

Hunter changes sports to become avid bird counter

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

Tim Fitzer is one busy bird counter.

During the Audubon Society's annual Christmas counts this year, Fitzer is doing eight all-day counts in locations ranging from the Suisun marshes to the Sierra and from Lincoln down to Stockton.

Some folks last only half a day on counts, said Ed Harper, another prominent local birder. Three is the upper limit for most.

Eight? "That's quite a few," Harper said.

A single count – especially in areas where waterfowl gather – may turn up more than 80 species and tens of thousands of birds.

But Fitzer's relationship with birds started with shooting, not counting.

Fitzer, the duck hunter, was sitting in a blind in the early 1970s when a common yellowthroat flew up beside him.

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