

# Tracking the Refuge

a publication for Friends of Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

Winter 2026



Burrowing Owl



Black-throated Gray Warbler

**O**n December 29, 2025 Refuge staff and volunteers came together for the yearly Christmas Bird Count. Three teams canvassed different sections of the Refuge to identify and count as many bird species as we could see. It was an extremely cold and foggy day, but the expert birders among us were able to catalog 18,665 individuals from 108 different species. Job well done!

Bald Eagle



Merlin



White-tailed Kite







January 24, 2026 was a busy day at the Refuge's Little Green Heron Playscape. More than a dozen scouts and leaders from Elk Grove Troop 288 moved and spread 20 cubic yards of mulch while volunteers from the community and Friends of Stone Lakes NWR weeded and assessed the needs of the garden area in the Playscape. After the mulch was spread, the



scouts got a tour and learned from Ranger Amy Hopperstad about what a critical habitat Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is for wildlife, both migrants and residents alike. Our Thanks to all of you! There are volunteer opportunities available much of the year, so if you are interested, please contact us at the addresses below.



We are excited to announce that on April 18, 2026, Friends of Stone Lakes NWR will host local biologist David Yee as a guest speaker at Del Webb Glenbrooke in Elk Grove. The talk will be from 5:45pm to 7:00pm. Mr. Yee is one of the area's foremost bird watchers and will speak about the Birds of the Delta. There will be limited seating, so please go to our website below or use this QR Code to RSVP.



## Species Spotlight: The Kestrel

Kestrels are found in a variety of habitats in all seasons at Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.



Kestrels are the smallest and most common falcon in North America. Compared to larger falcons, kestrels have a leaner and less muscular build, requiring less food and energy for flight and hunting. They primarily hunt by perching on elevated vantage points like trees, power lines or fence posts and waiting for prey to come near. They eat mostly large insects (like grasshoppers), but some small mammals, birds and reptiles.



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