



SAN MATEO COUNTY BIRD ALLIANCE

Volume 77, No. 1
January - March 2026

Welcome to 2026. Meet SMCBA Board Member, Ed Ching, Director at Large, as part of our continuing series.

Q: Could you tell us a little about your birding background?

Ed: I first started birding with a friend at Bixby Park to see the Burrowing Owls back in the 1990's after taking a Palo Alto Adult School course taught by Matthew Dodder (current SCVBA Executive Director). However, my interest in birding notably grew in 2019, as I began birding my neighborhood patch located just south of Edgewood Park. I regularly bird with Doug Brown, visiting San Mateo County hotspots such as Edgewood Park, Coyote Point, San Bruno Mountain, Seal Point, Pillar Point, Burleigh Murray, Lower La Honda Creek, Devil's Slide, and others. Outside of the county, I visit Palo Alto Baylands, Arastradero Preserve, and across the bay. We have some great places to bird in our county; did you know you can see Burrowing Owls at Seal Point in winter?

Q: What brought you to the SMCBA board?

Ed: I was already attending events and birding with current and former board members, so it was a natural, organic transition for me to take the next step and volunteer!

Q: Do you have any helpful suggestions for people just starting?

Ed: When I started to get serious about birds, I purchased a "superzoom" Canon PowerShot camera and used it as a tool to photograph birds from afar, so I could study the photos later for identification purposes. That was particularly useful during the pandemic when you couldn't meet with other people. I'd suggest getting a camera that is easy to carry and use, has great zoom and image stabilization, and features the option to send photos to your phone via Bluetooth or Wi-Fi for quick and easy photo transfers. Once transferred to your high-resolution phone screen, use the Merlin app to assist with photo ID, or send the photos to your friends for ID assistance. Join local bird walks regularly. Getting to know the most common 25 local birds is a great start. Additionally, multi-day bird festivals and events, like the Central Valley Birding Symposium, can be a wonderful opportunity to join experts on field trips, learn, and see amazing birds outside of our county.

Q: Do you have an exciting bird story to share?

Ed: At the end of a cross-country road trip in 2016, I stopped at the Grand Canyon in Arizona. I came up to the edge of a cliff and found myself looking directly across the ravine at a California Condor!! I was able to take a photo, and after noting that the Condor was wearing an ID tag, contacted Fish & Wildlife to learn its story. This was my spark bird!

Q: Are there any projects or goals that you would like to focus on?

Ed: I believe very strongly in young birders. They are the future – they will take the lead and ensure we have good representation in the future. I am encouraged by the educational opportunities we support, such as the SMCBA scholarships, and would like to see even further outreach, perhaps getting back into schools. I'd also like to see transportation issues addressed, since not all young birders have their own cars or have easy access to get to birding events.

Q: Is there anything you would like to say to prospective members or volunteers?

Ed: The birding community has been very accepting and supportive of new members like me. Start small; every little bit helps. It's fun to get out and meet your fellow members!

In closing, I'd like to thank Ed for a great conversation! Remember to get out, enjoy nature, and look up! *Joyce Courtney*

Meeting Programs

2nd Thursdays at 7:00 pm

January 8 - Zoom

How Birds Fly: The Science and Art of Avian Flight
Peter Cavanagh

February 12 - Zoom

**In the Shadow of the Bridge:
Birds of the Bay Area**
Dick Evans & Hannah Hindley

March 12 - Zoom

Wildlife of South Africa
Donna Pomeroy

MEETING PROGRAMS

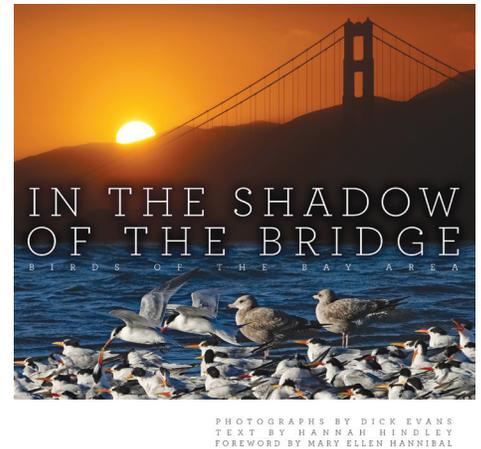
January 8 – Zoom

How Birds Fly: The Science and Art of Avian Flight. Peter Cavanagh is a scientist, author, and bird photographer who lives in the San Juan Islands of Washington State. He is drawn to the study of bird flight by his experiences as an instrument-rated private pilot, his professional training in anatomy and biomechanics, and his passion for nature and the outdoors. In his presentation, Peter will show photographs and videos illustrating various aspects of bird flight described in his recent book ***How Birds Fly***. His images have been featured in the Audubon Society's Top 100 Bird Photographs of the Year. Peter is also the author of ***100 Flying Birds: Photographing the Mechanics of Flight*** and has traveled widely to photograph birds on every continent, most recently to India and Bhutan. His work can be found at www.petercavanagh.us and on Instagram [petercavanaghbirds](https://www.instagram.com/petercavanaghbirds).



February 12 – Zoom

In the Shadow of the Bridge: Birds of the Bay Area is a sumptuously photographed art book that showcases the wild beauty and biodiversity of one of the most significant bird habitats in North America. With over 200 full-color images by acclaimed photographer Dick Evans and poetic prose by award-winning writer Hannah Hindley, it captures the rich avian life of the San Francisco Bay bioregion—where the Pacific Flyway converges and more than half of the country's bird species can be found. From the Russian River to the Farallon Islands, the book explores not only the splendor of local and migratory birds but also the complex conservation challenges they face. A tribute to the resilience of nature and the human will to protect it, this book is a must-have for birders, environmentalists, and lovers of the Bay Area alike. Book sales benefit Point Blue Conservation in Petaluma, CA.



March 12 – Zoom

Wildlife of South Africa. Donna's dream of going on a wildlife safari to Kruger National Park began when her father visited in 1974 and spoke highly of the experience. Her trip certainly lived up to his glowing review. The program will be mostly birds and mammals from the Cape Town region and Kruger National Park, with a few other animals and flowers thrown in for good measure. These photos were all taken by Donna during her recent trip to South Africa.

Donna Pomeroy has a BS in Wildlife Management from Humboldt State University. She has been a birder since high school and a photographer even longer. Now retired, she spends much of her time photographing wildlife and volunteering for SMCBA as well as many ongoing community science projects.





SMCBA Field Trips



Please note that rain or Air Quality Index over 150 cancels unless otherwise stated. Bring binoculars, water, snacks, sunscreen, and dress in layers as the weather can change. The Great Backyard Bird Count is February 13 – 16, an important worldwide community science project: birdcount.org

Tuesday January 6, Coyote Hills Regional Park, Fremont (9:00 – 12:00) This park comprises 1,266 acres of marshland and rolling grassland-covered hills located along the eastern shore of San Francisco Bay. eBird cites 222 species at the Visitors Center! \$5.00 Vehicle admission fee, 8000 Patterson Ranch Road **Leader:** Donna Pomeroy **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4iEuvIP>

Saturday January 10, Oyster Point Bay Marina/Park, South San Francisco (8:30 – 10:30) This 33 acre bayside park offers many shorebirds and terns, as well as some sparrows. There is little elevation and this easy walk will start at the marina park, then we will head towards the canal and turn back to the start. Mass transit accessible. **Leader:** Max Hollenback **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4rC913d>

Sunday January 11, Woodside Horse Park, Woodside (9:00 – 11:00) Join us for our second outing at the Woodside Horse Park. An equestrian facility whose mission includes education and land stewardship is allowing us access for guided public bird walks. It is a rare opportunity to experience sweeping views of the Santa Cruz mountains, the grassy hills adjacent to Jasper Ridge, and views of the bay. Home to raptors year round, the park has several habitats including oak woodland, water features attracting migratory waterfowl, and open fields. Mostly flat terrain. Waterproof hiking boots are recommended, for grip and any mud we may encounter. **Leaders:** Christin New and Doug Brown **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4rAx8zf>

Saturday January 24, Laurelwood Park, San Mateo (9:30 – 11:00) Slow birding is a unique way of being in nature and experiencing birds. Scientific studies have shown intentionally slowing down, engaging our senses, and being aware of the present moment is beneficial for our wellness. Mostly paved level paths, bring a small lightweight chair if you have one. Limited to 10. 3471 Glendora Dr. **Leaders:** Sonia Wu, Davena Gentry, and Patti Berryhill **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4pNMhM7>

Sunday January 25, Oyster Point Bay Marina/Park, South San Francisco (8:30 – 10:30) See January 10 description **Register:** <https://bit.ly/44AoiI0>

Wednesday January 28, Filoli: Spring Creek Trail, Woodside (9:30 – 12:00) Join us for a 3 mile hike. This trail gains 100' elevation in ¼ mile on a dirt path - not recommended if you have mobility issues. We will spend most of the morning on the California Trail in the Oak and Madrone forest and the Spring Creek Trail through the Redwoods. The California Trail is over dirt paths with a slight incline and is one mile long. The Spring Creek Trail is ½ mile on a narrow dirt track with a 100' elevation gain. Admission Fee. **Leader:** Kimberlie Moutoux **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4rzNxnX>

Thursday February 5, Filoli: Estate Trail, Woodside (9:30 – 12:00) A 2–2.5 mile moderate walk. This eBird hotspot recorded 65 species during February '25! Habitats include mixed oak, redwood, madrone woodlands, riparian corridor, and historic horse pastures. Admission fee. **Leader:** Kimberlie Moutoux **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3Xz6Ks0>

Saturday February 7, Bair Island, Redwood City (10:00 – 12:00) A level out and back dirt trail make this an easy outing. Curiosity-seekers and those interested in learning more about birds should join this outing. We should see a variety of ducks, shorebirds, and smaller songbirds. Directions: From US 101, exit Whipple Ave. Heading east, it winds for 0.5 mile, becoming E. Bayshore Rd, then Bair Island Rd. Meet at the Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge Bair Island Trail parking lot. We'll have loaner binoculars. **Leader:** J.R. Blair **Register:** <https://bit.ly/48iumXX>

Sunday February 8, San Bruno Mtn, San Bruno (8:30 – 11:30) San Bruno Mountain Park is a unique open-space island amid the peninsula's urbanization. It is home to a wealth of wildlife, hidden pockets of woodland, and sheltered canyons. We'll walk about 1 mile on mostly flat dirt and asphalt trails. \$6.00 Vehicle entry fee. Directions: Meet at 555 Guadalupe Canyon Parkway. **Leader:** Doug Brown **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4pimeVH>

Sunday February 8, Raptors of San Benito County, Tres Pinos, (8:30 – 3:00) Let's explore the backroads of San Benito County in search of Golden Eagles, Ferruginous Hawks, and Prairie Falcons. San Benito County is an excellent area for wintering raptors. Bring lunch, liquids, and a scope if you have one. Since parking is limited, participants on this trip must be willing to carpool with other participants from Tres Pinos (we are limited to 4 cars on the trip route). Directions: Meet at Catholic Church (7290 Airline Highway (SR 25) coordinates 36.787133, -121.316453) in the small town of Tres Pinos, San Benito County, south of Hollister. From San Mateo, allow about 2 hours driving time, taking Hwy 101 south to Hwy 25; follow Hwy 25 from the church. Take advantage of bathroom facilities in Hollister before you drive to Tres Pinos. Rain will reschedule to February 22. **Leader:** Leslie Flint. **Register:** [email lfint@earthlink.net](mailto:lfint@earthlink.net)

Saturday February 14, Oyster Point Bay Marina/Park, South San Francisco (8:30 – 10:30) See January 10 description **Register:** <https://bit.ly/49Rea15>



Saturday February 14, Shorebird Park, Foster City (9:30 – 11:00) Slow birding to expand your experience of birding. This 3.5 acre waterfront park has paved trails and some accessible mudflats. This is more reflective and meditative rather than chasing numbers. **Leaders:** Sonia Wu, Davena Gentry, and Patti Berryhill **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3XAT6EJ>

Thursday February 19, Filoli: Spring Creek (9:30 – 12:00) See January 28 description **Leader:** Kimberlie Moutoux **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4iCj9F1>

Friday February 27, Pillar Point Bluff County Park, Moss Beach (9:00 – 12:00) This small County Park has sweeping views of both the agricultural land and the ocean, with an uncrowded trail system. There is a nice mix of birds here including breeding California Thrashers. The trail is moderately easy with a short, but steep, descent at the end of the loop. Directions: Meet at the Pillar Point Bluff parking lot on Airport St, across from the Half Moon Bay airport on the west side. **Leader:** Donna Pomeroy **Register:** <https://bit.ly/49W6FWK>

Sunday February 28, Oyster Point Bay Marina/Park, South San Francisco (8:30 – 10:30) See January 10 description **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4pRlCy4>

Saturday March 7, Oyster Point Bay Marina/Park, South San Francisco (8:30 – 10:30) See January 10 description **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3Mi5XZY>

Sunday March 8, Coyote Hills Regional Park, Fremont (10:00 – 12:00) See January 6 description **Leader:** J.R. Blair **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3MgfmBu>

Sunday March 15, Woodside Horse Park, Woodside (10:00 – 12:00) Coffee and refreshments will be provided by the Horse Park for this more stationary and educational outing for those with limited mobility. **Leaders:** Christin New and Doug Brown **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4pNO5Vp>

Monday March 16, Filoli: Estate Trail, Woodside (9:30 – 12:00) See February 5 description **Leader:** Kimberlie Moutoux **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4ozSZ7g>

Thursday March 19, Las Gallinas, San Rafael (8:00 – 11:00) The Las Gallinas Ponds are an excellent area to view a wide variety of waterfowl and other wetland birds. This is a slow-paced trip, along level trails, excellent for all levels of birding. A scope is useful here, if you have one, but many of the birds are close enough for great photo opportunities. Directions: from Highway 101 take the Smith Ranch Road exit, then go east on Smith Ranch toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks, staying on Smith Ranch, and go about .5 miles to the end of the road, to the Las Gallinas Ponds parking lot where we'll meet. **Leader:** Donna Pomeroy **Register:** <https://bit.ly/48QsdTu>

Saturday March 21, Laurelwood Park, San Mateo (9:30 – 11:00) See January 24 description **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3Y7IhtU>

Sunday March 22, Burleigh H. Murray State Park, Half Moon Bay (8:00 – 12:00) This is a leisurely 3-4 hour walk of ~3 miles in this bird-rich location on a level gravel, former ranch road leading to the historic barn. Directions: Take SR1 south from Half Moon Bay and then turn east at Higgins Canyon Rd. **Leader:** Ginny Marshall **Register:** <https://bit.ly/48rZx3j>

Monday March 23, Filoli: Spring Creek Trail, Woodside (9:30 – 12:00) See January 28 description **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3Yb7WSO>

Saturday March 28, Oyster Point Bay Marina/Park, South San Francisco (8:30 – 10:30) See January 10 description **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4pb5BD0>

Saturday March 28, Coyote Pt Recreational Area, San Mateo (8:30 – 11:30) The diversity of habitats at Coyote Point offers the chance to see a number of species. With luck, we may see the resident Harlequin Duck. Directions: Exit Peninsula Ave. from US 101 and follow the signs 1701 Coyote Pt. Dr. \$6.00 Vehicle admission fee. Meet near the yacht club. **Leader:** Doug Brown **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4pMCEgw>

Sunday March 29, Palo Alto Baylands, Palo Alto (10:00 – 12:00) Perfect for a first outing, this is a beginner and family-friendly field trip! Meet in the parking lot for the Lucy Evans Baylands Nature Interpretive Center, 2775 Embarcadero Rd. for a leisurely walk on level gravel trails where we will explore this San Francisco Bay treasure. Loaner binoculars are available. **Leader:** J.R. Blair **Register:** <https://bit.ly/44FltW5>

Connecting Through Birds: Reflections From the 2025 Symposium

Attending the Central Valley Bird Symposium (CVBS) for the first time was a wonderful introduction to a dedicated community of passionate, experienced birders and naturalists, ornithologists, environmentalists, conservation groups, biologists, as well as renowned wildlife photographers and talented artists.

The balance of early morning hikes in the chilly, foggy Central Valley outdoors with cozy afternoon receptions, educational evening lectures, and social gatherings created the perfect rhythm to each day.

Every morning began with a selection of 10 to 12 different field trips departing from the Stockton Hilton lobby and heading to destinations up to 45 minutes away from the symposium center. Additional workshops in bird photography and bird carving were also offered.

The hikes were planned around the diverse habitats of the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta, which hosts large populations of wintering migratory and resident birds. I was especially grateful for the freshly brewed 6 a.m. coffee and the pre-packed lunches prepared by the skilled and caring CVBS team.

My highlight was the field trip to Staten Island and the Cosumnes River Preserve, led by Rodd Kelsey, Ph.D., director of the Nature Conservancy project. Staten Island, a 9,200-acre area formed between the north and south forks of the Mokelumne River, is part of the Cosumnes River Preserve. In summer, this mix of protected natural and agricultural habitat is used to grow corn, rice, potatoes, and other crops. In fall and winter, the fields are intentionally flooded, creating crucial habitat for a wide variety of wintering birds such as Sandhill Cranes and other Pacific Flyway species. Prior to 1990, the fields were burned.

The sight and sound of thousands of geese (Snow, Cackling, White-fronted), cranes (Lesser and Greater), songbirds (White and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Finches, Blackbirds), and ducks (Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal) landing, lifting off, flying overhead, and covering the flooded fields in search of food and mates, calling, dancing, arguing, was exhilarating and uplifting. It is truly a spectacle like no other.

Standing there with fellow birders, I felt in awe and deep gratitude as we caught a glimpse of what the Central Valley wetlands must have looked like long ago. I felt hopeful that this beautiful land will remain protected and welcoming to these graceful birds for generations to come.

While all the evening programs were engaging, the most captivating for me was *Woodpecker: A Year in the Life of North American Woodpeckers* presented by Paul Bannick. Paul shared stories, sounds, videos, and remarkable close-up photographs from his new book, offering a fascinating look at the diverse woodpecker species of North America, their family structures, and the challenges they face due to habitat loss.

In summary, the Central Valley Bird Symposium provided a wonderful opportunity to connect with fellow birders, make new friends, discover hiking trails, join a growing community of naturalists and learn from inspiring speakers about birds and conservation. It was a joy to spend time outdoors and share the passion for birding. I'm definitely planning to return in 2026.

Inna Magner, Chapter Member, Conservation Committee Member and Outreach Volunteer



Pardee Reservoir Eagle Boat Tour, CVBS, Bald Eagle by Inna Magner

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MISSION STATEMENT

San Mateo County Bird Alliance protects native birds and other wildlife and their ecosystems in San Mateo County by engaging people of all ages in conservation, education, advocacy and enjoyment.

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Sandhill Cranes Sunset at Staten Island, Inna Magner

San Mateo County Bird Alliance Membership

Senior or Student membership	\$20.00
Individual membership	\$25.00
Family membership	\$45.00
Supporter	\$100.00
Donation to SMCBA	\$ _____
	Total \$ _____

Yes, I am interested in volunteering _____

Newsletter Preference:

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