

Central Sierra Audubon Society

Sierra Squawker



www.centralsierraaudubon.org

February - 2015

PUBLIC PROGRAM - FEBRUARY 18

Africa Tour - Kruger National Park

Presented by Steven Umland

My wife, Suzi, and I rented a pickup in Johannesburg during July of 2013. Come share our adventures as we drive the length and breadth of one of the world's greatest natural treasures. Learn about a system where the humans are caged during the night instead of the animals. If you arrive at your camp after the gates close, serious trouble ensues (along with hefty fines)!

Being our own tour guides allowed us to explore parts of the Park that tour companies might not visit. Lion, leopard, zebra, giraffe, sunbird, stork, and much, much more were the target of our binoculars. Did we escape the charging, musth-crazed elephant? Find out on February 18th!

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 1980s 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.



Southern Ground Hornbill

Join us at 7 PM, **February 18th** in the Tuolumne County Library on Greenley Road in Sonora to enjoy Steven's 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 2015 Public Programs

March 18: Susan Schneider, "No Bird Brains Here"

May 20: Tom Hahn, Red Crossbills

April 15: John Harris, Sierra Mammals

June 17: Annual meeting & potluck

NEW MELONES EAGLE COUNT

On January 10th, five CSAS activists joined the Bureau of Reclamation for the day to undertake the annual Eagle Count on the now much-depleted lake. Presumably because of low water levels and few fish, the eagle count was only about half of last year's with 12 mature and 10 immature Bald Eagles plus 2 mature Golden Eagles. We also saw one or two Ospreys (one with a fish in its bill), a Peregrine Falcon, Great Blue Heron, many Eared and Western Grebes, and lots of Common Mergansers. The 2 immature Bald Eagles that we saw in the Stanislaus River canyon were both unusually patient in letting us get good close-up photos as you see here.



Barry Boulton

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RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS

January 3

About 10 days ago, I was treated to the sight of a pair of Varied Thrushes scavenging off on a large bank on our property. I've never seen this bird before so it was a real treat. The Spotted Towhees, Dark Eyed Juncos and, what I believe to be, Golden-crowned Sparrows are ruling over the seeded front yard. Our pond is visited daily by a Green Heron....who is fairly shy...flying off at the smallest disturbance. Shortly after spotting the Thrushes, a Red-Breasted Sapsucker grabbed onto a tree right out my upstairs window.

Amy Monsen, Murphys, elev. 2,000 ft.

Spotted a Swainson Hawk out in E. Sonora last week sitting on fence post in sheep herders field. First saw its back, (flecked), second day saw its bib front, really wowed me, never seen one in these parts.

Annie McClure

January 4

A gorgeous male Varied Thrush showed up. I have not seen one here before (in 25 years). Also, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet was flitting around in the Dutchman's Pipe.

Barbara Balen, Mormon Creek, elev. 1,800 ft.

January 4

After seeing Barbara Balen's posting of the Varied Thrush, we too, here at Lake Don Pedro are seeing a male Varied Thrush. He has been appearing erratically for the past two weeks -- seen most recently yesterday and again twice today.

Yesterday I participated in the Calaveras Christmas Bird Count, and we spotted 18 Varied Thrushes in our area alone. That is very unusual. In the past five years of counting, we have not seen one before.

John Turner, Lake Don Pedro, 1,075-ft., blue-oak savanna

January 5

I too have had one male Varied Thrush in my yard for the past 4 days. I haven't seen it yet today. It is a new yard bird. The last time I saw a Varied Thrush in Groveland was in Feb 2007.

Jeanne Ridgley, Groveland, elev. 3,100 ft

Jan 10 - 13

Flock of 30 American Crows circling overhead at White Pines for a couple of days but no attempts were made to land. Crows are very rare at this 4,000 ft. elevation even in small numbers and so 30 seems quite odd. After a week the flock is still here, but down to 10 or so.

Watched a just-fledged Purple Finch, still unable to fly but without watchful parents, foraging on the ground amongst Dark-eyed Juncos who completely ignored its open-bill begging for food. A day later a juvenile Pine Siskin joined the Purple Finch foraging for seeds.

A female Hermit Warbler came though my garden in Arnold which is very late; normally they migrate by end of November, so maybe this is another result of warm weather.

John Sutake, Arnold, elev. 4,000 ft.

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CSAS FIELD TRIPS

February 4 & March 4 GCS D 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.

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

February 14, Salt Springs Valley (near Copperopolis)

Salt Springs Valley is one of our annual field trips and last time we saw 56 species, including a Peregrine Falcon and a favorite of mine - the Loggerhead Shrike.

Meet at 8.30am about 200 yards along Rock Creek Road where it joins Highway 4 at Copperopolis. Bring lunch and we should finish around 2pm. If you have radios, bring them too.

Barry Boulton (209)596-0612

SAN JOAQUIN AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS

February 14, Cosumnes River Preserve / River Walk

Join leader Jim Rowoth (487-3489 or rowoth@sbcglobal.net) for the monthly River Walk bird count through the varied habitats of the CRP. Meet Jim at the visitor center on Franklin Rd. Check website www.cosumnes.org for last minute updates. Double check with Jim for start time.

February 15, Flood and Waverly Road

Join leaders Joanne Katanic and Mark Elness for this trip to San Joaquin County's premiere area for wintering raptors. Meet at Toot Sweets (northwest corner of March Ln. and Quail Lakes Dr.) in Stockton at 7:30 a.m.

February 21, Woodbridge Wilderness Area

Join leader Liz West for our monthly census of this small riparian park on the banks of the Mokelumne River. Meet at the north end of Meadowlark Lane in Woodbridge at 8a.m.

February 25, Panoche Valley / Mercy Hot Springs Resort

Join leader Terry Ronneberg (835-7847) for a mid-week trip to this Important Bird Area. Meet Terry at 7:00 a.m. at Toot Sweets (northwest corner of March Ln. and Quail Lakes Dr.) in Stockton to carpool. There is a \$5 per person admission fee at MHS to view the Long-eared Owls. Please call Terry if you have any questions.

STANISLAUS AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS

February 15. San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge.

Near Modesto, the Refuge is huge and offers the most diverse habitats in the area, including mixed species transitional savannas, riparian forest, oak woodlands, grassland, and seasonal wetlands. Trip leader, Ralph Baker (sharks_hockey_maniac@yahoo.com) chooses the particular habitats to visit each month based on conditions and season. Meet at the Stanislaus County Library parking lot (1500 I Street, Mod-esto) at 7:15 a.m. We will return to Modesto mid afternoon.

February 21, San Luis National Wildlife Refuge.

Near Los Banos, this Refuge has it all, wetlands, grasslands, and forest. Trip leader, TBA. Contact David Froba for information, 209-521-7265, froba@comcast.net. Meet at the Stanislaus Library parking lot at 1500 I Street at 7:15 a.m. We'll be back mid afternoon.

CALAVERAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

The Bird Count on January 3rd was one of those special days that one remembers; we met new friends as newcomers to the CBC joined us; we socialized, we saw birds; we exchanged observations, and consequently we thoroughly enjoyed a day of bright, sunny weather - perfect! Some groups had truly memorable experiences. In my group in Arnold we saw two Ravens mounting each other, not for procreation at this time of year, but as a way of strengthening their bond as a monogamous pair.

Patty Raggio and Karen Orso near Mountain Ranch watched a Red-shouldered Hawk ripping into a deer carcass. Two hungry Ravens were about 15 feet away wanting to join the feast. As they attempted to come in to feed, the hawk would have none of it and battled them away from it a number of times. By the time Patty and Karen left it looked as if they had given up and she was free to enjoy her meal undisturbed.

Dave Olson and his team in Murphys saw a Belted Kingfisher demonstrating a well executed dive to catch a 5"-6" fish, whereupon he flew up to a tree limb with fish in mouth, proudly displaying his catch for all to see.

If you are interested in participating next year, please let me know and I'll contact you around mid-November.

Barry Boulton- Calaveras CBC Coordinator

HIGHWAY CLEAN-UP

The next Adopt-a-Highway cleanup will be on Friday, February 20th. Meet at Perko's at 7:30am to carpool to the Lake Don Pedro vista parking lot, or meet at the vista point at 8.00am. We will return to Perko's by 10am.

Tom Harrington

OBITUARY - BLAINE ROGERS

It is always sad to announce the passing of family, friends or members of our community, and we offer our condolences to the family of Blaine Rogers. You will see in this eulogy by John Buckley of CSERC that Blaine was a man who aspired to the best in life, and consequently inspired his many students and colleagues.

Blaine Rogers was a scientist, a college professor, a leader of field outings, a citizen activist, a loving family man, and classic example of someone who loved to observe nature and to share ecology lessons with others.

Throughout his career at Columbia College and his many years of connections to local volunteer groups, Blaine was excited about the world of nature. Whether it was pointing out something unusual about the calls of a Pileated Woodpecker in Calaveras Big Trees Park or describing the delicate hues of a wildflower in the midst of spring displays, Blaine was enthusiastic. For many people who knew him primarily through his lectures and field tours that were tied to courses at Columbia College, Blaine became their favorite instructor. He was highly entertaining as well as a good communicator. For those who worked alongside of Blaine on committees such as those dealing with protecting Phoenix Lake and restoring water quality, Blaine was a patient and hardworking fellow citizen activist.

Throughout all of his networking, lectures, tours, and activist efforts, there was one thing that most people always associated with Blaine. He was funny, and not just occasionally funny, but truly hilarious - again and again. In his lectures and especially in his field tour descriptions, Blaine could take science lessons and his observations of the environment and make people laugh so hard they would end up nearly in tears. His jokes ranged from dry humor to intentionally bad jokes to highly unexpected punchlines. But he used that humor and his excellence as a compelling comedian to help people remember science lessons. He made learning fun. He repeatedly and consistently made learning fun and memorable.

Blaine will live on in the lives of the countless people who learned important lessons from him - both science lessons and life lessons - as well as in some of his jokes that are probably still being shared by those who love our natural world.

John Buckley, CSERC

THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT FEBRUARY 13 - 16

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.

Since then, more than 100,000 people of all ages and walks of life have joined the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

We invite you to participate! Simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, February 13-16, 2015. You can count from any location - your backyard is perfect.

To register, go to this website [www. http://gbbc.bird-count.org/about/](http://gbbc.bird-count.org/about/) that gives you more info.

In 2014, Great Backyard Bird Count participants in 135 countries counted nearly 4,300 species of birds on more than 144,000 checklists! See top 10 lists and other 2014 results.

This is one of the Citizen Science projects that I mentioned in the last Squawker that allows us to be part of the deeper understanding of bird population patterns, leading to improved conservation programs for birds.

Many of you are already doing these counts informally at home, and if you'd prefer not to register and enter the data, simply shoot me an email with your data (species and count) and I'll do it for you. In any case, I'd like to know how you get on and what you see over this period.

Thanks in advance for whatever you are able to do.

Barry Boulton, rbarryboulton@gmail.com

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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