



Fresno Audubon Society Annual Report for 2020

The Fresno Audubon Society (FAS) chapter of the National Audubon Society was organized in 1966 and was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization in 1975. The mission of Fresno Audubon is to engage local communities in building a sustainable environment for people, birds, and other wildlife through education, science, and advocacy.



Rachel Clark, FAS President 2020

Board

The board of directors of Fresno Audubon Society determines the direction of and has fiduciary responsibility for the organization.

FAS activities start in September and end, historically, in May of the following year with little activity in June through August. For 2021, however, FAS will offer General Meetings during June, July and August in 2021 using Zoom.

The board meets monthly on the last Sunday of the month from August through May. FAS board meetings, held typically at the Fig Garden branch library before COVID-19 and now held over Zoom, are open to the public and all are welcome. Annual elections are held at the December board meeting each year. Board terms are for two years.

Membership on the Board

The FAS board consists of the following members:

Rachel Clark – President
Radley Reep – Vice President
George Folsom – Treasurer
Barbara Bailey – Secretary
Robert Snow – Past President
Nancy Gilmore – Outreach Chair
Nancy Griesser – Membership Chair
Lowell Young – Program Chair
Karen Baker – Member at large
Esther Fernandez – Member at large
Rich Gilman – Member at large
Judy Johnson – Member at large
Robin Jolly – Member at large

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Work with California Audubon and sister chapters

There are 48 local Audubon chapters in California divided into five councils. FAS belongs to the Central Valley & Sierra Council. The other 11 chapters in our council are: Central Sierra Audubon Society, Eastern Sierra Audubon Society, Kern Audubon Society, Kerncrest Audubon Society, Sacramento Audubon Society, Sierra Foothills Audubon Society, Stanislaus Audubon Society, Tulare County Audubon Society, Yolo Audubon Society and Yosemite Area Audubon Society. The council meets annually in October to discuss issues common to their chapters and to National Audubon Society. Because of the large geographical area covered by our council and the advent of COVID-19, the last two meetings were held as Zoom video conferences.

National Audubon Society maintains a California office known as Audubon California, headquartered in San Francisco and with a significant presence in Sacramento. Each of the five California councils elects a representative to serve on the advisory board of Audubon California to attend four meetings annually and to serve as liaison between their chapters and Audubon California. Robert Snow is serving in his second 3-year term (expiring February 2022) as the representative of the Central Valley & Sierra Council.

Finances

Fresno Audubon Society had a surplus budget in FY 2020 (January to December) with income of \$12,029.81 and expenses of

\$7,129.74. This \$4,900 positive balance was a big change for FAS from years past when we had to borrow funds from our reserves to maintain operations. The increased income was due primarily to more memberships and fundraising activities, as well as \$2,300 in interest from our investment account (see next). Total assets at year-end were \$45,964.30. A budget summary page is attached to this report as Appendix A.

Fundraising activities

In 2020 FAS had several fundraising campaigns. We received \$71.42 from Amazon Smile donations. Donations for bird seed for the River Center bird feeders contributed \$587.43. Donations for greeting cards raised \$100, and the COVID-19 masks donated by Susan Estep raised \$537.84. Our dues share from National Audubon was \$1,579.75 while FAS memberships brought in \$5,030.04. FAS thanks all who became members or renewed their membership in 2020.

Expenses

Our largest expense categories are insurance (\$1,548) and communications like Zoom, Social Media, website and Constant Contact (\$2,226). Full details are in Appendix A.

Grant

FAS received a grant in 2020 for \$650 from Audubon's Collaborative Grant program to install a native plant garden at the River Center near the bird feeder and water station. We planted 43 native plants in an area of several acres. Plants included

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Toyon, Coffeeberry, Red Monkey Flower, Hummingbird Sage, Bush Lupin and Deer Grass. The plantings were integrated into the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust (The Parkway) master plan for the River Center by The Parkway's Executive Director Sharon Weaver. We are working with the River Center to create signs identifying the plants.



Hummingbird Sage at River Center



Audubon Plants for Birds at River Center

Communications

Fresno Audubon Society communicates with current and potential members and the community through our monthly blog, *The Yellowbill*, through our Constant Contact e-mail system (986 contacts in December) and through social media. FAS maintains four social media accounts managed primarily by Nancy Gilmore. Our followers on Facebook (@FresnoAudubon) increased from 1,000 in January 2020 to 1,600 in December 2020. We also maintain Instagram (@fresnoaudubon, 496 followers), Twitter (@fresnoaudubon, 1,200 followers) and YouTube (@fresnoaudubon, 50 subscribers) accounts. The YouTube channel allows us to post recordings of General Meetings and virtual field trips, as well as birding-by-ear lessons created by Rachel Clark. Social media and posting to KVPR, KFCF and FresYes Community Calendars have greatly increased the recruitment of people to our events.

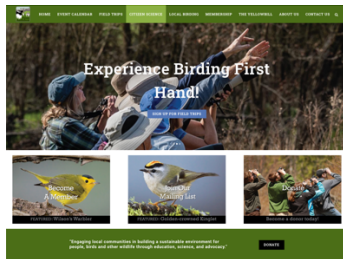
Website

The FAS website is being refreshed in spring 2021. We are changing the way *The Yellowbill* newsletter is being published so

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that the pages and photographs will automatically fit any screen used for viewing.



FAS Website

The Yellowbill

FAS publishes our newsletter as an online blog. The newsletter (published September through May) includes the President's message, upcoming field trips and birding classes (when permitted by state pandemic rules), a column by Jeff Davis on noteworthy birds seen in the previous month in Madera and Fresno counties, links to recent news articles about birds, and member photographs. Member photographs have proven to be very popular, and FAS now receives bird photos from up to 10 photographers a month. The pictures are also used in our social media posts.

E-mail

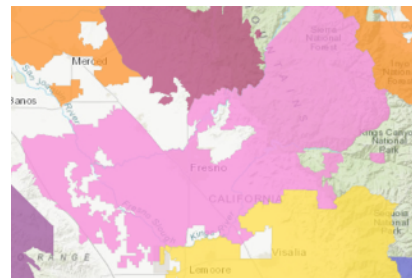
FAS uses Constant Contact to inform our members about activities. Constant Contact also allows us to create events that members can register to attend. Registration allows trip leaders to know about how many people will attend, and it speeds the process by including a liability waiver during registration. Constant Contact is also used to manage our membership roster and has built-in

fundraising tools. We had 986 contacts at the end of 2020.

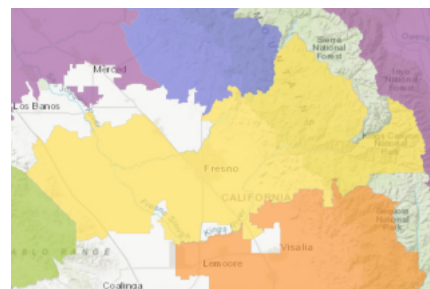
Membership

Numbers: national and local

Any member of the National Audubon Society residing within the boundaries of Fresno Audubon Society (roughly Fresno and Madera counties with the exception of Fresno County within the Yosemite Area Audubon territory) is automatically a member of Fresno Audubon Society. In December 2019 FAS had 437 members through the National Audubon Society (NAS). We annually receive \$1,580 from NAS as a share of NAS dues for *NAS members residing within our chapter boundary*. This is a fixed amount and is not dependent on the number of members we have through NAS.



National Audubon Society map of Fresno Audubon Society territory in 2019. Zip codes with National Audubon Society members in Fresno and Madera Counties are shown in light pink. Areas without color represent zip codes without NAS members.



National Audubon Society map of Fresno Audubon society territory in 2020. Zip codes with National Audubon Society

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members in Fresno and Madera Counties in 2020 are shown in yellow. Note the increase in zip codes with NAS members in 2020 vs. 2019.

FAS also has our own local chapter membership plan. The FAS membership year is from September 1 through August 31 each year. We had 189 local chapter members in December 2020 compared with 122 in December 2019. Three of these are lifetime members. Local chapter membership is a significant portion of our annual income (41%).

Member Activities

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted FAS in 2020. After starting the year with great plans for field trips and birding education, we held our last in-person field trip (to the Audubon Kern River Preserve) March 14.

Even with the pandemic, Fresno Audubon Society engaged over 200 people in activities in 2020 including 20 children. Forty-five volunteers contributed 780 hours to FAS efforts. These numbers were down substantially from 2019 due to the COVID19 pandemic.

General Meetings

In August 2019 the board decided to reduce the number of General Meetings to quarterly owing to low attendance. We held four General Meetings in 2020. While data is limited, it seems that reducing the number of meetings increased in-person attendance: Our only in-person meeting was in March 2020, and attendance was nearly 50 people.

After COVID-19 restrictions were put in place we moved our General Meetings to

Zoom and saw a general increase in attendance. This encouraged us to again hold General Meetings on a monthly basis. Thanks to the efforts of Lowell Young (new Program Chair of FAS) and Rachel Clark we now have speakers arranged through all of 2021, including the summer months. Even if we decide to again meet in-person we will continue to broadcast our General Meetings *via* Zoom. This allows more attendance and reduces driving and late nights for our members.

The speakers and presentations in 2020 were:

March, *No Birdbrains Here: The Latest on Bird Learning, Instinct and Intelligence* by Susan Schneider.

September, *Introduction to the Birds of Fresno State* by Tricia Van Laar and Joel Slade.

November, *Natural History of Local Common Birds*, by Jeff Davis

December, *Bird Photography*, by Gary Woods

Birding Outings

FAS led only nine field trips on Wednesdays and Saturdays in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Field trip destinations included Millerton Lake, Madera Grasslands, Clovis Urban Birding, San Luis National Wildlife Refuge, Elkhorn Slough and Stephen's Ranch in Moss Landing, Ball Ranch, Eastman Lake and Kern River Preserve. Trip leaders included Rachel Clark, George Folsom, Larry Parmeter, Lynda Schafhauser, Jeff Seay and Robert

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Snow. Attendance ranged from 8 to 40 people per trip.

FAS also held one virtual field trip in 2020 to the Fresno/Clovis Wastewater Plant (WTP). We used a Nikon P1000 with telephoto lens as a webcam for a Zoom session. Rachel Clark then described what birds were in the field of view. Although it was a foggy morning, the audience got to experience the birds without risk of contracting COVID-19.



Frame from WTP virtual field trip.

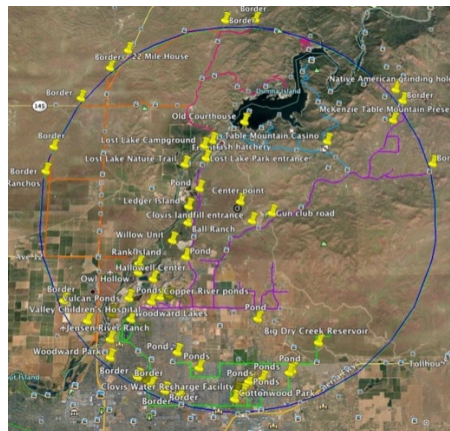
Birding Classes

FAS held four Introduction-to-Birding classes and two Introductory Bird Walks at the River Center in 2020 (before COVID-19 restrictions) attended by a total of 45 people. The classes were held at the bird feeding station at the River Center using the binoculars purchased with the generous donations of members. Instructors included Rachel Clark, Judy Johnson, George Folsom, Rich Gilman, Nancy Gilmore and Robert Snow.

Citizen Science

Fresno Audubon undertakes a variety of projects each year under the general category of Citizen (or Community) Science. Citizen Science projects use volunteers to collect data for a variety of uses.

Christmas Bird Count: The best-known example of Citizen Science is the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), which has been held annually by Audubon chapters for over a century. FAS manages the Lost Lake CBC. In 2020 the CBC was again managed by Rachel Clark, who managed her first FAS CBC in 2019. A total of 20 participants formed 16 groups to cover the accessible sections inside the count circle. Between the 16 groups, a grand total of 233.53 miles were covered (190.93 by car and 42.6 by foot), and approximately 81.5 hours were spent counting birds (28.5 by car and 53 on foot). By the end of the day, 118 species had been observed. European Starling was by far the most numerous, with 2,799 individuals observed.



Lost Lake CBC circle

River Bottom Surveys: In 2019 FAS began surveys of the local San Joaquin River areas being restored to native habitat. Volunteers survey the areas at least monthly and record their data using eBird. The goal is to monitor any changes in the avifauna along the river as a result of the restoration efforts. Volunteers submitted 62 checklists

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in 2020 for this project, double the number submitted in 2019.

Pacific Flyway Shorebird Surveys: We also participated again in the Pacific Flyway Shorebird Survey (PFSS) covering the South Los Banos Grassland. The data were submitted to a database managed by Point Blue Conservation Science. PFSS is an effort led by Point Blue and designed to guide the management and conservation of wintering shorebirds in the Pacific Flyway. This project contributes data to the Migratory Shorebird Project, the largest coordinated survey of wintering shorebirds on the Pacific Coast of the Americas now spanning 13 countries.

Community Outreach

Earth Day: FAS has been a sponsor and exhibitor of Earth Day Fresno for the past five years, but the event was canceled in 2020.

County Board of Supervisors advocacy:

Fresno Audubon has partnered with the League of Women Voters through FAS Vice President Radley Reep to get the County of Fresno to include the public in developing a new general plan, as required by California state law.

Fresno Audubon is keeping a close watch on the Lost Lake Park Master Plan implementation. Lost Lake Park is the number one birding location in Fresno and Madera counties as indicated by the number of species observed there. The Master Plan has the potential to totally change the character of the property by

removing riparian growth to increase river access and by recontouring large swaths of the floodplain area.

State legislature advocacy: Each year Audubon California organizes a “Lobby Day” at the California state capital where volunteers meet with state senators and assembly members in support of legislation considered important to Audubon. In 2020 this day was held virtually instead of in person. Robert Snow attended and met with staff of Assemblyman Jim Patterson and Assemblyman Joaquin Arambula to discuss legislation that would restore migratory bird protections that were eliminated by the Trump administration, and other legislation that would conserve at least 30% of California land and ocean by 2030. The so-called 30 x 30 act is part of an international push for conservation aiming to protect biodiversity and mitigate climate change impacts.

Bird-friendly Communities

In 2020 FAS sought to strengthen our relationship with the San Joaquin River Parkway. At the River Center, we offered more birding classes, maintained the bird feeders and water fountain and planted a native plant garden selecting plants from Audubon’s Plants for Birds website (<https://www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds>), which allows a user to select native plants for their area that are valuable resources for birds.

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Direction of FAS in 2021

In early 2021, FAS will resume virtual field trips. We are closely monitoring the COVID-19 situation in Fresno County and beyond, and will be using this information to decide how and when to resume in-person field trips, as well as in-person Introduction to Birding classes. FAS will hold general meetings each month in 2021, including the summer months. Each meeting will be held using Zoom video conferencing. In-person general meetings will resume when it is safe to do so.

We are working to increase diversity among our membership by increasing social media engagement and by partnering with various local and state organizations. FAS will continue its partnership with the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust by maintaining the bird feeding stations and the Plants for Birds garden at the River Center, and by performing avian surveys on properties that have undergone restoration efforts. We will continue to post educational content on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

Conclusion

We provide this report to give our membership a clear idea of how we spend the money our members entrust to us. Please let us know, through social media or email to admin@fresnoaudubon.org, whether you found this useful and informative. Your input will help us determine how to improve the report to meet your needs.



Appendix A

Fresno Audubon Society Annual Financial Report 2020

▼ Money In	\$12,029.81
Budget Income	\$9,229.99
Donations	\$1,970.20
Donations (Other)	\$673.28
Amazon Smile	\$71.42
Bird feed	\$587.43
Cards	\$100.13
Masks	\$537.94
FAS Membership	\$5,030.04
Grants	\$650.00
Plants for Birds RC	\$650.00
NAS Dues Share	\$1,579.75
Interest Income	\$2,299.82
Returned Check	\$500.00
▼ Money Out	-\$7,129.74
Budget Expense	-\$7,129.74
Bank Fees & Charges	-\$62.00
Bird Feed	-\$87.21
Californis Audubon meetings	-\$409.60
Communications	-\$2,226.00
Constant Contact	-\$960.00
Social Media	-\$282.74
Website Fees and Updates	-\$983.26
Donation to Non-Pofits	-\$500.00
Grants	-\$352.43
Plants for Birds RC	-\$352.43
Insurance	-\$1,548.00
PO Box	-\$254.00
Presentations	-\$436.50
Meeting Room Rent	-\$136.50
Speakers	-\$300.00
Storage Unit	-\$654.00
Taxes, Tax Prep	-\$600.00
Tax Preperation	-\$600.00
Money In:	\$12,029.81
Money Out:	-\$7,129.74
Net Total:	\$4,900.07
Investment account balance	\$33,813.98
Checking account balance	\$12,150.32
Total December 31, 2020 cash assets	\$45,964.30