

Central Sierra Audubon Society

Sierra Squawker



www.centralsierraudubon.org

December - 2014

SEASONAL EVENTS - CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

December 20: Sonora Bird Count

January 3rd: Calaveras Bird Count

Don't forget to sign up for the CBCs!! We are in desperate need of volunteers to go out and help spot birds. This event will take place from 12 midnight to 12 midnight on the 20th for the Sonora count, and 8am - 4pm in Calaveras. If you cannot get out in the field, please sign up to be a feeder watcher. You can assist from the comfort and safety of your home! Such a deal! Join in on one of the largest citizen science events in the world. There are over 2,200 counts worldwide within a 3 week period.

After the Sonora count we meet at the Tuolumne Co. ambulance center on Stryker Ct. to compile the days birds and enjoy a potluck dinner. Please contact **Steven Umland** at **209.352.6985** or at **stevenum71@gmail.com** .

To join in the Calaveras count, contact **Barry Boulton** at **(209)596-0612** or **rbarryboulton@gmail.com**.

Birds you may enjoy seeing during the counts



Clockwise from top left:

- * Steller's Jay
- * American Kestrel
- * Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- * Hermit Thrush
- * Lark Sparrow

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: Steven Umland, Africa Tour, Part II

March 18: Karen Amstutz, Nepal

April 15: John Harris, Sierra Mammals

May 20: Tom Hahn, Red Crossbills

June 17: Annual meeting & potluck

CONDOR IN THE GRAND CANYON



Last August Evelyn and I visited the Grand Canyon National Park, South Rim at Mather Point. I was thrilled to be able to take pictures of a California Condor in the wild. N7 is a year old female raised at San Diego Wild Animal Park and released in the Grand Canyon on June 2, 2014 along with a male N8. We were able to see her perched on a rock about 40 feet away. She seemed fascinated by the crowds of people. She flew around the area for 20 minutes or so before returning to the same rocky ledge. In my spotting scope, she looked like a portrait.

The last time I saw a Condor in the wild was in the late 1940's or early 50's. They were uncommon, but flew over my grandmothers ranchette in Garden Grove, Orange County when the land was largely orange groves and row crops, not houses.. We would see them 2-3 times a year. They were always adults with a magnificent wingspan and the white linings under the wings. Turkey vultures were often nearby and seemed puny in comparison.

Ken Smith, Field Trip Chair

RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS

Oct 30

I know this is old hat to most of you, but we live at 2,200 ft and yesterday were delighted find a **Steller's Jay** visiting our front and back yard and meadow here in Sonora. Our **Scrub Jays** and **Sparrows** didn't know quite what to make of him, but in 27 years of living here we've never seen one!

Jenny Souza & Ron Ferrell

Oct 30

Stellar Jays have shown up on Mormon Creek and the nut-hatches don't know what to make of them robbing their sunflower seeds! Don't recall seeing Steller's Jays in the 25 years I've been here. Scrub Jays -yes.

Barbara Balen

Mormon Cr. Tuolumne County, elevation 1,800 ft.

Oct 30

The **Steller's Jays** have been in Murphys for the past couple of weeks. I've seen them here before, but not in such numbers. Perhaps we will have major snow up-country?

A few days ago, we had a slew of **Robins**....along with a few others of similar size...that I didn't get a good look at.....bathing and drinking in our small pond...but they were totally aggressive with the smaller birds and dive bombed a **Kingfisher** out of the area. Like they were hyped up or something. Perhaps a migrating stop?

I have had a family of **Acorn Woodpeckers** exploring the hole/former nest in our oak....as well as a family of **Starlings**. Last year the Starlings physically drove out the woodpeckers and took over the nest hole for their own family.

Amy Monsen

Murphys, elevation 2,000 ft.

Oct 30

Last week an irruption of **Steller's Jays** came through our oak and pine tree yard and then flew south.

Jean Hackamack

Twain Harte, Tuolumne County, elevation 3550 ft.

Nov 2



Local photographer **Peggy Sells** ([www. http://peggysells-photography.com](http://peggysells-photography.com)) photographed this shy **Common Poorwill** on a dirt road in Moccasin using her car headlights.

It is a nocturnal chaparral insect-feeding species and so this sighting at dusk in the glare of your headlights is the most likely way that you'll see one.

It is a very unusual bird in that it is one of the very few that can go into a state of torpor (or short-term hibernation) in which the body temperature may be as much as 40 deg.F below normal if conditions and lack of food make that necessary. This can last for a few weeks under extreme conditions.

Nov 23

There were 22 **Hooded Mergansers** in a pond along Moran Road in Blue Lake Springs, Arnold. There were 5 males while the remainder was probably an assortment of females and juveniles, but were too far away to reliably distinguish between them.

I have 3 **Varied Thrushes**, 2 **Hermit Thrushes** and a **Spotted Towhee** enjoying my front yard water drip and bird bath. The Hermit Thrushes are also enjoying the fruit off my crab apple tree.

John Sutake

Arnold, elevation 4,000 ft.

CSAS UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

December 3rd & January 7 GCSO 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. **Buffleheads** and **American Coots** have returned for the winter. Other wintering waterfowl will be arriving in the next few weeks.

Meet the group in the GCSO 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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FUTURE (MID-2015) CSAS FIELD TRIPS

June 5 – June 7: 2015 Yuba Pass & Sierra Valley

On June 5 through 7 I am planning a field trip to the Yuba Pass, Gold Lakes Highway and Sierra Valley area. Yuba Pass, at 5635 feet is a good place in June to see warblers, Evening and Pine grosbeaks, vireos, Brown creepers, Cassin's and Purple finches, and more. The Gold Lakes Highway, with its high-elevation lakes present good habitats for water-oriented birds and lastly, the Sierra Valley with the marshy habitat will have an even greater selection of viewable birds. In 2007, the group saw 95 species of birds in two days.

As with the past field trips to this area, we will be staying at Herrington's Sierra Pines Resort in Sierra City on Highway 49. Their web site is <http://www.herringtonssierrapines.com/>. Please note when reservations are made under conditions of "internet specials" there is a discount. Please read the entire page and print it out to bring it with you when paying. I plan to arrive Friday afternoon and stay Friday through Sunday

evenings. In the past some plan to leave for home late Sunday afternoon after we finish birding the Sierra Valley. When I called Herrington's recently, a recorded message said they are currently closed for the season and will start taking reservations March 1, 2015. So please mark your calendar. This needs to be planned well in advance, as the resort fills up on weekends well in advance.

Contact John Turner for additional information, 209-852-2348, or josanbird@gmail.com.

July 10 - Flammulated Owl trip at Lake Davis

You may remember that in October our Public Meeting presenter was David Arsenault of the Plumas Audubon Society who talked about their project to determine how forest thinning and snag availability affects the Flammulated Owls. David has offered to take CSAS chapter members on an evening walk to (hopefully) observe Flammulated Owls.

We will do the owl part on either Friday or Saturday night (Friday preferred). We can either eat dinner in Portola or have a picnic dinner at Lake Davis. We would then go out to see the owls leaving the lake around 7 pm. We will see owls at a nest and then possibly band owls (we may be able to participate) and/or do some owling until 10pm.

There are campgrounds at Lake Davis as well as cabins available at Lake Davis Resort. There are also hotel accommodations in Portola, which is just 15 minutes from the lake. There is other good birding in the area in the Lakes Basin, Yuba Pass, Plumas Eureka State Park, and the Truckee area where you can go for the rest of your trip. In July, the good birding is done and over in Sierra Valley and other lower areas so you would want to stick to the high country.

If interested, please contact Ken Smith (949)922-1455 or kenksing_2@yahoo.com.



Flammulated Owl - David Arsenault

STANISLAUS AUDUBON UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

December 6. Introductory Birding Field Trip

Join leader Marl Elness at the north end of Laurel Avenue in Lodi (on the east side of Lodi Park Road, off of Turner Road) at 8am. Birders of all skills are welcome, but the focus will be on birding fundamentals.

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CSAS FIELD TRIP REPORTS

November 8 - Merced National Wildlife Refuge



Our late afternoon and evening visit to watch hundreds of **Sandhill Cranes** arriving in excitedly noisy and social flocks silhouetted against a gloriously flaming sunset was quite spectacular as you can see here.

We also saw the **American Pipits**, **Wilson's Snipe** (demurely eating whilst well hidden in reeds), **White-faced Ibis**, and **Yellowthroats** actively foraging among the reeds.

Barry Boulton

November 22 - Merced NWR



From the parking area we were greeted by perhaps 1,000 or more **Snow Geese** flying overhead – a wonderful display. The birds were too far away to tell if there were any **Ross' Geese** amongst them, but the uniform size in flight suggests that all were Snow Geese.

Also observed from the lot were several hawk species: **Red-tailed**, **American Kestrel** and **Northern Harrier**. While much of the refuge is not yet flooded but still dry, the areas under water contain many, many species of ducks and shorebirds while **White Pelicans** were on an island away from the road.

Ken Smith

OBITUARY - STEVE STOCKING

Saying good-bye to an inspiring figure is never easy, but Steve Stocking, long time naturalist in the San Joaquin and Calaveras areas and the Sierra Nevada mountains, passed away on November 9th. He was also a long time field trip leader for Central Valley Birding Symposium, and specialized in gardening for birds.

Steve will be sorely missed throughout the community, particularly in Calaveras County

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

YOUR AUDUBON BOARD

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