

Sierra Squawker



PUBLIC PROGRAM - APRIL 16th

Just Feathered Reptiles - hah!

Presented by Guy Van Cleave

We all know about wing bars, bill shapes and gorgets but what other characteristics define a bird? This slide illustrated presentation will explore some of the structural and functional adaptations found in the world's second largest class of vertebrates. Why is it that geese can migrate across the Himalayas where you and I would have trouble maintaining consciousness? Why are those islands white, or closer to home, what is that white stuff on my windshield? Why do birds knees bend backwards (actually they don't)? Learn answers to these and other questions presented in an informal and understandable style. You will certainly come away with a new appreciation of the subjects of our favorite pastime.

Guy Van Cleave is a retired biology instructor from Columbia College. He taught anatomy, physiology, microbiology, and general biology but his main teaching emphasis was majors-level zoology. All of his biology courses contained a strong ecological and field component. In fact he is still teaching field biology courses for Columbia College and at Glendale Community College's field station in Baja. Outdoors there is no more conspicuous animal group than birds; that coupled with a fascination with flight has sparked a 35 year love affair with all things feathered. Guy has led natural history tours to Australia and given numerous presentations at colleges in the area. His binoculars are well-traveled including Panama, Ecuador, and most recently South Africa but he has found nothing that beats the magical experience of a Central Valley wildlife refuge in the winter.



Join us at 7 PM, April 16th at the Tuolumne County Library on Greenley Road in Sonora. 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.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I would like to take this opportunity to thank **Rick Baird** for his many years of volunteer service for Audubon. Not only has he been a stalwart member of the board here at CSAS, holding at one time or another almost every position, but his time with Audubon extends back to 1980 when he first became involved with the San Mateo Chapter. He has also served on the board of the Audubon Canyon Ranch in Marin County. Locally he has been with CSAS for at least seven or eight years, with his most recent position that of Treasurer. He has recently resigned from those duties and we are sorry to see him go. His service to the community continues however, as he is currently the President of the Tuolumne County Historical Society. We are grateful indeed for his many contributions over the years and wish him all the best. When next you see him, please extend warm greetings and congratulate him on a job well done. Thanks, Rick.

David Harden

2013 TRAVELOGUE

Southern African and Madagascar by Steven Umland. Part VII

Kruger National Park—Let's Talk Birds

Last month, I shared the various kinds of mammals we were lucky enough to see. This month, the birds we saw in the Park will be the focus of my missive. At Pretoriuskop Camp I mentioned the numerous Scarlet-chested Sunbirds. In case you do not know about Sunbirds, listen up. We are all familiar with the New World's hummingbirds which is an incredible group of birds that evolution has shaped into nectar-feeding, plant-pollinating gems. They are endowed with real hovering ability--they get uplift on both the forward and backward stroke of the wing. Sunbirds are **not closely related**, but fill the same niche in the Old World that the Hummers fill here. Though incapable of hovering, they are nectar-feeding small birds. Many have the same iridescence patterns of Hummingbirds - metallic swatches on the throat and or head.

We left Lataba Rest Camp one July morning last year and rolled into a flock (herd) of the largest extant bird. The area around Letaba is more grassy with fewer trees. We came around a corner and off to the left were eight Ostrich! We stayed and watched them feed for about 20 minutes. They stayed



in the group and did not seem to be aware of us oohing and aahing (from the comfort and safety of our car). FYI the Ostrich is the only bird that has two toes.



Kori Bustard

Asking in the glory of that group we left them and quickly got into a group of 5 Kori Bustard. Though not as large, these flightless birds are still impressive.

Again, we had to press on but were halted only minutes later by a goofy looking, tall, lanky bird with several long quills sticking out of the top of its head. We watched our first Secretarybird as it hunted in the long grasses



Secretary Bird

50' off the road.

As the days rolled by we were amazed at the variety of very large birds we happened upon: Woolly-necked, Yellow-billed, and three other kinds of Stork. At one time we happened upon a feeding frenzy of various Vulture (just as in the documentaries!). The wealth of large raptors is extraordinary.

Though not large, the two kinds of Oxpecker (Red- and Yellow-billed) were a source of endless fascination. Their job is to feed on the ectoparasites of the larger mammals. They roam the hides of these great animals and pick off the ticks they see. They each provide a service to the other.

Birding was fabulous in conjunction with all else the African continent has to offer. I left with a great list of animals seen and a continued awe of the land.

Next month I will end this series by saying a couple of things about Mozambique.



Yellow-billed Oxpeckers

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

May 21 Jack Laws - "Nature Observation"

June 18 Annual meeting, elections and potluck
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UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

April 2nd & May 7th, GCSD

Jeanne Ridgley will, as usual, lead the Bird Walk at the Groveland Community Services property. 137 species of birds have been seen there since November of 2007, and 30 species were seen on the March 21 bird walk, including a Black-necked Stilt - first time at GCSD! Meet the group in the GCSD parking lot at 8:00 AM. Rain will cancel the trip. The walk will last about two-three hours. If you have any quvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvestions, call **Jeanne at 962-7598**.
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April 6th, New Hogan Reservoir

Steve Stocking and Ailene Garrido will lead a field trip to New Hogan Reservoir and the surrounding area. This will be a combined birding and native plant field trip. Again, a great opportunity to examine some relationships between birds and plants. We hope to see tricolored blackbirds if there's enough rain to activate the vernal pools. We will meet at 8.30am at Hogan Dam Overlook which is adjacent to the offices, has a restroom and a good view of the lake.

Take Silver Rapids Road off of Hwy 26 south of Valley Springs; this takes you up the river to the dam. (The other way is to take Hogan Dam Road off of Hwy 26 which starts nearer Valley Springs.).

A secondary meeting place at the IOOF Hall in Milton (9:30) and then on to Copperopolis and the vernal pools if they are functioning. Bring a snack, lunch and drink.

Steve can be reached at snlsox@earthlink.net
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April 12th, Nighttime Owling

There is a mystique surrounding owls that has intrigued and enthralled humans for time immemorial, and now's your chance to take a closer look or, more likely, sound with our own resident expert. Steven Umland will lead this nighttime trip and we shall meet him at Perko's in Sonora at 8.30pm. Bring warm clothes and perhaps your best hearing aid???

Steven Umland 352-6985
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CSAS FIELD TRIP REPORTS & SIGHTINGS

Basso Bridge, March 8th

An amazing day indeed - when I tell my biology colleagues that I can go out locally and see 66 species in a given area they are usually incredulous. We had over 20 people with members of my Columbia College Biology 158 class and the

president of the Stanislaus Audubon Society so I suspect that few birds were able to evade all the vigilant and experienced eyes.



Remarkably, we saw five species of woodpeckers, a pair of Hooded Mergansers on the river and a very rare for the area Sage Thrasher at Turlock Lake Inlet. A few of us went to the campground at Turlock Lake and were rewarded with Fox Sparrows and Spotted Towhees in abundance. Around 4:30 pm, after all had left I went back to the inlet and sat at the tables in the shade near the entrance. A flock of over 55 Long-billed Curlews, "curlewing" away as they approached, circled twice and then landed nearby. I relate this because the curlews were one of the reasons we went to the inlet and I wanted my class to see them but sadly, I was the only one. The inlet seemed depauperate but when I checked our list, the area had generated a fair number of our species for the day.

Guy Van Cleave
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Watertown Pond, Calaveras County. March 15th

On a beautiful Saturday in the middle of March, Ailene and I welcomed 15 eager birders to western Calaveras County. We met behind Starbucks at the famous Valley Springs sewage pond. Famous because of the Barrow's Goldeneye seen here last winter, but only the Common Goldeneye was present on Saturday. We also observed Hooded Merganser, Bufflehead, Ring-necked and Ruddy ducks on the water.

Then north from Valley Springs to Watertown Pond where we saw other species including the Phainopeplas and a Lewis Woodpecker. On to the nearby Coast to Crest Trail staging area where we had a great view of a pair of Bald Eagles above their new nest. They posed for photos. Thanks to Ailene for spotting them on a scouting trip. On from here to Pardee Dam where we had close-up views of Bush Monkey



Photo: Barbara Wells

Flower, Virgin's Bower and Bush Lupine in full bloom. There were also Cliff Swallows, Double-crested Cormorants and Ring-billed Gulls on the reservoir. The White Pelicans stayed downstream at Comanche Lake.

From Pardee we reversed direction and headed for the Calaveras River below Hogan Dam for a short walk there by the river. There we observed wildflowers and birds on the "River of Skulls" Nature Trail. We missed the Wood Ducks but did see both Bewick's and House Wren. Across the river on the hillside above the River there was a glorious display of the Foothill Poppy. Finally, as it was close to noon we went to the observation area above New Hogan Dam where we had our lunch. In the trees at the picnic area we were joined by Oak Titmice, Bushtits and a Red-breasted Sapsucker. All had a fine "spring" day in sunny Calaveras.

Steve Stocking

Adopt-a-Highway Clean-up

The next Adopt-a-Highway cleanup on Hwy 120/49 will be on Friday, April 18, just before Earth Day and the "Great American Cleanup". We will meet at Perko's at 7:30am to carpool to the Lake Don Pedro vista parking area to start the cleanup at 8am. We should be back at Perko's before 10am. Come and enjoy the comraderie and wild flowers on this easy stroll.

Tom Harrington 694-8564

Spring Bird House Sale, April 26

Our annual Bird House sale will be in San Andreas this year, with CNPS as usual. It will be held at the Calaveras County Water District building which is at 120 Toma Ct. We hope to attract some new customers and potential new members who will need to learn about CSAS. The sale hours are 10am to 1pm and we will begin setting up at 9am. **If you can help with the sale, that would be great.** This new venue for us does not have established landscaping (no trees) so good sun protection will be especially important. If you can make any bird or bat houses, call Tom for plans and wood.

Central Sierra Audubon Society - CSAS

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

www.centralsierraaudubon.org

General Meetings: Third Wednesday at 7pm (except July and August), in the Tuolumne Public Library on Greenley Road, Sonora.

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

Membership of National Audubon & CSAS

If you are not already a member, we would be honored to have you join us. You can join as a full member of National Audubon Society which includes dues for CSAS membership or, 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

To get there, take Hwy 49 to San Andreas, turn left onto Pool Station Rd. and after about 2 miles, turn left onto George Reed Rd. Toma Ct. will be on your left.

Call Tom Harrington at 694-8564 so that car pooling might be arranged (or email applehill@sonnet.com)

Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, June 20 - 22, 2014

Every June, several CSAS members participate in the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua based at Lee Vining. For those not familiar with it, it's a series of birding field trips and seminars led by top birders in the most spectacular locations on the Sierra east side. Just two weeks ago I visited and saw (and heard!) a flock of Pinyon Jays among the Jeffrey Pines just beyond the south tufa area. If you want to see these jays and a host of others, this is the best place to be in June, so come and be a part of the CSAS contingent! You can view the program and presenters at: <http://www.birdchautauqua.org/>

Registration starts at 6.30am on April 15th (yes, April 15!) and you need to be on-line at 6.30am to get your top pick.

Barry Boulton

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!!!

CSAS will be leading bird walks from the Summit Ranger District office at Pinecrest on Sunday mornings in July and August from 8 - 10am. Open dates are July 13 & 20 and August 3 & 10 - but we need you!

Contact: Pamela Blair 533-1668

MYSTERY BIRD

Last month's mystery bird was a delightful Red-breasted Sapsucker - but there's no space for one this month.

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rbarryboulton@gmail.com

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