hierarchy keeps the birds within a flock evenly spread out as they feed on seeds on the ground. Many species have dominance hierarchies. In almost all of them, the males dominate the females and older birds dominate the younger birds. Dominant birds often get the best nesting territories and the greatest access to feeders. However, dominant birds must spend more time and energy defending their status. In many species, dominance does not seem to influence success in mating. The hierarchy helps spread the birds out into various parts of the habitat but birds within the hierarchy have equal chances of successfully raising babies.

Dark-eyed Junco Challenges Put a check mark in the box when you have completed the challenge

- Identify a Dark-eyed Junco. The males tend to have darker heads.
 - See the white outer tail feathers of a junco flying away from you.
 - Observe dominance displays within a flock. Notice how dominance displays keep the juncos spread out as they forage on the ground.
 - Notice variations in plumages within a flock. This is most easily studied at a feeder. Juncos have a greater diversity in plumage than most species.
 - See a flock fly into dense cover to roost through the long winter night.
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If you haven't visited the website lately you may not realize that our past president, Dan Greaney, continues to write BirdWord articles every month, found on our blog page - <https://www.wintuadubon.org/blog/>! The articles are always interesting and informative. The current article is titled "Cinnamon Teal - spice on the water"