

Central Sierra Audubon Society's
Sierra Squawker



Volume XXXII No. 6

February 2012

Program: February 15 Wild Birds of California

Central Sierra Audubon Society is proud to present renowned bird photographer Gary Woods as the guest speaker at our February general meeting. Gary Woods works as an agricultural advisor in integrated pest management in Fresno and Madera counties. He was an avid golfer until one day, eight years ago; he spotted a Vermilion Fly-catcher on a golf course, quit golfing on the spot and started birding instead. Carrying a camera to work to take photos of crop pests, he started taking pictures of birds. One thing



Snow Goose

led to another, and now he estimates that he spends one hundred fifty days a year chasing birds. Gary will present a selection of his favorite photos and speak about the process he uses to capture his best shots. He will also bring his camera equipment to the meeting and answer any questions pertaining to his passion. Some examples of his photography can be seen online at woodshots.com.

The meeting will take place at 7 PM Wednesday, February 15th, at the Tuolumne County Library on Greenley Road in Sonora. The public is always welcome, and refreshments will be served after the meeting. For further information, please contact David Harden at **533-1668** or dharden@sonnet.com.



Pamela Blair and Tacy Rowan's fourth grade class at Sonora Elementary enjoy a lively discussion about birds.

Field Trip: February 4 Salt Spring Valley & Reservoir

On Saturday the 4th of February we will repeat our annual birding exploration of the Salt Spring Valley and reservoir in Calaveras County. We will meet at 9am on Rock Creek Road just off highway 4 on its north-west side. Driving west on highway 4 from Angels, turn right onto Rock Creek Road and park on the right side of the road. From Tuolumne County take O'Byrnes Ferry Road (E15) from highway 108/120, meeting highway 4 just through the historic town of Copperopolis. Rock Creek Road is directly across highway 4.



We might see such species as Bald Eagle, Merlin and other raptors, Burrowing Owl (if we're really lucky) Rock Wren, Loggerhead Shrike, woodpeckers, and a host of others, so if the weather treats us well, it will be a good day. We normally take a lunch break and birding walk around the campground at the reservoir, but so far I've not been able to contact the new owners. In any event, bring lunch with you.

You can meet us there, arrange your own carpools, or call me and I'll try to find you a carpool.

By the way, rain means cancellation and if you're in doubt, call me, Barry Boulton at **795-8225**. My email is barryboulton@earthlink.net

February Board Meeting
Wednesday, February 1, 2pm
Jamestown Community Hall on Main St.

Please note, an Editor is needed to put together the Squawker, Central Sierra Audubon's Newsletter. See last month's newsletter for more details on this need. Contact Kate Sim at **209-728-9022** or email katesim@att.net

Great Backyard Bird Count

Feb. 17 through Feb. 20, 2012

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where birds are across the U.S. and Canada. As many of you have already practiced your identification skills in the Christmas counts, here's another chance to refine them still further. To participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count:

- ❖ Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count.
- ❖ You can count longer than that if you wish.
- ❖ Count on as many of the 4 days as you like.
- ❖ You may count in different locations on the same day, but note them separately.
- ❖ If you are doing a stationary count, record the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time. If you are doing a travelling counts (such as a hike) record all birds seen.
- ❖ Submit a separate checklist for each new day.
- ❖ If you count in more than one location on the same day, submit a separate check list for each location.
- ❖ Enter your checklists on the homepage, <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/howto.html>, where, beginning on the first day of the count, you will see a button marked "Enter Your Checklists!"
- ❖ You may find it helpful to print out a data form and a species checklist ahead of time.



“Genealogy became a passion among the British after the Norman conquest. A branching family tree, when written on paper, was referred to as a *pied de grue* , French for ‘foot of the crane’. From this expression came the term pedigree.”

Laura C. Martin, *The Folklore of Birds*

Your Audubon Board:

Rick Baird, President	532-4323
David Harden, 1st Vice President, Programs	533-1668
Tom Parrington, 2nd Vice President, Conservation	928-3835
Tom Harrington, Secretary	694-8564
Janet Maffei, Treasurer	532-8426
Barry Boulton, Field Trips	795-8225
Jeanne Ridgley, Membership	962-7598
Pamela Blair, Education	533-1668
Kate Sim, Newsletter	728-9022
John Turner, Past President	852-2348

Your Audubon Committees:

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

Conservation Update

Tuolumne Review Guide



As previously noted, the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors appointed a committee to review and revise the Biological Resources Review Guide which provides an alternative to developers to

avoid having to prepare a separate environmental analysis of their proposed projects. The committee is composed predominantly of representatives of the agricultural and development community with only one representative from the environmental community, namely Rebecca Cremeen who is with Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center, known as CSERC.

The majority of this committee have made recommendations that will weaken environmental protections and reduce required mitigation measures. One example is for habitat which is classified as Third Priority. Such areas include more of the common habitats such as blue oak/gray pine, Sierran mixed conifer and chaparral. The existing Guide requires that 20% of the total area be preserved as open space. The majority support only applying the 20% Open Space requirement to the actual Third Priority habitat, rather than to 20% of a parcel that contains Third Priority habitat. Shifting to only protecting 20% of the good habitat would often result in an 80% reduction from mitigation protection

Another contentious issue has been preservation of oak trees and native oak woodland. Current environmental law and regulations require measures intended to preserve certain oak trees and oak woodlands. However, discretion is left to each county to determine the extent of such mitigation measures. Protections for old growth oak are proposed to be reduced. Intrusion of such items as paving and walls into as much as 50% of the area beneath the tree would be allowed compared to only a 25% intrusion now allowed in that area measured as 125% of the area beneath the tree's outer drip line. Current restrictions against intrusion of .the area beyond the drip line would be eliminated.

Revisions recommended by the Committee will be subject to approval by the Board of Supervisors, the Department of Fish and Game and U. S. Corp of Engineers. The proposed revisions have been submitted to the Board of Supervisors which set a 45 day public review period ending Friday, March 9th. Audubon will submit its comments on those revisions which it opposes in the hope that Fish and Game may require more, not less, environmental protection, as part of the Guide. *Individual comments are important. Audubon encourages your response to the Board of Supervisors.* The Committee Revisions are available on the County's website under Community Development, Hot Topics, Biological Resources Review Guide. The document on the revisions is titled Committee Revision Draft January 2012 (even though the document showing the changes is dated Nov. 17, 2011).

Tom Parrington, Conservation

Eagle Count Results

New Melones Count, January 14

Below is a bonded pair of Bald Eagles beak to beak on their nest above the Stanislaus River adjacent to Camp Nine Road near Vallecito. In total we saw 30 Bald Eagles, of



—Peggy Sells photo

whom 16 were adult and 14 immature, along with 5 adult Golden Eagles and 2 Ospreys during a day of beautiful weather. We also observed some Great Blue Herons, Western Grebes, Double-

Crested Cormorants, Common Mergansers, Canada Geese, Red-tailed Hawks, American Coots, Belted Kingfishers and Rock Wrens.

Don Pedro Count, January 22

The count started under initially cold and cloudy skies, which later turned into a persistent rain. The group was able to conduct the survey only on the lower half of the lake before returning to the marina. The survey produced 16 Bald Eagles, of which nine were immature, four Golden Eagles and two Ospreys. John Turner thanks the participants, Barry Boulton, Steve Hannon, Tom Parrington, Peggy Sells, and Steven Umland, for sticking it out in the unpleasant weather.

Book Review

Sierra Nevada Birds

by David Lukas

To quote the author, “This book gives fully detailed accounts for the 207 bird species that are most characteristic of the Sierra Nevada. These birds are common residents or common migrants, and can be found in reasonable numbers every year. Shorter accounts are given for an additional 115 species that are very rare visitors to the Sierra Nevada, or else breed or migrate in very limited areas.”

For each species Lukas includes the life history, nesting, habitat, vocalization, migration, and various aspects of behavior. He does not include any illustrations of the birds, as this is not a field guide, but a “companion” to guides you may already have.

The author realistically notes that “...it is important to remember that birds are individuals and there are still many patterns and behaviors that have not been discovered- described. It is surprising to realize how few birds have been studied in the Sierra Nevada...”. You may contact David at david@lukasguides.com.

This small paperback (288 pages) subtitled “A Compact Field Guide Companion” was published by the author and can be obtained from him at **P.O. Box 231 Big Oak Flat, Ca. 95305** for \$25.20.

Field Trip Report

Merced Nat'l. Wildlife Refuge, January 8

A good group of CSAS birders met at the National Wildlife Refuge to take the leisurely car tour around the wetlands. In all we saw 75 species, a respectable number for little more than half a day.

Just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, we may all experience different sets of highlights. I think we were all impressed with the large flock of Ross's Geese, infiltrated by a small percentage of Snow Geese, rising into the air in that noisy and confusing yet graceful pattern that they form when spooked by a raptor. Oddly enough, we saw only a handful of Sandhill Cranes so the reputed 5,000 must have been off-site somewhere. For me, the highlights were the American Bittern pretending to be a bunch of reeds and obviously anxious about our presence, and the Common Yellowthroat that was pretending nothing - just searching for food and ignoring us.

A few of us also visited the San Luis complex and new visitors' center. There we saw the Tule Elk herd where the alpha male physically encouraged the females to move away from us. Well away from him were another couple of majestic young bucks - but not ready yet for all-or-nothing combat with the alpha. We also saw a splendid young coyote in his prime - and aware of it! It was a good day.

—Barry Boulton

Coming Events

Crane Festival, March 15-18

Nebraska's annual crane festival will take place in Kearney, Nebraska, March 15-18. Five hundred thousand cranes and millions of waterfowl migrate through the area (part of the Central Flyway) every year. Viewing of cranes and prairie grouse leks are features of a schedule filled with workshops and outings for the whole family. For more information, go to nebraskacranefestival.org, or call (402) 797-2301. Registration by Feb. 28 gives you discount prices.

Nome, Alaska

Rich Cimino's tours of Nome are coming up in June. The tours 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”. The four trips dates are: June 8-12, June 12-16, June 16-20, 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.

For a detailed itinerary and availability contact Rich Cimino at **925-353-0266**, or yellowbilledtours@gmail.com or visit the website www.yellowbilledtours.com

SIERRA SQUAWKER

Central Sierra Audubon Society

(A Chapter of the National Audubon Society)

P.O. Box 3047

Sonora, CA 95370

209-532-0570

www.centralsierraudubon.org



Presorted
Standard Mail
PAID
Permit #1
Jamestown, CA
95327

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

February 2012

Field Trip

Salt Spring Valley & Reservoir ,Page 1

Program

Bird Photographer Gary Wood, Page 1

Great Backyard Bird Count *Page 2*

Conservation *Page 2*

Inside:

Eagle Count Reports, Page 3

Field Trip Report, Page 3

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**)*

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address _____

- Newsletter preference Email me the PDF copy
 I will read or print it from your Website
 Send me a printed copy. *I do not have an Internet Connection.*

C2ZC440Z