

**New Website.** Happy New Year! In January, the Bufferlands rolled out a revamped website coinciding with Regional San's merger with our sister agency, Sacramento Area Sewer District. The new layout will make it easier and quicker to locate information, such as our upcoming tours, past videos, Bufferlands history, current and past projects, and more. This information is available at [www.bufferlands.com](http://www.bufferlands.com)



**Tours** To start the new year, over 70 participants joined us for a virtual presentation about burrowing owls, presented by Chris Conard, one of our staff Natural Resource Specialists. The following week, we led a field tour to locate these owls and learn more about our management to provide both foraging areas and nesting sites. We were excited to see 2 owls during our walk and many other bird species.

**Grazing Program.** The Bufferlands has over 700 acres

that are leased to local cattle ranchers. The lease generates revenue, but the biggest benefit is to our burrowing owl population. These small, ground-dwelling owls forage in short grass habitats. Without the cattle grazing to keep the grass short, these areas would soon grow too tall for them to easily find their diet of insects and small animals, or to spot potential predators. The cattle turn grass into dung, which provides food for insects the owls eat—the owls even line their burrow entrances with the cattle dung. So thanks to our recent rains, the Bufferlands receives revenue—the cattle have plenty of grass to eat-- and the burrowing owls have large areas to forage. It's a win-win-win!



**New Bird!** We are always excited to add a new bird to our ever-growing list. Recently, we added species number 247—the Heermann's Gull. Besides being a first for us, it was also the first record for the county and one of fewer than ten records for the entire Central Valley. The breeding season adult is a striking bird, though we had to settle for two birds in less showy plumages. Our list of 247 bird species is a phenomenal amount of diversity for a 2000-acre area. In contrast, Yosemite National Park, which covers over 700,000 acres, has a bird list of 265 species. Only 18 more species and we'll catch them!

**Christmas Bird Count.** On January 2, 2024, a total of 17 counters, made up of Bufferlands staff and volunteers, participated in the 28th annual Rio Cosumnes Christmas Bird Count (CBC). We recorded 109 species on the Bufferlands and counted 41,292 individual birds. In past years, we've recorded as many as 120 species and as many as 811,644 individual birds. This year we added two new species, Mute Swan and Red-breasted Nuthatch, to our CBC cumulative total, now at 165 species recorded on the Bufferlands in the count's 28 years. Thanks to everyone that helped out!

