



Program: November 16 Sierra Nevada Bird Mysteries

In the course of writing the first complete guide to the life histories of Sierra Nevada birds, local author David Lukas, discovered that there are many fascinating mysteries about these birds. Modern field guides give the impression that everything is known, but in fact many birds in the Sierra Nevada have never been studied, and many aspects of their lives remain unknown. On top of these mysteries there are strange patterns of species that are new arrivals to the area, like the now widespread Common Raven and the unexpected American Pipit nesting on remote alpine peaks.

Lukas has been leading birding tours and classes in the Sierra Nevada for over 20 years. He is the author of many books, including the revised edition of *Sierra Nevada Natural History* (UC Press) and *Wild Birds of California* (Companion Press). He recently published *Sierra Nevada Birds*, which will be available for sale at the meeting. He currently lives near Yosemite National Park, where he leads birding and natural history tours.

Come out for an evening of entertaining insights into some of the mysteries, long term changes, and quirky behaviors of our local birds! The meeting, which is open to the public, will take place at 7PM, Wednesday, November 16, at the Tuolumne County Public Library on Greenley Rd. in Sonora. Refreshments will be served after the program.

Ospreys in Action

As we know, the Osprey is impressive in its fishing techniques, and although some of have probably already seen this excellent video by the BBC's Natural History Unit, those who haven't should go to this website to be thrilled: <http://www.arkive.org/osprey/pandion-haliaetus/video-00.html>



© Fritz Polking/ www.flpa-images.co.uk

Osprey approaches prey

Field Trip: November 12 Sandhill Cranes at Lodi

Every fall there's a Sandhill Crane Festival in Lodi to celebrate and enjoy the return of those majestic birds, and if you're interested in attending any of the organized events, you can view the program and register for the forthcoming festival over November 4th – 6th at www.cranefestival.com.



—Barry Boulton, photo

Sandhill Cranes Fly In at Sunset

However, in the event that you'd like to view the cranes without participating in the festival events, then join John Turner and myself as we lead a field trip to Lodi on Saturday, November 12th. Since this is a 2-hour drive from the Sonora area we'll carpool as much as possible. We'll determine the exact time closer to the event, but in the meantime, if you're interested, either email or call me, barryboulton@earthlink.net or (209) 795-8225.

All CSAS field trips are open to the public. Bring drinking water and lunch or snacks. Hiking boots or sturdy walking shoes, a sun hat and sunscreen, and insect repellent are recommended. Binoculars are a must, bird books most helpful, and spotting scopes much appreciated. Heavy rain will cancel, and if there is any doubt, call at least one hour prior to meeting time.

[Look for Christmas Bird Count](#)
[Information in our December issue!](#)

“The Big Year” and Birding the Net

As many of you may know, the Fox movie “The Big Year,” starring Owen Wilson, Jack Black and Steve Martin, was released on October 14. The film was inspired by Mark Obamscik’s best-selling chronicle of three colorful and obsessive birders as



they compete for the biggest “Big Year.” According to Audubon president David Yarnold, Audubon “served as a resource for filmmakers, contributing both expertise and Audubon branded materials for set-dressing.”

Audubon itself even makes a few appearances in the movie. Yarnold describes the film as “a positive, engaging look at birding and birders. It even presents a fairly accurate version of Audubon’s founding and history.”

You can read an exclusive (and amusing) interview with the three stars on the Audubon website. Also on the website — Birding the Net, a new social media project in which you can “discover” birds all over the Net, compete with friends, and win prizes, including a trip to the Galapagos Islands.

Adopt-A-Highway November 18

Many thanks to Pat Gogas, Tom Parrington and Tom Harrington for conducting the highway cleanup on September 16. It was a beautiful morning for a stroll. Our assigned 2-mile stretch is on Hwy 120/49 and starts at the bridge over the Tuolumne River near the Don Pedro Vista parking area, goes west for 2 miles and is on the south side of the highway. It was a very pleasant morning and our collection of recyclables was worth \$5.81, not a fortune, but every litter bit helps the CSAS scholarship program. And the highway looked a whole lot better! Our next Adopt-a-Highway pickup will be on November 18 when we will meet at Perko’s at 7:30 AM and carpool to the Don Pedro Vista parking area to start at 8:00 AM. We are usually back to Perko’s before 10:00. If the weather looks doubtful, call **Tom Harrington at 694-8564** before 7:00 AM.

Snail Mail or Email?

The Central Sierra Audubon Society’s newsletter, *The Squawker*, is available to view or to print at:

www.centralsierraaudubon.org

If you would like to receive it by email, send a request to:

Jeanneridgley1@sbcglobal.net

If you do not have internet access and would like to receive a printed copy, please send a request to **Jeanne Ridgley** at:

**19353 Pine Mountain Drive
Groveland, CA 95321**

By using the Internet we can use funds more effectively on scholarships, education and conservation, and also help save trees and habitat.

Housing Shortage Improves!

It was a lovely fall day at the Rocca Park in Jamestown, with yellow leaves falling and seeds parachuting down from the Linden tree—a perfect day for our semi-annual bird box/feeder, bat house and book sale, held in conjunction with the local California Native Plant Society plant sale on Saturday, October 15. Many thanks to our helpers-- John Turner, Janet Maffei, Bob and Joyce Schieferstein, David Harden and Pamela Blair, Jeanne Bodiford, Rick Baird and Kathy and Tom Harrington. Also, thanks to the builders of the bird supplies that we sell: Blaine Rogers, Ron Long, Billy Hamilton, Tony Lloyd, Ed Picha, Mike Steiler, Jerry Fueslein, John Turner and Tom Harrington. Our profit from the sale was \$654 which will help us meet our goal of two \$1000.00 scholarships for continuing education in the field of environmental studies.

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Field Trip Report: Oct. 16th Ironstone Winery, Murphys

A small group of eight birders led by myself and John Turner enjoyed a morning of sauntering and observing birds among the fall foliage at the Ironstone



—Barry Boulton photo

Winery in Murphys. We are kindly invited to Ironstone several times throughout the year, where on each occasion we are regaled by a different variety of species. The highlight on this occasion was the flock of 30 or so Cedar Waxwings, those superbly marked nomadic

fruit-seeking birds that remind me of that old saying “you see him here, you see him there, that damned elusive Scarlet Pimpernel.”

As a photographer I’d like some certainty about their whereabouts – tough luck! Still, watching them alight on the vines still loaded with grapes was an absolute delight. We were pleased to see a female Western Bluebird keeping a close eye on “her” box that we erected a couple of years ago. Interesting too that the entrance hole showed signs of woodpecker attention which will require some repair fairly soon.

Passing the bird box, we approached a small pond where a Great Blue Heron lazily floated into the sky, to be followed soon after by the clattering of beating Mallard wings. In turn, they were followed by several Wood Ducks. No sign, though, of the resident Belted Kingfishers that we’ve seen previously. Plenty of Brewer’s Blackbirds were in evidence, along with a Song Sparrow, and little family of White-crowned Sparrows, the juveniles still in their duller uniforms. We saw just one Red-tailed Hawk in the distance, as well as a few Acorn Woodpeckers. Meanwhile, in the live oak trees were White-breasted Nuthatches, Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Nutall’s Woodpeckers; while in the undergrowth a Hermit Thrush and Fox Sparrow were calling. As always at Ironstone, Lesser Goldfinches were gorging on the thistle feeder, but were also in evidence down by the creek. A very enjoyable birding session – look for more in the future!
— *Barry Boulton*

Tuolumne River Watershed Water Bottling Update

As previously reported in the Squawker, an existing company owned by a Scott Fahey, currently sells water from a private spring in the Tuolumne River watershed which is trucked to the Valley for bottling. His company requested that both the State Water Board and U. S. Forest Service approve his proposal to divert 40 gallons per minute (year-round) from two National Forest springs that are important sources of water for Hull Creek in the Clavey River watershed, which is part of the Tuolumne River Watershed.

The Clavey River was designated by the Forest Service as the only Critical Aquatic Refuge on the entire Stanislaus National Forest. Spring water that flows downstream is essential for a variety of amphibians and other species that depend upon moist habitat conditions, including the American Dipper, Kingfisher, and other aquatic species.

The State Water Board had approved this application without further studies, but as of the last Squawker issue, the Forest Service had yet to make its decision. In October, 2011, the Forest Service announced its decision to allow Fahey’s company to divert 20 gallons per minute from each spring. However, that decision determined that to maintain riparian vegetation and habitat, a minimum of 10 gallons per minute must be maintained at each spring. This limit doubles the minimum flow that was originally suggested by the Forest Service. This approval is still an unwarranted taking of public property for a private use that results in a new pipeline across national forest land, reduces natural water flow, and increases truck traffic taking water from the Sierra to the Valley. Most of the objections made to the Forest Service and to the Water Board by Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center, the Central Sierra Audubon Society, and others to this proposal were ignored.



The old nursery rhyme “Sing a song of Sixpence, /A pocketful of rye, /Four and twenty blackbirds, /baked in a pie” was based on the fact that many centuries ago European peasants often ate the European blackbird.

Members of royalty were said to have used blackbirds as a source of amusement at banquets and parties. According to custom, they placed live blackbirds in a pie crust and when the “pie” was cut at the banquet, the birds would fly out, creating great amusement among the guests.

—*The Folklore of Birds, Laura Martin*

Renaissance banquets also featured a wide variety of birds on the menu, among them spit-roasted songbirds, spit-roasted skylarks, quail and pigeon, partridge, stuffed geese, and poultry pie (two chickens to each pie).

November Board Meeting
Tuesday, November 29, 2 PM
Jamestown Community Hall on Main St.

SIERRA SQUAWKER

Central Sierra Audubon Society

(A Chapter of the National Audubon Society)

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Sonora, CA 95370

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November 2011

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General Meetings

3rd Wednesday (except June, July, Aug. & Dec.)
7 PM, Tuolumne County Library

Board Meetings

4th Tuesday, August through May (except Dec.)
6 PM, Jamestown Community Hall

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

To become a member of BOTH the National Audubon Society, with subscription to *Audubon* magazine, and of **Central Sierra Audubon Society**, with subscription to CSAS newsletter, *Sierra Squawker*, complete this form and mail with **check for \$20 payable to National Audubon Society** to:

Jeanne Ridgley, CSAS Membership Chairman, 19353 Pine Mountain Dr., Groveland, CA 95321

*(To become a member of only CSAS, (with subscription to the CSAS newsletter, *Sierra Squawker*, please make your **check for \$15 payable to CSAS**)*

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