2023 CVBS FIELD TRIPS

Please be considerate of the leaders and fellow birders by arriving in plenty of time, at least 15 minutes prior to the departure, to receive any last-minute instructions and to arrange the carpools. Due to the rising cost of fuel, please remember to offer the driver gas money.

A boxed lunch will be available (pre-order) for Friday and Sunday field trips from the Stockton Hilton. Please designate on the registration form if you wish to purchase boxed lunch(es).

Please note, the codes in parentheses after the descriptions are ratings provided as a service to our participants with limited mobility. Explanations are given at the end of the Field Trips section. Contact Cliff Hawley (yellowhammerCA@gmail.com), field trip coordinator, if other arrangements need to be made.

Thursday

<u>Birding with Jon Dunn—Yolo County, Capay to Woodland (Fundraiser):</u>

Join Jon for a full day of exploring the under-birded heart of Yolo County. We'll start at the south end of the Capay Valley, where Cache Creek leaves the edge of Blue Ridge and flows into the Sacramento Valley. As a result of restoration, two parks along the creek, Capay Open Space Park, and Cache Creek Nature Preserve, offer varied habitats for wildlife including oak savanna, riparian and grasslands. Capay Open Space Park is a good spot to look for California Thrashers and sparrows. Heading east, we'll stop at the Cache Creek Nature Preserve, a former gravel mining site to check the pond for waterfowl, waders, and rails, and the riparian area for winter passerines. In Woodland, we'll walk the evaporation ponds at the Woodland/Davis Water Pollution Control Facility and scope the North Pond for waterfowl, shorebirds, and gulls. Anything can show up in these ponds! If there is time, we'll head south to a nearby area known for high raptor diversity and numbers. Possible raptors include Ferruginous Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, and Prairie Falcon. This trip should produce a high number of species as well as many educational opportunities. Bring lunch, snacks, and water. All funds raised on this trip benefit the Youth Scholarship and Publication funds. \$125 donation to the CVBC. Driving time 80 minutes. Restroom opportunities at first two locations. (3/SM, SS) 5:30 AM departure, late afternoon return.

Friday

Directions and maps for all Friday trips will be provided Friday morning prior to departure time at the field trip meeting location on the first floor of the Stockton Hilton. Don't forget to pick up your boxed lunch if you pre-ordered one.

5:15 AM departure A) Colusa NWR with Jon Dunn

5:30 AM departures B) Colusa NWR, Sutter Buttes & District 10

C) Merced Refuges

D) Salt Spring Valley & Vicinity

E) Sutter Buttes

6:00 AM departures F) Yolo County

G) Cosumnes River Preserve H) Eastern Stanislaus County

I) Pardee Reservoir Eagle Boat Trip
J) Sacramento County Bufferlands

K) San Joaquin River NWR

L) Staten Island/Bridgeway Island Pond/Digiscoping

M) Southeastern Solano County

6:30 AM departure O) Western Amador County

Colusa NWR with Jon Dunn (Fundraiser): Join Jon for a full day exploring the waterfowl and wintering passerines at the Colusa National Wildlife Refuge. Jon will be paying particular attention to geese, with the goal of identifying the shy Tule Goose subspecies of Greater White-fronted Goose. The latest research on their life history makes them an intriguing candidate for a split. Birding will be from the platform at the first parking lot, then by carpool along the refuge loop. Radios will make communication possible, and you should bring a scope if possible. As this trip will not return to the hotel until afternoon, bring lunch, snacks, and water. All funds raised on this trip benefit the Youth Scholarship and Publication funds. \$125 donation to the CVBC. Driving time from Stockton to Colusa NWR is about 2 hours. (2/SM) 5:15 AM Departure

Colusa National Wildlife Refuge, Sutter Buttes, & District 10: The focus will be Colusa NWR, one of the best places in the Central Valley to view large waterfowl concentrations. There will be myriad ducks on the tour and skeins of Snow, Ross's and Greater White-fronted geese, and many raptors overhead—possibly including Bald Eagle and/or Peregrine Falcon. Eurasian Wigeon is almost a cinch. There will be some easy walking on a level trail through a riparian forest next to the main viewing pond. If time allows on the return trip, we will drive around the Sutter Buttes to look for Rough-legged Hawk, Sandhill Cranes, and diving ducks. Then we will proceed to District 10, northeast of Marysville, a winter haven for thousands of easily viewed geese and swans, including occasional Trumpeter and Bewick's swans, and White-faced Ibis. Driving time from Stockton to Colusa NWR is about 2 hours. (2) 5:30 AM Departure

Cosumnes River Preserve: Cosumnes River Preserve has the finest valley oak riparian forest in California. The preserve also has extensive wetlands, fallow fields, oak savannas, and fresh water tidal marshes and swamps. There are two possible routes: 1) River Walk trail, Lost Slough Boardwalk, along Desmond Road, and wetlands around "The Barn" (~4-5 miles), or 2) Tall Forest, Accidental Forest, along Desmond Road and wetlands around "The Barn" (~4-5 miles). The River Walk and Lost Slough Boardwalk trails are flatter, unobstructed, and a better sampler of all the habitats of the lower preserve. Birding the Tall Forest requires following narrow trails through what is perhaps the best remaining example of the Central Valley's riparian forest. Rubber boots are encouraged due to standing water and low spots. Participants on both tours can expect to see many cranes and waterfowl, a diverse variety of raptors and many songbirds. Most specialty birds are found on the River Walk, but Pacific Wren, Varied Thrush, Hutton's Vireo, and Wrentit are more likely in the Tall Forest. Driving time ~30 minutes. (3/C) 6 AM Departure

Eastern Stanislaus County: This field trip will focus on the grasslands, oak savanna, and foothill reservoirs of Eastern Stanislaus County. Starting in Oakdale, we will make a brief visit to Oakdale Recreation Area, and then go to Woodward Reservoir (day use fee per vehicle--\$10 for general, \$5 for seniors 62/over). From there, we will go to Willms Road, looking for such wintering raptors as Ferruginous and Rough-legged hawks, Bald and Golden eagles, Merlin, and Prairie falcons. We will go north on Cooperstown Road to La Grange, where we should see Lewis's Woodpeckers. Mountain Bluebirds, Vesper Sparrows. Burrowing Owls are possible there, too. We will visit Basso Bridge and go down Lake Road, where Phainopeplas are likely. We will visit the Turlock Lake Campground (if permission is obtained and time permits), where we may see Redbreasted Sapsucker, Brown Creeper, Pacific Wren, or a rare wintering passerine. Our last stop will be Modesto Reservoir if there is enough time before returning to Oakdale by early afternoon. Restrooms and picnic tables are available at Knights Ferry and La Grange. (2) 6:00 AM Departure

Merced Refuges: East of the O'Neill Forebay in central Merced County, these refuges attract an abundance of cranes, waterfowl, waders, and shorebirds. Ibis, pelicans, and eagles are also a possibility. In the past, we have seen rare species such as Swamp Sparrow, Eastern Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Stilt Sandpiper, and Ruff, so although we cannot predict seeing a rare bird, this area provides a great opportunity to discover an unexpected species. We will visit the Merced NWR and the San Luis NWR, and if time permits, the Los Banos Wildlife Area and Gun Club Road marshes. Driving time is about 100 minutes each way. (2/SS) 5:30 AM Departure

<u>Pardee Reservoir Eagle Boat Tour</u>: This scenic foothill reservoir is normally closed to the public during the winter months. This field trip features a four-hour boat tour led by East Bay MUD Fisheries and Wildlife Biologist James Jones. Eagles, Ospreys, and winter waterfowl are expected. Limited to 20. (C) **6 AM Departure**

Ripon Oak Grove Park & Wastewater Treatment Plant: Oak Grove Park in Ripon is a 55-acre undeveloped remnant of riparian forest and riparian oak woodland on the north bank of the Stanislaus River at the southern edge of San Joaquin County, 25 miles south of Stockton. The park contains some excellent habitat, and the black currant, raspberries, elderberries, wild grape, and naturalized black mulberries provide an abundant food source for both resident and migratory species alike. Although the trails are level, they are not all well-maintained, so there may be a bit of bushwhacking, stepping over logs, ducking under branches, etc. If it rains, the trails may be muddy. The adjacent Ripon Wastewater Treatment Plant consists of 15 acres of treatment ponds and 40 acres of accessible (on foot) disposal ponds. A Pacific Golden-Plover has been found here in past winters, and a variety of waterfowl, shorebirds, waders, and gulls is expected. Driving time is about 45 minutes each way. (3/R) 7 AM Departure

Sacramento County Bufferlands: The 2500-acre Bufferlands, surrounding the Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant, provide an open space buffer between the treatment plant and the community. This tour provides an opportunity to visit sites with limited public access and to see the fruits of local conservation and restoration efforts. Large-scale habitat restoration has been underway since 1992. We will visit restored and remnant habitats, including tule and cattail marsh, managed seasonal wetlands, riparian forest, and grasslands to find a high diversity of species. In addition, the wastewater ponds can harbor a good diversity of shorebirds. This tour provides an excellent chance to look for rails, raptors, winter songbirds, shorebirds, and waterfowl. We will visit several sites, with short to moderate walks at each. Limited to 15 participants. (2/R) 6 AM Departure

<u>Salt Spring Valley & Vicinity</u>: East of Stockton, in the low foothills of Calaveras County, lies the Salt Spring Valley and reservoir. Due to the variety of habitats visited, a nice selection of birds will be viewed. Expected birds will include good numbers and variety of raptors and waterfowl. Raptors usually include Bald and Golden eagles, Ferruginous and Roughlegged hawks, and Prairie Falcon. Waterfowl will include a mix of geese, dabbling and diving ducks, mergansers, grebes, shorebirds, herons, gallinules, and coots. The ranch is also good for Lewis's Woodpecker and Phainopepla. Driving time is 60-90 minutes over a narrow country road. Restroom opportunities are very limited. (3/R) **5:30 AM Departure**

San Joaquin River NWR: The San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge is located west of Modesto within the historic floodplain of the confluences of the San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tuolumne rivers. Refuge lands consist of oak-cottonwood-willow riparian forest, pastures, agricultural fields, and wetlands. The refuge has an approved refuge boundary of 12,877 acres with over 1,900 acres of pristine riparian woodlands and 800 acres of newly restored riparian woodland. It is the primary wintering site of 98% of the Aleutian Canada Geese that winter in the Valley (October—April), plus it is a major wintering/migration area for Lesser and Greater Sandhill Cranes, Cackling Geese, and Greater White-fronted Geese. The refuge's riparian forest provides important migration and breeding habitat for Neotropical migratory land birds including the most recent celebrity, Least Bell's Vireo. We should expect to get close to 100 species on this trip. (3/C) 6 AM Departure

Southeastern Solano County: The grasslands and farmlands between Dixon and Rio Vista provide some of the best open country birding in the Central Valley. Target species include the Mountain Plover and numerous raptors: Ferruginous and Rough-legged hawks, Prairie Falcon, Merlin, and both eagles are possible. This is also one of the best areas for the regionally declining Long-billed Curlew, Loggerhead Shrike, and Tricolored Blackbird. The sheep paddocks of the Montezuma Hills harbor a large wintering flock of the California threatened Tricolored Blackbird. Scattered wetlands harbor waterfowl and forested patches shelter songbirds. Much of the birding will be along lightly traveled roads. Restroom opportunities are very limited. (1) 6 AM Departure

Staten Island & Bridgeway Island Pond/and Digiscoping: Staten Island Ranch is a 9,200-acre Nature Conservancy property that is actively farmed but is also managed for wildlife. The farm's corn and wheat fields are flooded in winter to provide critical habitat for Sandhill Cranes and other waterfowl. We can expect cranes, swans, geese ducks, shorebirds, and possibly early Short-eared Owl, Great Horned and Barn owls. Bridgeway Island Pond in nearby West Sacramento hosts a large population of wintering Blue-winged Teal. Both Garganey and Black Rail have been found here in recent years. For participants who wish to explore digiscoping, your leaders from Swarovski Optik will cover setups, settings, techniques, and review of images. Please bring all your equipment including spotting scope, tripod, camera and adapter, fully charged batteries and empty memory cards. Restroom opportunities are limited. (3) 6 AM Departure

<u>Sutter Buttes</u>: The trip will be an opportunity for birders to get a close look at the only mountains in the Central Valley. The season will limit the diversity of birds, but it will be a good opportunity for those working on their Sutter County bird lists. (A \$30 donation for the Middle Mountain Foundation to be collected with your registration) (3/R) **5:30 AM Departure**

Western Amador County: East of Sacramento in the foothills of Amador County, numerous ponds, a large reservoir, fields, riparian woodlands, and oak savanna harbor a high diversity of birds. We will visit several hotspots to see waterfowl, grebes, pelicans, and eagles. In the past, rare wintering species have included Red-naped Sapsucker, Pacific Loon, Iceland (formerly Thayer's) Gull, Tundra Swan, Burrowing Owl, Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Green-winged Teal, and Black-and-white Warbler. We will visit Camanche Reservoir (fee \$12/vehicle), the Ione area and numerous ponds in between. This area provides a great opportunity to see many birds for your Amador County list. Driving time is about 60 minutes each way. (1) 6:30 AM Departure

<u>Yolo County</u>: Trip leaders will guide participants to sites offering the county's largest variety of wintering birds. This trip goes to wetlands, sewage ponds, lake, and riparian habitats. Some possible stops are: Putah Creek riparian for passerines (Rufous-crowned Sparrow), and waterfowl along the creek (Hooded Mergansers, Barrow's Goldeneye); Lake Solano (Osprey); Davis landfill and wastewater treatment plant for gulls (Glaucous-winged, Iceland) and shorebirds; Yolo Basin marshes for waterfowl (Blue-winged Teal, mixed geese) and shorebirds (Ruff). This outing consistently produces the highest species total among symposium field trips. This field trip has easy to moderate walking, but it's mostly driving. (2) **6 AM Departure**

Local Field Trips: (Saturday/Sunday)

Directions and maps for all Saturday and Sunday field trips will be provided prior to departure time at the field trip meeting location on the first floor of the Stockton Hilton.

<u>SATURDAY</u> FIELD TRIP DEPARTURE TIMES VARY, BUT RETURN TIME IS 10:30 AM. PLEASE CHECK EACH TRIP FOR DEPARTURE TIME.

ALL SUNDAY FIELD TRIPS: 11:45 AM—3:45 PM Don't forget to pick up your boxed lunch if you pre-ordered one.

Black Hole Duck Club: The Black Hole is a balanced, sustainable wetland habitat created by Dino Cortopassi beginning in 1992. The property lies at the northwest end of W. Woodbridge Rd., Lodi. The habitat was created entirely with private money and has restricted access. The total property is 750 acres; however, only the west section of the Black Hole will be birded on this field trip. eBird shows the Black Hole West as a Restricted Hotspot with 129 bird species listed. The Black Hole was created as a duck club and was lightly hunted by family and friends of Dino in the early years. However, over the past 5-10 years it has been managed completely as habitat for the breeding and foraging of birds. The habitat is truly unique and must be seen to be fully appreciated. One can expect to see many Sandhill Cranes, ducks, geese species, shorebirds, raptors, and small bird species on the field trip. Limited to 20 participants. (2/R) Saturday 7 AM Departure

<u>Caswell Memorial State Park</u>: Caswell Memorial State Park, located along the San Joaquin River between San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties, includes one of the finest examples of closed-canopy Valley Oak riparian forest in the Central Valley, a habitat type that has been nearly extirpated by agricultural and urban development. Lawrence's Goldfinches nested here this year, one of few known nesting locations on the valley floor. Caswell is an excellent spot for both resident and wintering woodland birds of the Central Valley including Pacific Wren, Varied Thrush, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Brown Creeper, warblers, sparrows, and finches. There is a \$10 per-vehicle day use fee at this state park, so carpooling is strongly recommended. Restrooms available. (3/R) **Departures: Saturday 7:30 AM, Sunday 11:45 AM**

Clifton Court Forebay: This field trip will cover three counties: San Joaquin, Contra Costa and Alameda. Starting out in northeastern Alameda at the junction of Mountain House Rd and J4/Byron Rd., we will bird the agricultural fields along Herdlyn Rd., looking for raptors, Long-billed Curlews and possible shorebirds. We'll then continue to the Mountain House—Kelso Rd. area for hawks, eagles, possible Prairie Falcon, and Burrowing Owl. We will move on to Clifton Court Forebay in Contra Costa County (outdoor restrooms available). At Clifton Forebay, we'll need scopes to scan for ducks, gulls and cormorants, possible Peregrine Falcon and Merlin. Our last stop is Bethany Reservoir (fee area) to use the restrooms and as we enter this BLM area, we'll search for sparrows, warblers, and possibly wintering Swainson's Hawk. From the parking lot, we'll scan the reservoir for ducks, gull species, Golden Eagle and possible Ferruginous Hawk. Note: The field trip finishes at Bethany Reservoir. (Day Use Fee: \$10/vehicle) The field trip leader will get the group back to Hwy 580/205. (1/WS) Sunday 11:45 AM

<u>Cosumnes River Preserve</u>: We will visit the River Walk Trail. Please see Friday's description for more details. (3/C) **Departures: Saturday 6:30 AM, Sunday 11:45 AM** Flood/Waverly Roads: The Flood/Waverly rangelands in eastern San Joaquin County are a "Raptor Wonderland" in winter. Birds likely to be seen include Ferruginous and Rough-legged hawks, perhaps a Prairie Falcon or Merlin. Eagles, owls, and numerous other raptors are possible. Other birds to be looked for include Long-billed Curlews, Loggerhead Shrikes, Mountain Bluebirds and perhaps gulls near the landfill. (1) Departures: Saturday 6:30 AM, Sunday 11:45 AM

Flood/Waverly Roads and Digiscoping: The Flood/Waverly rangelands in eastern San Joaquin County are a "Raptor Wonderland" in winter. Birds likely to be seen include Ferruginous and Rough-legged hawks, perhaps a Prairie Falcon or Merlin. Eagles, owls, and numerous other raptors are possible. Other birds to be looked for include Long-billed Curlews, Loggerhead Shrikes, Mountain Bluebirds and perhaps gulls near the landfill. For participants who wish to explore digiscoping, your leaders from Swarovski Optik will cover setups, settings, techniques, and review of images. Please bring all your equipment including spotting scope, tripod, camera and adapter, fully charged batteries and empty memory cards. Restroom opportunities are limited. (1) Departures: Saturday 6:30 AM, Sunday 11:45 AM

Lange Twins Family Winery: For nearly three decades, the Lange family has practiced the art of sustainable winegrowing improving not only their vineyards but the surrounding nature environment. They are committed to a variety of projects including habitat restoration and conservation, utilization of renewable energy, and improved soil, air, and water management practices. Join their Sustainability Manager, Kendra Altnow, on a walking tour of their wildlife habitat areas and adjoining vineyards where you will see a variety of bird species and possibly even Sandhill Cranes flying overhead. The tour will culminate in a visit to the family winery where adults will be treated to a pre-set flight of five wines that have been personally nurtured by the family from the soil to the bottle. The cost of the tour and tasting is \$15 per guest and is non-refundable. However, a 10% discount on any of their wines purchased that day will be offered. (3/WM, SM) Sunday 11:45 AM

<u>Lodi Lake Wilderness Area</u>: A 40-acre oak riparian jewel along the Mokelumne River near downtown Lodi. Maintained trails make for very easy walking. It is a great spot for wintering passerines such as Varied Thrush, Pacific Wren, and Goldencrowned Kinglet and a good vagrant trap, with some of the rarest birds in the county historically found here. Parking lot \$5/vehicle, street parking free. (3/WM, SM) **Departures: Saturday 7 AM, Sunday 11:45 AM**

<u>Mokelumne Day Use Area:</u> This is a small, delightful riparian oak woodland along the banks of the Mokelumne River northeast of Lodi. Expect mergansers, sparrows, warblers, and an occasional Osprey or eagle. There are maintained trails in this area leading from the parking lot to the river and riparian forest. (3/WS/SS) **Departures: Saturday 6:30 AM, Sunday 11:45 AM**

<u>Ripon Wastewater Treatment Plant</u>: This consists of 15 acres of treatment ponds and 40 acres of accessible (on foot) disposal ponds. A Pacific Golden-Plover was found there last spring, and a variety of waterfowl, shorebirds, waders, and gulls is expected. (3) **Departures: Saturday 7 AM, Sunday 11:45 AM**

<u>Sacramento County Bufferlands</u>: This will be an abbreviated version of Friday's tour, visiting a few of the most productive sites. **Note**: The Sunday tour will end in the field (near Elk Grove, not back at the Hilton). Limited to 15 participants. (2/R) **Sunday 11:45 AM**

<u>Staten Island</u>: The 9,200-acre Staten Ranch on Staten Island is a Nature Conservancy property that is still actively farmed, but also managed for wildlife. The farm's corn and wheat fields are flooded in winter to provide critical habitat for Sandhill Cranes and other waterfowl. Restroom opportunities are limited. (1) **Departures: Saturday 7 AM, Sunday 11:45 AM**

<u>Stockton Rural Cemetery</u>: The large oaks, elms, and other trees in this historic cemetery host an interesting variety of wintering and migrating thrushes, warblers, sparrows, and woodpeckers, among others. Even when the birding is slow, visitors can enjoy a relaxing stroll through California history. (3/WS) **Departures: Saturday 7:45 AM, Sunday 11:45 AM**

<u>Waldo Holt Preserve</u>: The Waldo Holt Preserve is located at the north border of San Joaquin County. It is on the west side of Lower Sacramento Rd., just south of Dry Creek and the City of Galt. It consists of approximately 80 acres, a large portion of which is riparian habitat lying to the south side of Dry Creek. There is a seasonal creek and pond on the property. The Preserve has restricted access and is birded only on special occasions. The purchase of the property was a collaboration between the San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG) and the Waldo Holt Conservancy (WHC). Five acres of the property was paid for by WHC, which has since disbanded. These five acres have been licensed to the San Joaquin Audubon

Society for educational uses. However, the entire 80-acre Preserve is available for restricted field trips. The entire property is being converted to riparian habitat. Plantings of elderberry, valley oak, wild rose and other native plants have recently been completed over most of the 80 acres. We are especially pleased the preserve has been named in memory of Waldo Holt. Waldo was a longtime Conservation Chair for San Joaquin Audubon Society and member of the Central Valley Bird Club. Waldo loved all birds but was especially active in the preservation of Swainson's Hawks. Restroom opportunities are limited. (3WM) **Sunday 11:45 AM**

<u>Walk and Roll Birding at Cosumnes River Preserve</u>: Whether you walk, use a wheelchair, or a walker, this trip is for you. We will travel along paved trails and boardwalk at Cosumnes River Preserve. The trip is led by Paul Miller who specializes in birding from a wheelchair with custom built scope and camera mounts. If you use a wheelchair, Paul can help improve your birding adventures. But even if you don't use a wheelchair or walker, join Paul for an exciting trip to Cosumnes. Restroom available. (3WM). **Sunday only 12:30 PM departure from the hotel.** Plan to meet the leader by 1 PM at the main parking lot at Cosumnes River Preserve.

White Slough Water Pollution Control Facility (Lodi WTP): These small settling ponds are near the intersection of I-5 and Hwy 12. Highly productive over the years, they are one of the spots to see Pacific Golden-Plover locally if they are around. When the conditions are right, they can attract good numbers of other shorebirds as well as gulls, terns, and ducks. (1) Departures: Saturday 7 AM, Sunday 11:45 AM

<u>Woodbridge Wilderness Area</u>: This wilderness area (open on selected weekends only) consists of lush riparian woodlands nestled along the south bank of the Mokelumne River in the town of Woodbridge. Dirt trails meander throughout the park. It is a great spot for wintering passerines such as Varied Thrush, Pacific Wren, and residents like Wrentit. This is a good vagrant trap, very similar to Lodi Lake, only wilder. (3/R) **Departures: Saturday 7 AM, Sunday 11:45 AM**

Field Trip Ratings for Limited Mobility Birders

Time in Car vs. Out

- (1) Most birding can be done in and around car
- (2) Mixed
- (3) Most or all birding requires being out of car

Codes (if applicable) for out-of-car segments:

- (WM) Most areas suitable for wheelchairs and scooters
- (WS) Some areas suitable for wheelchairs and scooters
- (SM) Most areas have places to sit
- (SS) Some areas have places to sit
- (R) Rough and/or muddy terrain
- (C) Contact leader, multiple routes of various accessibility possible