

THE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY // VOL. 104 NO. 4 FALL 2020



BIRDING WITH GGAS

BY ERIC SCHROEDER

Probably the last thing on your mind right now is travel. But you might be dreaming of an exotic overseas destination populated by lots of colorful, unusual birds. I remain hopeful those dreams will become possible. When that happens, GGAS will have some great birding destinations lined up for you.

CONTINUED on page 5

Female Brewer's Blackbird.
Elliot Janca





Mallard Ducks.

VOTE!

BY PAM YOUNG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

You are the most important person in the world. This is the year that your vote decides the future of your planet. You are reading this because you love our Bay Area birds, wildlife, wilderness, and all that they represent. Please protect what you love. Vote! Did you know that new science says that all living creatures are genetically related? Yes, really!...except for viruses. Think of all biota (sans viruses) as your family. As a family, we sustain each other. This holds true for life in the air, on land, and in the sea. This year is the most important election of your life. We all must vote!

Fact: Even though voters ranked our climate crisis as their highest concern, over 10 million environmentalists did not vote in 2016. Look how that turned out.

Fact: Since 2016, over 30 environmental laws, regulations, and measures have been removed, rolled back, or set aside. Without these protections, the climate crisis will escalate to a climate catastrophe and 1 million wildlife species will go extinct.

Fact: If all—or even most—environmentalists vote this year, we can restore our environmental protections, clean our air, soil, and water and protect our favorite

wild places, species, habitats! Vote!

Fact: Earth Overshoot Day fell on August 22, 2020. What is that? It's "the day when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that period." Yes. We seriously overshot.

What can we do? Plenty!! Advocate! Educate! Activate!

1. Vote!
2. Show up for public decisions and tell your leaders to protect our natural resources.
3. Study, learn, and advocate for replacing environmentally harmful extractive industries with sustainable and regenerative practices.
4. Support your favorite conservation and environmental organization. Support GGAS and...Vote!
5. Do one thing every day that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion.
6. Ask yourself, What can I do to help save my favorite wild place? Do the research, find your answer, work hard and do it!
7. Say no to plastic. Urge your shopkeepers to replace all plastic—containers, packaging, bags, clothing, machinery, appliances, toys, weaponry, hummingbird feeders, vanity compacts, jewelry, doodads, thoughtful gifts, thoughtless gifts, this-and-that, and other polluting stuff with compostable or biodegradable stuff.
8. Reduce your carbon footprint.
9. Plant native plants.
10. And. Really. No kidding. Vote. Because. Your health and your life. Depend. On it.

Thank yourself for doing what you know is the right and best thing. And, I most certainly thank you for supporting GGAS!

NEWS BRIEF

Speaker Series Success

GGAS is pleased to announce that our online Speaker Series events can now accommodate up to 500 participants every month thanks to upgrades on our webinar platform. Curious about how to sign up for information? Email our Communications Manager, Melissa Ramos, at mramos@goldengateaudubon.org.

Introducing New Development Director

Catherine Millar joins GGAS with extensive fundraising experience and expertise. She has worked in nonprofit fundraising as the Director of Development at Chabot Space and Science Center, Lindsay Wildlife Museum, Oakland Museum of California and Richmond Art Center. Welcome aboard, Catherine!

Calling All Blogs!

We want to hear from you! Do you have a shelter-at-home birding essay you'd like to share? Seen any interesting birds lately? Let's stay connected online. Our Golden Gate Birder Blog offers an opportunity for publication and outreach. Email your essays to Melissa at mramos@goldengateaudubon.org.



At left, Nuttall's Woodpecker; above, Western Bluebird and Turkey Vulture. Photos courtesy Robert Ho, Rick Lewis and Minder Cheng.

WILDCAT CANYON REGIONAL PARK: BIRDING HOTSPOT

BY ALAN KRAKAUER

LOCATION

5755 McBryde Ave,
Richmond, CA

*There are
more than
130 species
already
found in
Wildcat
Canyon.*

Wildcat Canyon Regional Park is nestled in the East Bay hills just northwest of its better-known cousin Tilden. A hike up to San Pablo Ridge will reward with stunning panoramic views west to the Golden Gate and Mt. Tamalpais, North to San Pablo Bay, and east over San Pablo Reservoir towards Mt. Diablo. Miles of trails and cattle paths wind through wooded canyons, across broad grassy hillsides, and past chaparral-cloaked slopes.

This diversity of habitats supports many resident and migratory bird species, meaning there will always be something to see! A check of eBird hotspots shows more than 130 species already found in Wildcat Canyon. This total is certain to grow as more birders discover the park.

In winter, the open areas are home to Say's Phoebes, Northern Harriers, and flocks of Western Meadowlarks. Come spring, Red-winged Blackbirds, Lazuli Buntings, and Grasshopper Sparrows breed among bright patches of mustard and radish on the slopes. There's even a show in the dry days of late summer as Red-tailed Hawks soar slowly along the ridge and Ospreys commute over the park from the bay to the reservoir. Scrubby areas hide Wrentits, California Thrashers, Rufous-crowned Sparrows, and the occasional Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

The mix of oak woodland and small groves of Monterey pines and redwoods shelter a nice diversity of forest birds including Pygmy Nuthatches, Acorn Woodpeckers, Hutton's Vireos, and several families of Great Horned Owls. It's hard to beat descending out of the summer heat to the lush banks of Wildcat Creek and being surrounded by the songs of Wilson's Warblers and Swainson's Thrushes.

There's plenty to see in addition to the birds. Alvarado Park, the smaller, more developed park adjacent to Wildcat Canyon, boasts grinding stones and other traces of the Huchiuñ Ohlone who lived in this area for thousands of years. You can find beautiful examples of historical WPA (Works Progress Administration) era construction in Alvarado as well. The Belgum Trail in Wildcat Canyon swings by the hidden foundations and feral plantings of the old Belgum Sanitarium. Keep your eyes peeled for coyote, deer, and other mammals that make the park their home (bobcats do occur here but are infrequently seen). And don't forget to enjoy those amazing views from the ridge!

For the official park website including the latest on trail closures, directions, and map, please visit <https://www.ebparks.org/parks/wildcat>.

Have a favorite birding site you'd like to share? Contact mramos@goldengateaudubon.org.

NAMES TO KNOW

BY DAN ROTH

John James Audubon,¹ Roger Tory Peterson, David Allen Sibley—three names synonymous with American birding. But the birding world is changing, and there are new voices in new media who promise to catapult us beyond field guides and paintings, and deepen the impact we can have on our environment and the people we serve. In case you don't already know them, here is a quick introduction to some of the birders who are leading us into the future.

Corina Newsome, Community Engagement Manager for Georgia Audubon, is one of the most inspiring and exciting science communicators around. The birding world is incredibly lucky to have her in our midst. Newsome's dispatches from the salt marshes of coastal Georgia, where she studies Seaside Sparrows, overflow with palpable enthusiasm and love for birds and their habitats. Newsome is one of the co-organizers of Black Birders Week, the tremendously successful week of discussion and action taken in response to the racist attack on Christian Cooper in Central Park in May. You can find her on social media at @hood_naturalist, and read more about her in the October cover story of the American Birding Association's monthly magazine, *Birding*.

Then there's Jason Ward. As you will learn when you search the internet for "Birds of North America" and binge-watch his show, Ward's love for birds started when, as a young boy, he watched a Peregrine Falcon take a pigeon in the Bronx. Beautifully shot and produced by Topic Media, *Birds of North America* showcases birds and birders in a manner that is informative, engaging, and just really fun. Ward takes viewers on tours of Cape May, Central Park, the Angeles National Forest, and other locations around the country, with birders including the Bay Area's Jonathan Franzen, South Carolina's J. Drew Lanham (the Poet Laureate of Birding,



Shutterstock

if you ask me), comedian Wyatt Cenac, and members of the Ohio Young Birders Club. Ward co-founded Black AF in STEM, a collective of Black scientists, naturalists, and birders, which organized Black Birders Week. Follow Jason at @JasonWardNY.

And add to your list Tykee James, Government Affairs Coordinator for the national Audubon Society in Washington, DC and a Board Member of DC Audubon. James sees the power of birding to build bridges across communities to encourage conservation while improving environmental equity and justice. Here he is, quoted in a recent Audubon article, talking about the power of birding to bring people together to facilitate meaningful change: "Birding is a coalition builder. The way it brought me to the table on environmental issues, is the same way I hope it brings people to the table on racial progress." James also co-organized Black Birders Week. Find him at @Tykee_James.

Dan Roth is a GGAS Board Member and Chair of the Board's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee

¹Please read the Audubon Society's recent piece, *The Myth of John James Audubon*, by historian and biographer Gregory Nobles (July 31, 2020), to learn about our namesake's white supremacist views and ownership of enslaved people, available at <https://www.audubon.org/news/the-myth-john-james-audubon>.

UPCOMING EVENTS

GGAS's Online Holiday Sale

Get ready for our GGAS early holiday online sale. From October 18th to November 1st, you can purchase beautiful locally made bird art, mugs, calendars, and more through GGAS's website! Many thanks to our dedicated volunteers for organizing this special online event. Check our website for more information.

Adult Education Classes

Improve your birding skills or get started in birdwatching with some friendly, expert help! GGAS is offering online classes this fall and winter for all levels of birding experience. Some classes may also have field trips. Classes are filling up fast so sign up at goldengateaudubon.org/education/classes.

Summer Donations Campaign

Your financial support helps us protect the birds we love. Because of you, GGAS can continue to translate vital programs into an online format like our Eco-Education programs and our Speaker Series. If you'd like to donate, please go to goldengateaudubon.org and click "Join/Donate."

Habitat Restoration Events

Thanks to San Francisco Parks and Recreation, GGAS is able to host a limited number of in-person habitat restoration events in San Francisco only. RSVPs and waiver required. For more information email Volunteer Services Manager Janet Carpinelli at jcarpinelli@goldengateaudubon.org.

BIRDING WITH GGAS from page 1

I began volunteering for the GGAS Travel Program in the summer of 2018, when Pat Kirkpatrick and Rubi Abrams had been running the Travel Program for several years. Most of the trips then were in the USA and Central America. Because I had previously worked in international education, I was eager to schedule some new overseas trips. By September, Pat, Rubi, and I announced the schedule for 2019.

Before the new year rolled around, Pat and Rubi rotated off Travel. I was fortunate to be joined by Dawn Lemoine and Daryl Goldman, both of whom had recently retired. With three new volunteers at the helm, 2019 was going to be an interesting year. The year began with a new trip from Eddie Bartley and Noreen Weeden, “Palm Deserts and the Salton Sea.” (For anyone who thinks all deserts look alike, this trip will change your mind.) The next three trips were familiar ones: “Baja, Mexico: Birds and Whales” with Juan-Carlos Solis, and two long-time favorites, “A South Texas Adventure” (Eddie and Noreen, again) and Southeast Arizona with Mark Pretti.

Two new trips followed, both with Wild Latitudes, a vendor we used in 2018 to visit Alaska. Ivan Phillipsen led “Montana: Birds and Wildlife of Big Sky Country” and “Iceland: Birds, Botany, and Geology.” Both were successful, and Wild Latitudes joined our regular trip rotation.

In August, we featured another new ven-



Hanno Lewis

In Namibia.

You might be dreaming of an exotic overseas destination populated by lots of colorful, unusual birds.

dor, Birding Ecotours, for our “Namibia and Botswana Safari.” The initial response was so enthusiastic that we reversed the itinerary and added a second trip. Participants on the first trip saw 275 species of birds and 45 species of mammals. (I know because I was on that trip!)

The year ended with another Mark Pretti offering—his very popular visit to Oaxaca, Mexico for the Christmas holiday season.

2020 began strong with Eddie and Noreen reprising “Palm Deserts and the Salton Sea” and offering another newly designed trip, “South Florida in Winter.”

And then the pandemic hit.

Trips for the rest of the year were postponed or canceled outright. (When booking a trip, note that the cancellation policy varies for each vendor because of the amount of time vendors spend trip planning and scheduling—and whether they have made deposits on lodges and get those deposit back themselves. Be sure to read individual cancellation policies carefully—and buy travel insurance.)

Dawn, Daryl and I did a lot of moping. Until now. We’re starting slowly, hoping to

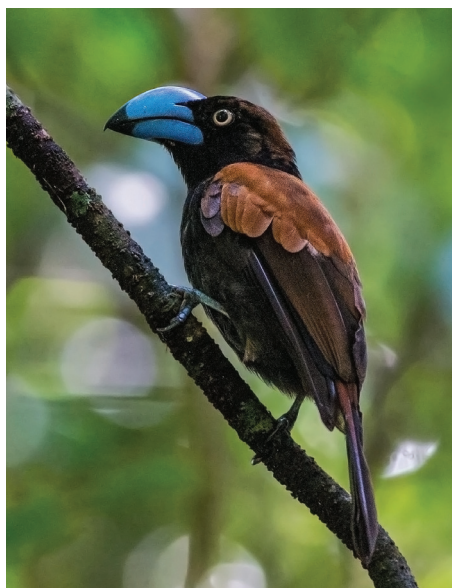
send two postponed trips, “Ohio: Eastern Warblers & Spring Migration Sensation” and “Brazil—Birding and Wildlife Watching” for 2021.

Later in 2021, we’re hoping to repeat the popular Namibia/Botswana trip from last year.

We’ve got our fingers crossed for a couple of new tours, “Bhutan—Birding, Mammals & Monasteries” and “Madagascar Magic.” Both of these trips would tick the “exotic” and “colorful, unusual birds” boxes that I mentioned at the outset.

If travel is still impossible next year, there’s always 2022. We’ve already scheduled trips to two new destinations: the first is “Chile Birds: From Condors to Hummingbirds,” that has an optional extension, “Chile Birds: And Penguins, Too”; and the second is “Uganda: Gorillas, Chimpanzees, and LOTS of Birds!” We hope you can join us for a future trip.

If you’d like more details on any of the GGAS Travel Program trips, please visit goldengateaudubon.org/travel-with-ggas or email Eric at travelprogram@goldengateaudubon.org.



Ken Behrens

Helmet Vanga.



Western Bluebird.

RED COATS AND WILD BIRDS

DR. KIRSTEN GREER

ONLINE

Thursday, October 15
7 p.m. program

During the 19th century, Britain maintained a complex network of garrisons to manage its global empire. During their tours abroad, many British officers engaged in formal and informal scientific research. Dr. Kirsten Greer tracks British officers as they moved around the world, just as migratory birds traversed borders from season to season. Greer examines how the transnational encounters between military men and birds shaped military strategy, ideas about race and masculinity, and conceptions of the British Empire.

Dr. Kirsten Greer is an Associate Professor in the Departments of Geography and History at Nipissing University, and the Canada Research Chair (CRC) in Global Environmental Histories and Geographies. Her CRC program addresses reparations “in place” from Northern Ontario, Canada, to the Mediterranean and the Caribbean through interdisciplinary, integrative, and engaged (community-based) scholarship in global environmental change research. Greer is of Scottish-Scandinavian descent, from the unceded lands of Tiohtià:ke/Montréal.

GGAS's monthly Speaker Series is now online!

To sign up for email alerts with more info, email our Communications Manager, Melissa, at mrmos@goldengateaudubon.org

EXPLORING CULTURALLY RELEVANT EDUCATION AND CLIMATE SMART RESTORATIONS

ONLINE

Thursday, November 19
7 p.m. program

ISAIAH THALMAYER, JOHN PARODI, AND ALBA K. ESTRADA LÓPEZ OF POINT BLUE'S STRAW

Climate smart restoration is becoming recognized as an important strategy for healing landscapes and increasing human health. Our speakers will explore guiding principles of climate smart restoration, current science and projects where people and places are being restored. They will highlight experiences engaging diverse communities and practicing culturally relevant teaching, a pedagogical framework to make restoration science and conservation topics relevant to the culture and lived experiences of affected communities.

Since 1994, Point Blue Conservation Science's STRAW program (Students & Teachers Restoring A Watershed) implements community-based restoration projects, engaging more than 3,000 students annually in hands-on restoration across California.



Black-capped chickadee.

Brian Tennesen

SAND DUNES AND SALT FLATS: A GGAS TRIP TO NAMIBIA

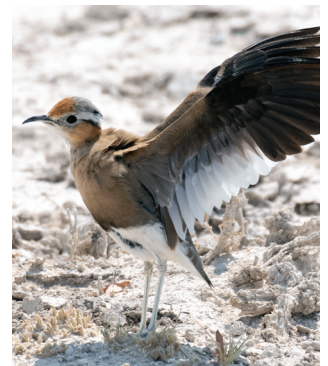
ONLINE

Thursday, December 17
7 p.m. program

BOB LEWIS

Special December Feature: Namibia, Africa has the largest sand dunes in the world, and it hasn't rained for 10 years in the Namib Desert. But it hosts many birds that have learned to survive in this arid place. Bob spent time in Cape Town and Walvis Bay. He'll show you many of the desert creatures he saw on our tour.

Bob trained as a chemist, but his second career is very avian. An award-winning photographer and frequent public speaker on avian topics, he has co-taught Master Birding, Avian Evolution and Bay Area Birds for GGAS. His bird life list stands at 5,037.



Burchell's Courser.

Bob Lewis

DONATIONS

Thank you for joining our donor community.

Donations from June 1, 2020 through August 31, 2020.

With gratitude to every individual, business, and organization who made a recent donation. We are especially appreciative of all donations during the Coronavirus pandemic. Despite the impact to our in-person events, your donations and support have kept us going. Large or small, the gifts you send support our conservation, education, and member programs, and directly benefit the birds you love.

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MISSION STATEMENT

Golden Gate Audubon Society engages people to experience the wonder of birds and to translate that wonder into actions which protect native bird populations and their habitats.

ABOUT GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY

The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 25, 1917. Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Membership is \$35 per year. You can join or renew on the website or through our Berkeley office.

The Gull is published four times per year. Special third-class postage paid in Oakland, CA. Send address changes to the office promptly. The post office does not forward *The Gull*.

Learn about upcoming Golden Gate Audubon events every month! Send your name and email address to mramos@goldengateaudubon.org to receive our monthly e-newsletters.

Golden Gate Audubon Society

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Visit our online store at goldengateaudubon.org/store.

This issue of *The Gull* was published October 2020.

Please know that we work hard to ensure the accuracy of this list. If your name has been omitted or misspelled, let us know at 510.843.2222.

www.goldengateaudubon.org

 The Gull is printed with soy-based inks on chlorine-free paper, 30% postconsumer waste content.

3 Bay Area Hotspot: Wildcat Canyon

A diverse habitat that supports many resident and migratory bird species.

4 Names to Know

A highlight reel featuring several up-and-coming birders of color.

6 Speaker Series

Learn about our upcoming online Speaker Series features.

BACKYARD BIRDER



Alain Daigle

Mourning Dove.

THE HUMBLE MOURNING DOVE

BY MELISSA RAMOS

One of my goals this year was to attract a variety of birds to my backyard. I often saw Anna's Hummingbirds and California Towhees every time I looked outside, but not many other species. As I scattered seeds on the ground, cleaned up the bird bath, and refilled bird feeders, I hoped to attract a particular bird, one that I feel is often overlooked: the humble Mourning Dove.

According to allaboutbirds.org, the Mourning Dove is one of

the most widespread birds in North America, with a population of approximately 350 million birds! Despite their sheer numbers, I did not see a Mourning Dove until I moved from New York to the Bay Area several years ago. I delighted in watching them perch on a fence or on telephone wires. Their namesake coo intrigued me. Somehow, their somber call put me at ease. I hear them frequently now in my yard and I smile every time I realize they're near.

What I appreciate most about the Mourning Dove is their ability to survive in harsh conditions. For instance, Mourning Doves have adapted to live in almost any environment, from harsh cold landscapes to the desert. They have adapted to drink brackish water that would likely kill other creatures. They'll nest just about anywhere too. While some may see this particular nesting behavior as a rather strange evolutionary tactic, I can't help but admire that these birds can make a home out of any place.

After I put out enough bird seed, several Mourning Doves came to my yard. One mated pair tried to build a nest on our neighbor's veranda, which was directly in my view. I watched for days as these birds diligently flew into our yard, foraged through plants, and used twigs to build their nest. Unfortunately, they were scared off when my neighbor started frequenting his yard more often, but I admired the Mourning Doves' tenacity nonetheless.

On these smoky days, I find solace in the Mourning Doves hanging out so close to where I live. I can watch their silly antics through the windows. They come by for water and food. They congregate together on the fence and on the ground. Sometimes they even go for a ride on the outdoor ceiling fan! I've captured many entertaining videos of this. In these difficult times, these birds have brought me joy. Each day, I look forward to seeing them again.