



Program: A Sea of Birds Coastal & Pelagic Birds of California

The January general meeting on Wednesday the 18th will feature Guy Van Cleave as guest speaker. He will present a survey of seabirds often found on the California Coast.



Western Gull

Guy Van Cleave is retired from the Yosemite Community College District where he was a Biological Sciences Professor. His zoology courses, with their emphasis on ecology and field biology, led to his avid interest in bird watching. He has given presentations and led tours for over 25 years, including field trips to Australia and annual journeys to Baja California and the Sea of Cortez.

Please join us at 7 PM, January 18 at the Tuolumne County Library on Greenley Road in Sonora for what is sure to be an enlightening and entertaining program. The public is always welcome and refreshments will be served after the program. Products and publications on a wide range of birding topics are on display at each meeting.

For more information please contact **David Harden**, 533-1668 or email dharden@sonnet.com

Editor Needed

Central Sierra Audubon Society is looking for a volunteer editor for our newsletter, which is issued 10 months of the year. Basic computer skills are necessary, but we will train you in computer functions specific to the newsletter. The position involves setting deadlines for board members to submit articles, basic editing of articles, selection of the month's materials, layout of pages, and submission of copy to printer. Editor may also submit an article if desired. For information contact Kate Sim at 209-728-9022 or email to katesim@att.net.

Winter Eagle Counts Saturday, January 14

Join the **New Melones Mid-Winter Eagle Count**

and count the kings of the air that winter at the lake. Cynthia Watson will meet the count group at 8 AM at the Glory Hole Boat Launch. She said they are in need of birders, and if you are interested and can help with this count, Cynthia can be contacted at **536-9094, ext. 217**, or you may email her at creppond@usbr.gov for more information, directions,



Adult Bald Eagle

and to reserve your place on a boat. For the count remember to bring binoculars, lunch and/or snacks, water, and sun/wind/rain protection. Dress in multiple warm layers, and be prepared for any type of weather.

Saturday, January 21

Come and join the **Don Pedro Lake Mid-Winter Eagle Count** to help with the survey of the eagles that winter at the lake. John Turner is looking for volunteers to help with the annual mid-winter eagle count. There are three patio boats used for this count: two from Fleming Meadows Marina and one from the Moccasin Marina. The boat at Moccasin Marina will leave at 8 AM and the two boats at Fleming Meadows will depart at 9 AM. The three boats meet at lunch time at the mid-point at 1 PM and then return to their respective marinas by about 2:30 PM. For additional information and to reserve your spot, please call John at **852-2348**, or email him at josanbird@gmail.com. For the eagle count, you will need to bring binoculars, lunch and/or snacks, water, and sun/wind/rain protection. Please remember to dress in multiple warm layers, and be prepared for any type of weather and wind chill.

Field Trip

Merced National Wildlife Refuge

Sunday January 8th

For our first field trip of 2012, we'll visit the Merced National Wildlife Refuge near Los Banos, which is 90 minutes from Sonora and 2 hours from Murphys. Right



Marsh Wren

now the wetlands are well flooded with water, already sheltering perhaps 2,000 Sandhill Cranes and even more Ross's Geese. In fact, in an average winter, the refuge hosts as many as 20,000 sandhills and 60,000 geese along with a rich variety of waterbirds and shorebirds. And then there are Tri-colored Blackbirds, Marsh Wrens, Wilson's Snipe, Burrowing Owls, several duck species and others, so the avian possibilities are huge – although I can't promise any particular species! If you were unable to enjoy the Sandhill Cranes with us at Lodi in November, then you'll probably want to consider joining us for this great field trip.

After visiting this refuge we'll move on to the nearby San Luis NWR complex where we have a good chance of seeing the herd of Tule Elk. The complex also has a brand-new visitors' center which is open every day.

You can meet the group at the Merced NWR, or meet in Sonora or elsewhere to carpool. If you go independently and are unfamiliar with the refuge, you can find map and directions on Mapquest by using this address: **[100-1499] E Sandy Mush Rd, Merced, CA 95341**. The meeting time at the refuge parking lot off Sandy Mush Road is 9:30AM, while carpooling from Sonora means departing Sonora at 8 AM at latest.

If you're interested and wish to carpool either as a driver or passenger, let me know and I'll coordinate those who are interested, as much as possible. **barryboulton@earthlink.net (209)795-8225**

Squawker by Email

One hundred ten CSAS members receive their Squawker newsletter by email. This has resulted in more funds being available for scholarships, education, conservation, and also helps save trees and habitat.

To receive newsletters by email, send a request to **jeanneridgley1@sbcglobal.net**.

You can also view or print our newsletter on our website: **www.centralsierraudubon.org**. If you do not have Internet access, you can request a printed copy by notifying **Jeanne Ridgley, 19353 Pine Mountain Dr., Groveland, CA 95321**.



Conservation

Clinton Roadless Rule Upheld

According to the Union-Democrat, approximately 236,000 acres of the 900,000 acres in the Stanislaus National Forest is designated as roadless under the management plan crafted in 1991. President Clinton's ban on road building in the areas of our national forest which were still roadless has survived legal challenges. As reported in the October 25, 2011 issue of the Union Democrat, the U. S. 10th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld that ban in a challenge brought by the States of Wyoming and Idaho and others. Some members of Congress may attempt to overturn that decision by legislation. Although the decision was not by the 9th Circuit Court, which governs California, it is likely to be followed in California.

Tuolumne Ditch Designation

A team of local historians and archaeologists has found the 56 mile TUD ditch system – rich in natural and cultural history – to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. This status will finally give the system a measure of protection. With a grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, the team researched and recorded all aspects of the system – from moss-covered rock retaining walls to old riveted pipe. Also, a team of biologists is looking at the amazing biodiversity and wildlife and bird habitat that has come to be dependent (for 160 years!) on this naturalized waterway. The ditch system provides food, cover and water to numerous migratory bird species including wood ducks, mallards, yellow-breasted chats and kingfishers.

Although downstream water grabbers are quick to label it as a "leaky old system," we know this water is necessary to our community's health and well being. We are one of the few places left that can gravity-feed water, without using any electricity, to its citizens, and it is a gravity-fed 56 mile long fire hydrant! The whole ditch system – leaks and all – adds up to beneficial uses under the California Water Code. This is OUR water providing ecological services for OUR County.

Historical Society will have a Ditch Presentation Friday, January 27 at 7pm in the Sonora Library – presenters: Barbara Balen and Charla Francis.

From an article by Barbara Balen, a director of TUD

Snow Goose Festival

The 13th annual Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway will take place Jan 26-29 in Chico, CA. Over 65 fieldtrips and workshops will be available, and guest speaker will be Greg Miller, portrayed by Jack Black in "The Big Year." Contact by email: **info@snowgoosefestival.org** or on the web at **snowgoosefestival.org**.

Sonora CBC

December 17, 2011

The Christmas Bird Count was held under frightfully clear skies and mild temperatures after a frosty morning. About 30 people scoured our 15 mile diameter circle (centered on Lambert Lake and Tuolumne Rds) for all the birds they could see and hear. Owling started at 3:30 in the morning with a run down Wards Ferry Rd. and across Algerine Rd into Jamestown. Others were out at 8 or 8:30 enjoying wonderful weather.

Preliminary findings show an average number of birds and fewer species. With three areas not counted we saw 13,216 individuals of 89 species. So far we have had the lowest count of several species including Ruddy Duck, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Steller's Jay (this one may change), and Lesser Goldfinch.. Let's hope these numbers get a boost when the rest of the areas check in.

The owls rocked big time for Steven Umland, with 18 Great-Horned, 8 Western Screech, and 4 Barn Owls were the most collectively seen on any one of our Counts. Amazingly all three species were heard at a single location!

The best find of the day was Larry & Jeanne Bodiford's White-throated Sparrow in Soulsbyville. This was a first for us.

At a single location way down Ward's Ferry Road were a Merlin, Kestrel, and Prairie Falcon, all in view at the same time. Sightings of a BOBCAT and RIVER OTTERS rounded out an outstanding day.

I want to thank all of those who participated. It is you who make this work every year. I will have a final write up in the next newsletter and have the final numbers posted on the CSAS website. – *Steven Umland*

Your Audubon Board:

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Steven Umland, Sightings	352-6985
Suzanne Kilburn, Bird Box Trail	532-1938
Tom Harrington, Book Sales	694-8564
Anthea Neilson, Hospitality	533-0360
Joyce Schieferstein, Scholarships	586-1680

January Board Meeting
Wednesday, January 4, 2PM
Jamestown Community Hall on Main St

Nome, Alaska,

June 2012!!

Rich Cimino of **Yellowbilled Tours** is leading four birding field trips in June to Nome, Alaska. He will donate \$150.00 for every Central Sierra Audubon Society member who goes on one of the trips. Nome is a frontier town accessible only by boat and airplane. Bordered on the west and south by the Bering Sea, and the north and east by miles of trackless wilderness, Nome is a fascinating birding destination. During June and July the Midnight Sun is at its brightest, the tundra is in full bloom, and the birds and mammals are breeding.

The tour will cover the prime birding areas along the seacoast and the beautifully blooming alpine tundra surrounding Nome. Most of the birds are in their resplendent breeding plumages—rarely if ever seen in the “lower 48”. We'll make an extra effort to locate some of the accidental Asian species that regularly occur at Nome.

The four trips dates are: June 8-12, June 12-16, June 16-20, and June 21-25. Cost per person is \$2400.00 which includes a \$150.00 donation to CSAS. This includes lodging, ground transportation, airport transfers, and guide services. Not included are airfare and meals. The tours are limited to four participants.

Rich Cimino, a Bay Area resident and CSAS member, has led birding trips in many areas including Nome. For a detailed itinerary and availability, contact Rich Cimino at **925-353-0266**, or **yellowbilledtours@gmail.com** or visit the website **www.yellowbilledtours.com**

Adopt-A-Highway Clean Up

Our Adopt-a-Highway cleanup will be held Friday, January 27. Meet at Perko's at 7:30 AM to carpool. If weather is questionable, call Tom Harrington before 7:00 AM, **694-8564**

Thank you volunteers!



Do the Math

If you were to count up all the creatures enumerated in the carol “**Twelve Days of Christmas**”, you would have: 12 partridges (1 a day, 12 days); 22 turtle doves (2 a day, 11 days); 30 French hens (3 a day, 10 days); 36 calling birds (4 a day, 9 days); 40 golden pheasants (5 a day, 8 days) ~ the original carolers were probably singing, not of “five golden rings” as in jewelry, but of a golden variety of the Ring-necked Pheasant, a game bird associated with nobility ~ 42 geese (6 a day, 7 days) and 42 swans (7 a day for 6 days)!

Daily Muse 2011 Songbird Calendar

SIERRA SQUAWKER

Central Sierra Audubon Society

(A Chapter of the National Audubon Society)

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January 2012

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General Meetings

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

Board Meetings

1st Wednesday, August through May (except Dec.)
2 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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