

Sierra Squawker



PUBLIC PROGRAM - NOVEMBER 19

2014 Africa Tour, Part I

Presented by Steven Umland, CSAS Sonora CBC Coordinator

My wife and I were lucky enough to travel to Madagascar in the (their) winter of 2013. Madagascar is a land of many contrasts. Most of the interior has been logged and now is mostly barren while there is a ring of jungle that encircles the island on the coast. Though Madagascar cannot boast a huge number of species of animals, a large percentage of them are found nowhere else on Earth. We visited several national parks and saw a lot of beautiful country and remarkable wildlife. The focus of this talk will be on the birds and mammals of these parks along with some background on the country

After gaining an appreciation for the outdoors from my father, I pursued a degree in Wildlife Biology from Humboldt State University in Arcata, California. After graduating, I spent several years working around the country doing wildlife work for various government entities. My work took me from the bayous of Mississippi to the Cascade Mountains of southern Oregon. In the mid 1980's I got a job teaching 7th and 8th grades at Jamestown school and wrapped this experience into Math and Science lessons. We continued to travel and visited many places around the world including Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, Ecuador (including the Galapagos), Cambodia, Kenya, and a great deal of Europe. While visiting these places, we frequently toured the National Parks and Reserves, observing and enjoying the fantastic variety that Nature presents to us.



Helmet Vanga

Join us at **7 PM, November 19th** in the Tuolumne County Library on Greenley Road in Sonora to enjoy Steven's dynamic presentation. The public is always welcome at our monthly programs and refreshments are served after the program. Products and publications on a wide range of birding topics are on display and on sale at each meeting. For further information, please call **David Harden** at (209)533-1668 or email dharden@sonnet.com.

Upcoming 2014 - 2015 Public Programs

December 20: Sonora Christmas Bird Count & Potluck
January 3: Calaveras Christmas Bird Count & Potluck
January 21: Tri-colored Blackbird Project
February 18: Tom Hahn, Red Crossbills

March 18: Karen Amstutz, Nepal
April 15: John Harris, Sierra Mammals
May 20: Steven Umland, Africa Tour, Part II

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

The Christmas Bird Count has been on-going across America for over 100 years, and commenced in Tuolumne County in 1985 and then in Calaveras County. As you know if you've had time to peruse National Audubon's magazine or website, the CBC has been a crucial data source that provides the history required to understand and even predict trends in bird species populations, movements and behaviors.

So, we heartily invite you to join us in the Calaveras and Sonora CBCs as shown in the details below. We'll spend an enjoyable day in this outstanding place where we live, and then end the day with a sociable potluck and review of the day's events and surprises. You don't need to be a birding expert because we'll team you up with our local gurus who will impart fascinating information as you go, and some will astound you with their identification only by bird songs and calls.

30th Sonora CBC - Saturday, December 20th

Yes, this will be the 30th time we have taken to the field in an effort to census the winter birds of Tuolumne Co. for the Sonora Christmas Bird Count. We have come a long way since those cold December nights when we compiled the day's tally in my living room. There has been whole spectrum of weather from balmy short sleeve weather to people barely making it out of the waist deep snow on the flanks of Mt. Provo (it actually was snowing at the Stent-Jacksonville Rd. bridge over Don Pedro). In 1987 we had the highest number of individuals, 35,866 (just under half were Robins!). The least found was in 1989 at just 5104. The high and low species counts were an incredible 129 in 1991 and a mere 86 in 1996.

I want to thank all of you that have volunteered in any capacity over the decades to make this a successful Count.

Sonora CBC is a 15 mile diameter circle centered at the intersection of Tuolumne and Lambert Lake Rds. The circle is broken up into 20 areas. In a perfect world each area has a team of people counting every bird seen or heard. Each area has a leader who is experienced in bird identification. Most teams spend the entire day out in the field (some of us spend a few of the dark hours looking for owls). Some teams do a lot of walking while others find it more convenient to do more driving. At the end of the day, we gather at the Tuolumne Co. Ambulance center and compile the day's work while enjoying a great potluck meal.

I am imploring all of you to again participate on December 20th. As always, experience in bird identification is not necessary. We need as many pairs of eyes and ears as we can get to help point out birds that are missed by area leaders. Come out and enjoy a fairly laid back day and help census our area's birds.

If you are disabled, or cannot spare the time, consider being a **FEEDER WATCHER**. Enjoy your day in the comfort and safety of your home and still participate in a vital way. All you do is keep tabs on the birds coming to your feeders in the yard. How cool is that!

Please get in touch with me and sign up. The earlier you let me know, the easier it is for me to plan. Thank you!

Steven Umland

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Calaveras CBC - Saturday, January 3rd, 2015

In Calaveras County we will greet the New Year and walk off some of that Christmas pudding by going out on Saturday the 3rd of January. We will start the day at around 8am and end with a potluck at 4pm somewhere in Murphys at a location I still have to select (suggestions welcomed!).

As Steven has so eloquently described for the Sonora CBC, it helps greatly to plan ahead if you will let me know that you will be on the team. Similarly, if you wish to be a Feeder Watcher, let me know that too. Thanks!

Barry Boulton

(209)596-0612

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RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS

October 5

A pair of **Townsend's Warblers**, several **Warbling Vireos**, one **Black-throated Gray Warbler** and six **Yellow-rumped Warblers** all came through during this week and appeared to be migrants rather than residents even though I do sometimes have them as residents.

John Sutake, 4,000 ft., Arnold

October 19

This morning I birded at the Groveland Community Services District property on Ferretti Rd in Groveland. I saw 27 species. Highlights included **FOS Hermit Thrush & Dark-eyed Junco**, **9 Eared Grebes**, **Cedar Waxwings** and an **American Wigeon**. The complete checklist can be seen at <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S20277002>

Jeanne Ridgley, Groveland

October 19

First-of-Season (FOS) **Spotted Towhee** at our residence in Chinese Camp. We also have two trees next to our deck peppered with seemingly hundreds of drill holes from which a **Red-breasted Sapsucker** feeds several times per day and has become fairly tolerant of my sitting on my deck about 15' away. I haven't decided whether it is **ruber** or **dagetti**.

Ken Smith, 1180 ft., Bullpine/Savannah, Chinese Camp

October 22

Had several (around 4) **Varied Thrushes** calling near my house today. Such a sweet sound.

Steven Umland, Tuolumne Co.

October General

Bushtits came through our garden in early October, to be followed by a flock of 100 or so **House Finches**, and now I hear several **Phainopeplas** enjoying our mistletoe as I take my morning neighborhood walk. Then there's the **Sharp-shinned Hawk** that sits quietly in a tree ready to swoop down and take a hummer from one of our many feeders.

John Turner, La Grange

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

November 5th & December 3 GCSB Walks

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. 139 species of birds have been seen there since November of 2007. Migrating and winter birds returning continue. Recently **Eared Grebe, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Mountain Chickadee, Rock Wren, Lincoln's Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, and Golden-crowned Sparrow** have been seen.

Meet the group in the GCSB 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 two-three hours. If you have any questions, call **Jeanne at 962-7598**.

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November 8th & 22nd Merced NWR & San Luis NWR

The ducks, geese and cranes have returned to Merced NWR even though the water is still fairly low but with more releases now commencing for the wintering birds. At nearby San Luis NWR there will be plenty of bird species along with magnificent Tule Elk and a relatively new visitors center. I will lead two trips to Merced on these dates in November, each with different purposes as follows.

November 8 - Merced NWR Sandhill Crane trip

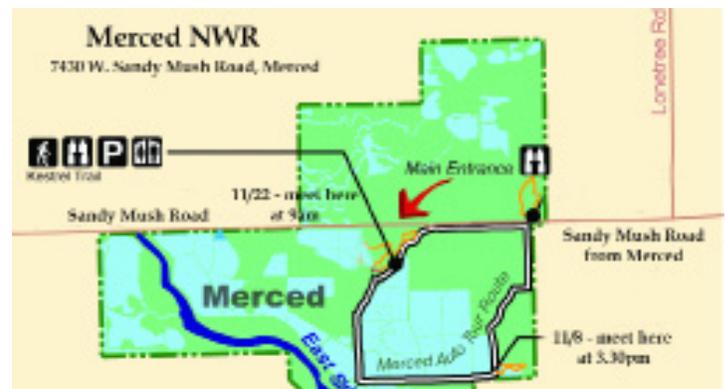
This trip is specifically to view the Sandhill Cranes returning at dusk (official sunset at 4.46pm), so we will meet at 3.30pm in the Merced NWR at the location shown on the map. At the same location I recently observed Marsh Wrens, Common Yellowthroat, Black-necked Stilts, White-faced Ibis plus various ducks and Coots.

November 22 - Merced NWR & San Luis Complex

This will be morning to early afternoon trip starting at Merced NWR, going on to San Luis where we'll have lunch – which we must bring! If we're lucky, we'll see Ross' and Snow Geese and Sandhill Cranes before the latter take off for the day, and we will certainly see some White-faced Ibis. As usual, the earlier the better, but since Merced NWR is 90 minutes from Sonora, we'll meet just inside the NWR at the first overlook and toilets at 9am (see map). Merced NWR is located at 7430 W. Sandy Mush Road, Merced. That's around 15 minutes south of Merced town center. If you're late, don't sweat because we'll be there until at least 11am, but what we'll probably do initially is drive (driving only in this refuge) to the far side because the Sandhill Cranes roost over that side and some stay to graze in the grasslands. Then we'll probably return to do the loop again looking for ducks and the Ibis. So, if you're late, drive round and join us. Then we'll go on to the San Luis complex. By the way, cellphone coverage at the NWR is spotty so if you call, I may not answer.....

Barry Boulton

(209)596-0612 or rbarryboulton@gmail.com



Stanislaus Audubon Upcoming Field Trips

Note: Stanislaus Audubon is based in Modesto and so you'd need to call the trip leader to select a different meeting place than Modesto library.

November 15. Consumnes River Preserve, Galt

This exquisite area lies on the lower reaches of the only river in the Central Valley that flows free and undammed out of the Sierra. This all creates many preserved natural habitats, all of which we will visit. Also, some areas are being managed back to their natural condition, and we'll visit them too. A birder's paradise. And, In the late autumn it will be packed with wintering migrants. Also, the trails are numerous and made with birders in mind. Meet at the Stanislaus County Library parking lot at 1500 I St. (parking lot is behind library) at 7:00 a.m.

Leader John Harris (209-848-1518, johnh@mills.edu)

November 30 - San Joaquin River NWR

This NWR is huge and offers the most diverse habitats in the area, including mixed species transitional savannas, riparian forest, oak woodlands, grassland, and seasonal wetlands. Meet at the Stanislaus County Library parking lot (1500 I Street, Modesto) at 7:15 a.m. We will return to Modesto mid afternoon.

Trip leader, Ralph Baker
sharks_hockey_maniac@yahoo.com

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FIELD TRIP REPORTS

October 18th - Birding Dragoon Gulch

Our first CSAS field trip to Sonora's Dragoon Gulch was well worth the effort. 13 birders, some new to birding, others with greater experience, hiked and birded the North, Ridge, and part of the Vista trails. The weather was perfect. The habitat varied from residential to dense brush including manzanita, oaks and conifers, with city views revealing just how mountainous Sonora is. We observed 31 species, including, in order of sightings: Red Shouldered Hawk, Scrub Jay (too numerous to count!), Acorn Woodpecker, Mourning Dove, Spotted Towhee, European Starling, Northern Flicker, Robin, Hermit Thrush, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Brewer's Blackbird, Black Phoebe, Dark-eyed Junco, Bushtit 15+, Band-tailed Pigeon, Rock Dove, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Oak Titmouse, Lesser Goldfinch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Wrentit (new species for me), Fox Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Turkey Vulture, Cedar Waxwing, California Towhee, California Quail, House Finch, Bewick's Wren. All agreed Dragoon Gulch is a beautiful "Birding Locally" site in Sonora's backyard. Ken Smith, Trip leader.

Ken Smith, Trip leader.

FALL BIRD BOX SALE - RESULTS

The sale on October was a lot of fun on a nice day and a great success too, netting over \$850, a big step in funding our scholarship and education program. Many thanks to all who helped, especially John Turner, master barn owl box builder. Anyone who would like to help restock our inventory by building a bird house or three, please contact Tom Harrington, 694-8564 or John Turner, 852-2348.

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HIGHWAY CLEAN-UP

The next Adopt-a-Highway cleanup will be on November 20th; meet at Perko's at 7:30am to carpool to the Lake Don Pedro vista parking lot. We will return to Perko's by 10am.

Tom Harrington

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SOME USEFUL LOGISTICS

To keep you current on your National Audubon Society membership which includes membership in the Central Sierra Audubon Society, you can check the membership expiration date on your Audubon Magazine label, call Membership Services 800 274-4201 or visit www.audubon.org and check Member Center.

You can donate your used printer cartridges to CSAS. We get \$2 apiece from Staples for them to help defray printing costs for our newsletter, The Squawker. Bring them to the general meeting.

Jeanne Ridgley, Membership Chair

Central Sierra Audubon Society - CSAS

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

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

Board Meetings: Third Wednesday at 3pm (Sept. - May) at the Blood Bank Conference Room behind Rite Aid on Greenley Road, Sonora.

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

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