



Madrone LEAVES

Madrone Audubon Society, Inc., Post Office Box 1911, Santa Rosa, California 95402

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Number 6

8th Annual Madrone Audubon/Ernestine Smith Scholarship Award

by Susan Kirks

The 2025 Madrone Audubon/Ernestine Smith scholarship recipient is Alex Margand. This scholarship is awarded to a student who attends or has attended Santa Rosa Junior College, transferring to a 4-year university for further education in the fields/majors of biological sciences, life sciences and/or environmental studies.

Alex grew up in Petaluma with their family and graduated in 2020 from Technology High School in Rohnert Park. Alex has always resonated with being outdoors and in our natural world, especially enjoying time in the local terrestrial coastal ecosystem, scrub, dunes, coastal prairie and Redwood forests. In Petaluma, Alex has always helped with their family's chickens and cared for their favorite hen, Speckie Dragon, sparking interest in birds at an early age. Following high school, Alex decided to continue education at their own pace, enrolling at Santa Rosa Junior College with the intent of studying Biology.



Alex Margand, 2025 Scholarship Recipient

Alex also works part-time as Kennel staff at the Cat Hospital in Petaluma. As they continued classes, Alex's interest in Ecology, especially plants and birds, increased. Learning about plants and birds, habitat, and how components in an ecosystem



Alex during a 2023 outing to the SF Asian Art Museum

inter-relate and also working to restore habitat to support birds and wildlife are areas of continuing educational focus Alex has chosen. Alex will transfer in Fall 2025 to University of California-Santa Cruz to study Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. They hope to eventually work in ecological research and do hands-on restoration of coastal biomes, wetlands and/or deserts.

Alex is grounded in an inclusive and practical approach to our environment and feels honoring Indigenous history and seeking guidance for the environment are very important. We are most pleased to award the 2025 scholarship to Alex Margand and wish them the best experience to build upon their SRJC education!



Bird-A-Thon – Still Time to Support!

The 2025 Spring fundraiser continues to June 30. We appreciate donations received to date. Please help us meet our goal of \$4000. Our loyal teams are out birding and doing all we can to ID species to share with our supporters. PayPal donations via the website (<https://www.madroneaudubon.org>) are convenient, or mail a check to Madrone Audubon, PO Box 1911, Santa Rosa, CA 95402. Include on check memo line either “General BAT” or your preferred team’s name.



Great-tailed Grackle

Courtesy of Tom Reynolds

2025 Bird-A-Thon Teams:

Oakmont Birding Buddies, led by Carolyn Greene (cgnpark@icloud.com).

Grey-headed Seersuckers, led by Ken Wilson & Ian Morrison (ken@talontours.com).

Hike & Bike Day/March Madness, led by Gene Hunn (enhunn323@comcast.net).

Burrowing Owls, led by Susan Kirks & Art Slater (susankirks333@gmail.com).

Funds raised will support Chapter operations, habitat gardening for climate action, and conservation efforts.

Thank you in advance for supporting our 2025 BAT!

Spring Membership Renewals are due now



New Members

Forestville

Nat Seavy

Petaluma

Mary Blakeslee

Santa Rosa

Angelique Goodhue

Sasha Ivanoff

Donations

*In memory of
Larry Broderick
by Kathleen Helleskov*

Are you a National Audubon member?



Please consider joining our local chapter, Madrone Audubon.

(see membership form, back page)

Madrone Audubon Sonoma County



Find us on Facebook for conservation alerts, outings, special announcements and more.



A Message from Our Outgoing President

by Susan Kirks

My privilege has been to serve our members in several capacities from 2008 to the present time. I joined the Madrone Audubon Board as Membership Chair in 2008, having served for two years as a Petaluma Wetlands Docent 2006-2008. I kept seeing the “Membership Chair Needed” announcement in the *Leaves* and thought, well, they seem to need help. 2008-2010 as Membership Chair when our Chapter had about 100 members, I was ready to have my life back and end my Board service. I was also advocating for open space conservation of an important habitat area in West Petaluma on Paula Lane (finally achieved in 2012). Against my better judgment, I agreed to serve as Vice President when asked. That was 2010. 2010-2012, serving as Vice President, although told I didn’t need to do anything except attend Board meetings and go to the quarterly Bay Area Audubon Council meeting, I felt a sense of responsibility and wrote what primarily became the Wind Energy section of Sonoma County’s Renewable Energy Ordinance. In 2012, I served my first two-year term as Chapter President. We clearly needed to update the Madrone Audubon website, and a committee was formed to plan and implement this update. Gordon Beebe’s skills helped update the website, working with our skilled website manager, Charles. In 2014 when Gordon became President, I continued as Past President and was our representative to negotiate a legal departure agreement of Petaluma Wetlands Alliance as they embarked upon forming a nonprofit. 2016 when Gordon was ready to move on, which was very understandable, I agreed to return to serve as Chapter President 2016-2018; no one was stepping forward to serve as Vice President. The 2017 wildfires and the 2020 COVID pandemic have been part of my organizational service to 2025, for 8+ additional years.



Killdeer

Courtesy of Tom Reynolds

I have served 5-1/2 terms as your organization President, and following are some highlights from over the years, reflecting what we have achieved together. To the Madrone Audubon members, I have enjoyed supporting the mission of appreciation of and education for birds, wildlife and environmental protection.

2009-2012

Represented Madrone Audubon as co-plaintiff in anti-Dutra asphalt plant litigation (Petaluma).

2013-2016

Represented Madrone Audubon as co-plaintiff in Cliff Swallows litigation, Petaluma River Bridge, in support of the initiative and swift action of Veronica Bowers and Native Songbird Care & Conservation.

Monitored settlement agreement terms 2014-2016 on a daily basis at the river bridge during nesting season.

2016-2019

Managed Phenology Project with Madrone Audubon volunteers at Paula Lane Nature Preserve in West Petaluma. Part of Audubon California pilot project with 4 Chapters, participating in the National Phenology Project.

2012-present

Initiated the West 9th St. nesting support project for egrets and herons, a project installed each year April to September, continuing. 2025 is the 13th year.

2016

Facilitated use of professional bookkeeping service to support organization, which had grown to 600+ members.

In 2017, wildfires were devastating for many of our members and our environment. We navigated through this together. The post traumatic stress continues to be very real for many.

2014-2016

Coordinated Family weekend morning outings with Sonoma County Regional Parks at Spring Lake Regional Park.

2014-2018

Initiated USFWS application for Ramsar Wetland of International Importance for Petaluma Wetlands, funded, followed up until official designation in 2018.

2016-present

Led our support for Roseland community group, advocating to establish a Neighborwood, nature preserve in southwest Santa Rosa, with Roseland Creek and sensitive habitat, opportunities for education and passive enjoyment by community.

2021-2025

Compiled and provided input to Sonoma County Local Coastal Plan Update.

2021-present

Representative to State Route 37 Technical Environmental Work Group to consider best planning and accurate environmental review to reconfigure State Route 37.

2021-present

Representative to coalition to support a healthy Farallones ecosystem and oppose use of a second generation anticoagulant poison to attempt to eradicate mice. (It appears the project has not been funded in the current federal fiscal year.)

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MESSAGE OF OUTGOING PRESIDENT

Continued from page 3

Madrone Audubon has observed the loss of loyal members who have passed on, along with members who have relocated, the organization has continued to welcome new members over the past 13 years and our relationship with National Audubon is an active and supportive one. National's transformation to become more diverse, inclusive and active regarding equity is ongoing and needs to continue. New National Audubon staff have been most encouraging and innovative. This adds to our California Audubon Chapters and our Chapter to Chapter relationships. During the recent southern California wildfires, I was able to communicate with reps from Pasadena Audubon and LA Audubon. Maintaining a cohesive and mutually supportive relationship with Chapters in California and National Audubon is integral to effective and innovative activities on behalf of birds, wildlife and habitat. To Madrone Audubon members, please reach out if I may be of assistance in any way. (707) 241-5548, susankirks333@gmail.com.

Thank you to our Outgoing Recording Secretary

Claudia Rannikar has served the Madrone Audubon Board for 4 years since 2021. She is a wonderful human being, an expert gardener, and for many, many years has anticipated the Spring arrival of migratory Hooded Orioles to her property and neighborhood. Claudia endeavored to protect her neighborhood from tree destruction and excessive development, to conserve remaining trees and vegetation so needed for nesting and cover and nutrition. She has served so effectively as Recording Secretary for the Madrone Audubon Board, words are not sufficient to express gratitude for her service and acceptance of responsibility. But, thank you so much, Claudia!

West 9th Street Nesting Support Project

The 2025 nesting season is active. We want to take this opportunity to thank in advance the service providers who help Madrone Audubon in the nesting support project, in our 13th year:

We are most grateful to Republic Servies, Need A Hand Movers, Goatee Home Services, Western Farm Supply, and White Cap. Thank you!

Hope for California's Endangered Species Status

by Christine Cohen

There is a current campaign to designate the California Burrowing Owl as a candidate for the California Endangered Species Act. This article is a continuation of the last one printed in the April/May 2025 Madrone Leaves based on the outstanding Zoom presentation by Jeff Miller of the Center for Biological Diversity.



Flying Burrowing Owl

Courtesy of Tom Reynolds

California Burrowing Owls prefer flat grasslands, deserts and steppe landscapes with low growing vegetation so that they can easily watch for predators when they pop out of their burrows. These owls have also made their homes in altered landscapes such as cattle pastures, golf courses and agricultural lands. According to the California Ricelands Waterbird Foundation in the Sacramento Valley, they are known to nest along the rice field berms. Ground squirrels play an integral role in a warning system by alerting other squirrels as well as Burrowing Owls to approaching predators.

Loss or fragmentation of habitat is a primary cause of a significant reduction in population. The California Burrowing Owl mates for life in most instances and once it nests, it has strong nesting site fidelity. If forced from its nest location, the owl will no longer nest and raise young. As one birder witnessed, once forced from its nest next to Shollenberger Park in Petaluma many years ago, the hapless Burrowing Owl lived in a drain on a parking lot and another lived in pipes intended for drainage. Aside from human activities, there are many species that will prey on this owl. They are, according to the Stanford Conservation Program, the following potential predators: badgers, house cats, weasels, skunks, dogs, coyotes, snakes, bobcats, Great Horned Owls, Am. Crows, Swainson's, Ferruginous, Red-tailed and Cooper's hawks, along with Merlin, Prairie, and Peregrine falcons. At the same time, these owls may actually use the burrows of badgers, ground squirrels

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BURROWING OWLS

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and other underground dwelling mammals for nesting as long as they are left alone and not disturbed.

By far, the greatest causes for the disappearance of the California Burrowing Owl are human destruction of natural ecosystems and the killing of these amazing and interesting birds. Burrowing Owls once populated Petaluma grasslands less than a hundred years ago. According to a well-known Petaluma Birder, because of the owl's habit of popping out of its burrow, locals enjoyed shooting them for target practice. The squirrels' disappearance further contributed to wiping out the nesting population of Burrowing Owls. Like the Monarch Butterfly, they are quietly disappearing in all parts of California. A few areas remain and hold out hope for a comeback.

The following is a quote from a Power Engineers newsletter: "Although not formally protected under the Federal Endangered species Act or CESA, the western burrowing owl is currently listed as a California Species of Special Concern by CDFW [California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife], considered a federal bird of conservation concern by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The take of western burrowing owl without a permit is prohibited by CDFW in Sections 3503.5 and 3513 of CA Fish and Game Code."

Numerous environmental groups and biologists are advocating and campaigning for California Endangered Species Protection. Without a serious effort to protect the California Burrowing Owl, this once plentiful owl will eventually cease to nest and survive as a viable nesting bird in California. The Santa Clara Audubon Society is working hard to save the small population of nesting Burrowing Owls that live in Santa Clara Valley within bayside parks, golf courses, airports and rural areas. Restoration, preservation and enhancement of habitat are their goals. Much further south, the Imperial Valley has about 70% of the remaining breeding pairs that have already suffered a 50% decline. On an Audubon Society website there are maps of the prioritized Burrowing Owl sites on both public and private lands. Such maps have been made possible by the Imperial Valley Community Found., Imperial Irrigation Dist., Institute for Bird Populations, the Sonny Bono Salton Sea Nat'l Wildlife Refuge, e-Bird and the California Natural Diversity Database.

According to Jeff Miller of the Center for Biological Diversity, one of the keys to ending the disappearance of the California Burrowing Owl is reintroducing ground squirrels into their regions for their positive interconnections. Open space with flat grasslands and low vegetation provide a vital habitat for the Burrowing Owl and many other species. Safe guarding such lands is a step closer to encouraging the Burrowing Owl

to nest, reproduce and flourish. With the concerted efforts by biologists, environmentalists and nature lovers, our hope is that the California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife will recognize the importance of saving this amazing and interesting owl and rule in favor of designating its status of CA Endangered Species. This status will provide a much needed safety net for the California Burrowing Owl.

(Editorial note: Dr. Shawn Smallwood's 2013 Biological Opinion, updated in 2023, on a proposed 28-luxury home development and construction of an extension of Helen Putnam Regional Park in West Petaluma grassland (Kelly Creek) identified probable habitat for Burrowing Owl. Dr. Smallwood's 2018 peer review of Biologist Kim Fitts' biological opinion on the critical importance of habitat protection at the West Petaluma open space property, Paula Lane Nature Preserve, and no encroachment into habitat by humans, affirmed the longstanding American Badger habitat throughout the land as well as the probable location of habitat for Burrowing Owl who will reuse abandoned badger burrows. The Kelly Creek property was approved for development by the Petaluma City Council and Dr. Smallwood's biological opinions ignored. The City of Petaluma ignored biologist Fitts' and Dr. Smallwood's expert input regarding the Paula Lane open space land.)

For planting and habitat consideration, see our Tree & Vegetation Planting Guide

[https://madroneaudubon.org/pdf/
Tree and Plant List.pdf](https://madroneaudubon.org/pdf/Tree%20and%20Plant%20List.pdf)



Black-crowned Night Heron

Courtesy of Tom Reynolds



Summer 2025 Outings

(Summer outings are once a month)

Bring binoculars and wear outdoor clothing suitable for the weather forecast. Our outings are free for members and the public. (We may have binoculars to loan for your outing.)

Thursday, June 12

8:30 –10:30 AM

Foothill Regional Park
1351 Arata Lane, Windsor

Leader: Janet Bosshard

Parking pass is required. We will check out the ponds and walk up the gentle hills, looking for summer birds. Info: (707) 480-3432.

Thursday, July 17

8:30 -10:30 AM

West County Trail, between Graton & Forestville.

Leader: Janet Bosshard

Turn left off Hwy 116 onto Ross Station Road. Come down to the parking lot on the left. No parking pass is required. We will walk along the flat multi-use path. A nice area to bird on a warm summer morning. Info: (707) 480-3432.

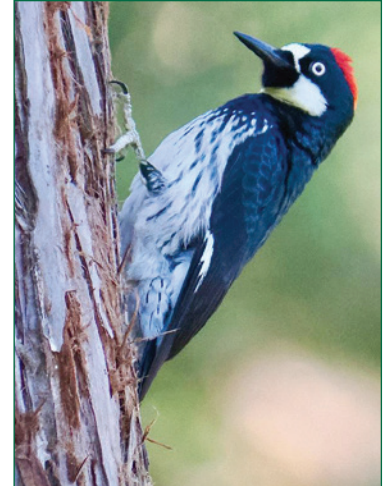
Thursday, August 14

8:30 -10:30 AM,

Doran Regional Park
Bodega Bay

Leader: Janet Bosshard

Use your county park pass or buy a day pass there. Park in the first dirt lot on your left. We will scan the shoreline for the early return of Fall birds, then cross the road to walk the paved trail to the east along the marsh. Info: (707) 480-3432.



Acorn Woodpecker
Courtesy of Tom Reynolds



Common Murre

Courtesy of Tom Reynolds



Osprey

Courtesy of Tom Reynolds

OUT & ABOUT

Winged Wonders

June 5 - October 2025

Sonoma Botanical Garden

9:00 AM-4:00 PM daily, closed Tuesdays

12841 Sonoma Hwy 12, Glen Ellen

Visit the fantastical exhibition of larger-than-life bird sculptures, created from all natural materials by artists Donna Dodson & Andy Moerlein. See sonomabg.org to learn more or call (707) 494-7585 for info and questions. (Carolyn Greene, long-time volunteer and Naturalist, is arranging several activities.)



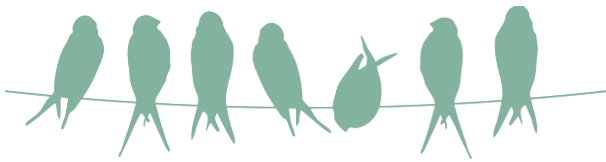
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\$200 to \$499

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Semipalmated Plover

Courtesy of Tom Reynolds



Madrone Audubon Society

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Summer 2025

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**TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY
CALENDAR ENCLOSED**



MADRONE LEAVES



Madrone Audubon Society meets on the third Monday of each month, except in June, July, August, and December. Meetings start at 6:30 PM, Zoom or in-person at First United Methodist Church, 1551 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa. All membership meetings and walks are open to the public. Information: e-mail - info@madroneaudubon.org.

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Northern California Rare Bird Alert 415-681-7422

National Audubon Society: 225 Varick Street, NY, NY 10014. 212-979-3000

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Please complete this form if you wish to join Madrone Audubon or renew your Madrone membership

Please note: We are a chapter of National Audubon, but membership in and donations to Madrone Audubon are separate and support our local chapter. Membership and donations are tax deductible.

☐ New member ☐ Renewal

☐ Senior \$20 ☐ Basic Member \$30 ☐ Family \$40 ☐ Student \$15

☐ Sustaining \$50 ☐ Supporting \$100 ☐ Patron \$500

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