

Central Sierra Audubon Society's  
*Sierra Squawker*



Volume XXXIV No. 5

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## PROGRAM - JANUARY 15<sup>th</sup>

### Sea Otter Research at Elkhorn Slough with Ron Eby & Robert Scoles



Photo: Pamela Blair

As part of a new project in Elkhorn Slough near Moss Landing, California, scientists hope to compile new data to support the recovery of the Southern Sea Otter, a federally threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Our speakers, Ron Eby and Robert Scoles, will talk about their experiences as "citizen scientists" looking beyond what they were taught and learned from reading with respect to otters and how their work has led to the ongoing Elkhorn Slough Otter Study. Ron and Robert have not just collected data, but have also recorded with both photos and videos some of the unique and entertaining behaviors of otters in this estuarine environment. Some of these videos were recorded with the live camera that they installed at Elkhorn Slough. You can view the camera at <http://www.elkhornslough.org/ottercam/> The best times for viewing are at high tides when the largest numbers of otters are seen.

Ron Eby graduated from the Naval Academy in 1969 and the Naval Post Graduate School in 1972. After retiring as a Commander he began volunteering with the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve. His third and ongoing career is as a "citizen scientist" collaborating with Robert in the field and with numerous scientists, education, government and non-government institutions conducting otter and other research related to Elkhorn Slough. Robert Scoles retired from law enforcement in 2005 to become a volunteer first at the Monterey Bay Aquarium,

and then the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. In 2007 Robert and Ron joined forces with Dr. Daniela Maldini and began a two-year study of the otters at the north harbor at Moss Landing. In early 2010 they began a study of marine mammals in the entrance to Parson's Slough as part of a tidal wetlands project which eventually inspired the current Otter project.

Please join us at 7 PM, **January 15<sup>th</sup>** at the Tuolumne County Library on Greenley Road in Sonoma. 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 information please contact **David Harden, 533-1668** or email [dharden@sonnet.com](mailto:dharden@sonnet.com)

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year to one and all from your Board of Directors!

It is time to salute Jeanne Ridgley, our Membership Chairperson, for all she does to keep Central Sierra Audubon running smoothly. Jeanne has been handling the membership duties for seven or eight years now, maintaining the constantly changing database and writing letters to new and lapsed members. She also works closely with our newsletter editor every month, printing labels and coordinating delivery. In addition to this, she has been monitoring bird populations in two areas near her Groveland home for many years, and leads monthly bird walks at the Groveland Community Services District property. We are very grateful for her dedication and cheerful presence at our monthly meetings. Thank you, Jeanne!

**David Harden**

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

- Feb 19** John Sterling on "Birds in Antarctica, Argentina and Panama"
- Mar 19** Guy Van Cleave on "Birds – Just Feathered Lizards, Hah!"
- Apr 16** TBD
- May 21** Jack Laws on "Nature Observation"

## 2013 TRAVELOGUE

### Southern African and Madagascar by Steven Umland. Part IV

Suzi, Jake, and I were back in Tana after a lovely stay in the north of Madagascar at Masoala NP. We had a few days to use up before Jake goes to visit his sister in Mozambique. What to do?? In researching for this trip, the word **Indri** kept popping up. The Indri is the largest of the lemurs and the calls it makes can be heard for miles. We hired a car and driver and headed East to Andasibe where we hoped to see (and hear) them.

We stayed at a lovely lodge on the edge of Alamontsetra NP. While we were walking down the road a gentleman on a bicycle passed us. When he saw my binoculars, he



**Diademed Sifaka**

turned around and asked us if we would like to use him as a guide. He saw my field guide and darned if he wasn't mentioned in it. (I started to think that EVERYONE was in the book as a contributor!). My hesitations aside, we agreed to use him and arranged to pick him up the next day. The following morning over coffee, we heard the wail of the Indri as they let everything for miles around know where they were. Since they travel in packs, this lets all the members know where each individual is (or they are discussing the weather or the latest group gossip) and it alerts other gangs in the area as to the location of each



**Blue Coua**

this park and kicked up many things we had not previously seen. At one point, I had pointed out a bird on the ground but it had disappeared. When I described it, he told the three of us to stay put and he went around the area with the hope of driving the bird toward us. His expert "driving" skills resulted in all of us seeing an out of season Scaly-breasted Ground-Roller! Maurice sure let us know how lucky we were!

At one point we were walking down a trail when an undetected troop of Indri let loose with their wailing right above us. Scared the pee out of us! It is a great sound of nature. The rest of the day was filled with similar experiences and we pulled in to the lodge late that night, beat and fulfilled.

The following day we returned to the capital for a couple of days of rest. Jake took off for Mozambique and Suzi and I prepared for the next phase of our journey to Kruger National Park in South Africa. See you then!

**Steven Umland**

### FIELD TRIPS

**Note:** All CSAS field trips are open to the public. Children are welcome. As usual, wear muted colors. Wear a hat, use sun protection, bring water and a snack plus sturdy but comfortable shoes. It is fall and the weather is variable, so consider dressing in layers. Bring binoculars, field guides and spotting scopes if you have them. Rain may cancel the trip – see trip details.

## CSAS UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

### **January 1st & February 5th, GCS D**

The first Wednesday of the month Bird Walk at the Groveland Community Services property at 18966 Ferretti Road, Groveland is led by Jeanne Ridgley. The property encompasses an area of more than 200 acres of oak, pine and willow habitat with three water storage ponds. 136 species of birds have been seen there since Nov. 2007.

22 Species were seen on the Dec 4 Bird Walk. The highlight was a lone Snow Goose which flew in with 12 Canada Geese.

Dates for upcoming trips are Jan 1 and Feb 5. Meet the group in the GCS D parking lot at 8:00 AM. Bring binoculars and a birding field guide if you have one. Rain will cancel the trip. The walk will last about two-three hours.

If you have any questions, call **Jeanne at 962-7598**.

### **Jan. 12. Woodbridge Ecological Reserve, Sandhill Crane Tour**

This is a docent led tour from 3:30 to 5:30 ending at the North Unit blind to observe the **Sandhill Cranes** returning to roost. **CSAS has a total of 14 spaces available**, so first-come, first-served! There will be a carpool from Perko's in Sonora at around 1.30pm, and possibly another in Calaveras County – more details after you're registered. Contact:

**Ken Smith:** (949)922-1455 or [kensingz\\_2@yahoo.com](mailto:kensingz_2@yahoo.com)

### **Jan. 25. Indigeny Reserve, Sonora**

Dan Webster will lead a field trip on Saturday January 25<sup>th</sup> to the Indigeny Reserve, an organic apple ranch, located at 14679 Summers Lane, Sonora. We will meet in the Indigeny tasting room parking lot at 9am and enjoy a leisurely walk around the grounds. For those interested, we will continue on to Phoenix Lake, so bring a light lunch and, of course, water too. Also, bring binoculars and spotting scope if you have one. If you have questions, call **Dan Webster** at 533-1559.

### **Mar. 26 - 28. Pinnacles National Park**

I will lead daily birding excursions during this mid-week field to Pinnacles NP. Accommodations are either further north on Highway 25 in Hollister, or camping at the park's Pinnacles Campground just inside the east entrance off Highway 25. For camping information, visit the website [www.nps.gov/pinn/planyourvisit/camp.htm](http://www.nps.gov/pinn/planyourvisit/camp.htm). Reservations can be made up to six months in advance, and get booked very quickly, so I advise booking ASAP. For more information on the trip call me at (209)852-2348.

**John Turner**

### **March 8, Tuolumne River near La Grange**

Join retired Columbia College biologist, **Guy Van Cleave**, for another "backyard birding" installment. We will visit the area along the Tuolumne River just downstream from La Grange (Basso Bridge Fishing Access). Other nearby sites will also be explored if time permits and participants are willing. The area in question teems with feathered vertebrates; 40+ species are not uncommon, some notables being **Phainopeplas** and Fox Sparrows.

Plan on arriving at the parking lot between 8:30 and 9 am; the fishing access is easy to find. Take J59 (La Grange Road) south toward La Grange. When you get to the stop sign turn right on Hwy 132 (Yosemite Blvd.), travel a mile or two and turn left on Lake Road. You will almost immediately see the lot on your right. (If you cross the river after the stop sign, you missed Lake Road). Bring the usual stuff: binos, hat, field guide, water, snack/lunch and weather appropriate clothing. We will do some walking on uneven terrain.



**Phainopepla - Barry Boulton**

## STANISLAUS AUDUBON JAN FIELD TRIPS

### **Jan 25, Merced National Wildlife Refuge**

Trip leader TBA. Contact Dave Froba, 521-7265, [froba@comcast.net](mailto:froba@comcast.net)

In the winter this magnificent refuge attracts waterfowl, shore birds, and others, in the millions. We chose a mid/late afternoon meeting to enjoy the sunset fly-in of thousands of Sandhill Cranes.

#### **Editor's notes on the Merced NWR trip:**

Contact Dave to establish meeting time at the NWR.

## **EDUCATION REPORT**

November was another busy month with presentations at Belleview on Bees, Twain Harte on Birds of Prey, and a presentation on Bald Eagles at Chinese Camp. In December, programs are scheduled at Copperopolis on water issues, and at Mark Twain Elementary school on bees.

**Pamela Blair**

## ROADSIDE CLEAN-UP

Our esteemed long-time activist, Tom Harrington, has for several years organized bi-monthly working groups to clean up of a stretch of highway 49/120 west of the Lake Don Pedro viewpoint. Here you see our hero along with fellow Board Member Walt Kruse, posing under the signpost that proudly shows that CSAS was named Volunteer of the Year - a tribute to Tom's commitment.



**Photo: Barry Boulton**

PS: Just in case you're not familiar with our heroes, Tom is on the left!

## Test your Bird ID Skills

This elegant pair of waterbirds is the only endemic of its family in North America. I expect to see it during the upcoming Calaveras Christmas Bird Count. What is it?

**Barry Boulton**



**Photo: Barry Boulton**

## Book Review

**Western Birds Backyard Guide** By Bill Thompson III, Cool Springs Press \$17.99 MSRP.

Excellent little guide to “creating a bird sanctuary in your own backyard” as the author puts it. For each species, a 2-page spread tells you how to identify it; where to find it; how you can feed it or attract it, and how it nests, along with a typical photo. In the front of the book is much information about how to set up a bird-friendly garden, plus information on suitable shrubs and flowers. All-in-all, a very useful guide for gardeners wishing to attract birds.

**Barry Boulton**

## Central Sierra Audubon Society - CSAS

Chapter of the National Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 3047  
Sonora, CA 95370

[www.centralsierraaudubon.org](http://www.centralsierraaudubon.org)

### LOGISTICS

**General Meetings:** Third Wednesday at 7pm (except July and August). Tuolumne Public Library.

**Board Meetings:** First Wednesday at 6pm (Sept. through May) Jamestown Community Hall.

### Membership of Audubon & CSAS

If you are not already a member, we would be honored to have you join us. You can join either as a full member of the National Audubon Society which includes dues for CSAS membership but, alternately, you may join as a local member of CSAS in which case you will receive the monthly Squawker newsletter and be privy to all other CSAS activities.

An application form is on the front page of the CSAS website at: [www.centralsierraaudubon.org](http://www.centralsierraaudubon.org)

### YOUR AUDUBON BOARD

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| David Harden, President                | 533-1668      |
| Tom Parrington, VP Conservation        | 928-3835      |
| Walt Kruse, VP Programs                | 588-8067      |
| Tom Harrington, Secretary              | 694-8564      |
| Rick Baird, Treasurer & Past President | 532-1106      |
| Ken Smith, Field Trips                 | (949)922-1455 |
| Jeanne Ridgley, Membership             | 962-7598      |
| Pamela Blair, Education                | 533-1668      |
| Jan Jorn-Baird, Publicity              | 532-1106      |
| Barry Boulton, Newsletter              | 596-0612      |

[rbarryboulton@gmail.com](mailto:rbarryboulton@gmail.com)

### YOUR AUDUBON COMMITTEES

|                                      |          |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Suzanne Kilburn, Bird Box Trail      | 532-1938 |
| Tom Harrington, Book Sales           | 694-8564 |
| Anthea Neilson, Hospitality          | 533-0360 |
| Pamela Blair, Scholarship            | 533-1668 |
| John Turner, Website                 | 852-2348 |
| Steven Umland, Sightings, Sonora CBC | 352-6985 |
| Barry Boulton, Calaveras CBC         | 596-0612 |