

# Sierra Squawker



## PUBLIC PROGRAM - MAY 20

### “A nomad for all seasons: Natural history of the Red Crossbills of the West”

Presented by Tom Hahn

**R**ed Crossbills are finches that fascinate bird watchers and ornithologists because of their unusual morphology, nomadic behavior and highly flexible breeding cycles. This talk will discuss the natural history of crossbills in the context of recent advances in our understanding of their diversity (there are multiple “types” that probably should be classified as separate species), habitat associations, reproductive cycles and migratory patterns. It will also discuss implications of logging and reforestation practices for the conservation of the different crossbill types. With practice, bird watchers can learn to identify the different types of nomadic birds like crossbills and evening grosbeaks by their vocalizations and make important contributions to the growing body of knowledge of their habits and distribution.



Type 5 Crossbill - Tom Hahn

**T**om Hahn is on the faculty in Biological Sciences at UC Davis. He and his students do field research throughout the West on the behavior and physiology of wild songbirds, particularly nomadic finches such as crossbills, pine siskins and evening grosbeaks. He teaches courses in Animal Behavior, Avian Physiology, and Hormones and Behavior, and leads field trips and workshops on identification of birds by their calls and songs.

**J**oin us at 7 PM, May 20th in the Tuolumne County Library on Greenley Road in Sonora to enjoy Tom’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](mailto:dharden@sonnet.com).

## Upcoming 2015 Public Programs

**June 17:** Annual meeting, potluck and  
Scholarship Awards

**Jul/August:** Summer break

**September 16:** Barry Boulton, Bird Behavior (video)

**October 21:** Karen Amstutz, Nepal

## Indigeny Field Trip April 11 - Report

The brilliant orange breast of the male Bullock's Oriole greeted nineteen eager birders as they stepped out of their cars. This was a great intro to a fine birdwalk at Indigeny where we wandered the field for a couple of hours on a delightful spring morning. Pamela Blair and David Harden led the outing and it was great to have a number of beginners with us to share in the enthusiasm.

A total of twenty-nine species were spotted with one of the highlights being a good look at the often heard but rarely seen Wrentit. The unmistakable bouncing ball



*Wrentit - Barry Boulton*

of its song was luckily followed by a perfect view of the long upright tail on this sprightly bird. We were often surrounded by the lovely music of the Orange-crowned Warbler, but they refused to make an appearance, preferring to remain still high in the oaks. We are lucky to have such a nice nearby destination to wander in classic foothill habitat. Many thanks to **Jay Watson**, the owner at Indigeny, for making this area available to us.



*Male Bullock's Oriole - Barry Boulton*

**David Harden**

## Ken's 2nd Annual Tricolored Blackbird Field Trip, April 18 - Report

Fifteen CSAS birders covered some 60 miles to observe Tricolored Blackbirds at three sites in Tuolumne and Stanislaus Counties. Yosemite Junction site was active but less than last year, with nesting and feeding of juveniles. Then along Rock River Road we saw none at the T-Bar-J site while the Clay Pit at the county line was active although few birds were seen. The largest site in Stanislaus County on Sonora Road was quite active and we were able to see Tricolored Blackbirds as close as 40 feet away.



*Horned Lark - Lucia Gonzalez*

The nesting areas of blackberries were full of birds constantly moving in and out, Males were perched atop the vines, displaying their epaulets.

Birds were loosely scattered, feeding in the high grasses and marsh around us. Shortly before we left the site, a flock of 100+ birds flew in from the Southwest to the blackberry bushes. Eggs are hatching and this is standard feeding behavior at this stage. Since I visited this site last Saturday, the activity level had increase by a factor of at least 10.

We listed 46 species including Horned Larks, Savannah Sparrows, Western Meadowlarks and many Western Kingbirds, two of whom chased a Red-tailed Hawk away from "their" tree.

Lunch break at the Knight's Ferry Creamery for ice-cream hit the spot nicely!



*Male Tricolored Blackbird - Lucia Gonzalez*

**Ken Smith - Field Trip Chair**

## RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS

March 31

**H**ad a male Black-headed Grosbeak visiting our feeder this morning.

**Jenny Souza, Standard**

April 2

**W**e are seeing Rufus Hummingbirds at the feeders this week. This week has been exciting with several first-of-season birds arriving.

**Dave Olson, Murphys, 2,000 ft. elevation**

March 30

**C**alliope Hummingbird female seen several times at a hummer feeder. Also heard and spotted the first Ash-throated flycatcher for this year.

March 31,

**C**alliope Hummingbird male with beautiful striated gorget appeared at our feeders. Also a beautiful male **Hooded Oriole** appeared for the first time this year.

April 1

**M**ale Hooded Oriole was again seen on a hummer feeder and this time was followed by a female Hooded Oriole.

April 2

**M**ale Calliope Hummingbird has been repeatedly seen on the feeders. A **BIG** surprise was this afternoon when a male Costa's Hummingbird appeared. We have not seen one here for two years.

**John Turner, elev. 1075-ft., blue-oak savanna  
Lake Don Pedro, Tuolumne County, CA**

April 3

**I**noticed a strange "jungle voice" coming from the creek here in Vallecito. While eating lunch I observed a very large black bird with extraordinary tail stealing my chicken feed. Somewhere between a Raven and Blackbird - we have a couple Great-tailed Grackles here and what a voice they have!

**Julie Hollars, Vallecito, elev. 1,700 ft.**



*Male Hooded Oriole - Lucia Gonzalez*

April 5

**A** Black-headed Grosbeak and the Bullocks Oriole came in today - orange bird day I guess because the Spotted Towhees which have been in short supply this week made brief appearances. Also, around 30 Band-tailed Pigeons.

**Dave Olson, Murphys, elev. 2,000 ft.**

April 12

**M**ale Black-headed Grosbeaks recently arrived about one week ahead of the females (actually arrived 4/18, six days later), to establish courting and breeding territories. Notable species in my garden are nesting Steller's Jays, Calaveras (Nashville) Warbler, Pacific Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Mountain and Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Spotted Towhee, Brown Creeper, Band-tailed Pigeons, along with White-headed and Pileated Woodpeckers - a fine selection for a small but wild garden I might say.

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

April 14

**H**ave a Pine Siskin eating the berries off my mulberry tree. A Rock Wren has been a constant musical voice for the last week. Yellow legs have been flying over Six Bit Gulch. Black-chinned Hummingbird at my feeder this morning.

**F**irst Phainopepla at my mulberry tree today. Juvenile Cooper's Hawk in the tree outside my window this morning - I wondered where all the other birds were!

**Charlotte Ginn. Red Hills, Chinese Camp, elev 957ft.**

April 16

**F**irst of season (FOS) Bullocks and Hooded Orioles at our bottle brush. At one time they were both plainly visible in the same tree which I have never seen happen before. Also FOS female Black-head Grosbeak - the male has been around for a few days. Finally as I was typing this a Robin arrived.

**R**ufous Hummingbirds have returned and the wars with the Anna's have resumed. Interesting that the Anna's are much more cooperative with their own species.

**Ken Smith, Chinese Camp, elev. 1,000ft.**

April 16

**B**ig Trees SP North Grove - several White-headed Woodpeckers, two Varied Thrushes and one Pygmy Nuthatch; also heard a Pileated Woodpecker and (fleetingly) an unidentified hawk. (North Grove elev. 4,700ft.)

**Barry Boulton**

April 18

**A**merican Goldfinches have come to my feeder - not normally seen here. Female Bullocks Orioles arrived a couple of days ago.

**Charlotte Ginn. Red Hills, Chinese Camp, elev 957ft.**

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## CSAS FIELD TRIPS

### May 6 & June 3 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 more than 200 acres of oak, pine and willow habitat with three water storage ponds. On the April 1 walk 41 species were seen. Highlights were Bullock's Oriole, Osprey and four species of swallows: Northern Rough-winged, Violet-green, Barn and Cliff.

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**.

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### May 22 Lyons Dam Railroad Grade

Pamela Blair and David Harden will lead a bird walk on the Lyons Dam Railroad Grade off of South Fork/Confidence Road. Meet at 8 AM just north of Middle Camp Road on South Fork/Confidence where the railroad grade starts.

**Trip Leaders: Pamela or David at (209)533-1668**

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### Report on Bird House Sale

Thanks to our bird/bat house and feeder builders, CSAS had a successful sale along with the California Native Plant Society Foothills Chapter on April 11 in Calaveras County. For this sale, Ron McDow, Craig Ethier, John Turner, Tom Parrington, Herb Hahn and Tom Harrington were the builders. Tak Iwata donated hummingbird feeders. Linda Millsbaugh, Tom Parrington, Craig Ethier and Tom Harrington were the "Gold Team" sellers, and proceeds were \$481.00 added to our scholarship fund.

**Tom Harrington**

## RIM FIRE REFORESTATION by Tom Parrington

The Forest Service in late February released its Scoping Package for proposed replanting within portions of the Rim Fire burn area. The stated goals of the Service are *"returning mixed conifers that contribute to an ecologically healthy and biodiverse landscape, restoring old forest, reducing fuels and enhancing deer habitat"* which are goals that CSAS support. Unfortunately, these goals are ignored in many of the areas proposed for replanting of conifers.

As observed by a joint letter to the Service by Sierra Forest Legacy, Sierra Foothills Audubon Society, Mother Lode Chapter of the Sierra Club and others, *"Traditionally, after stand-replacing fire, burned forests in the Sierra Nevada have been heavily salvage logged, planted, and repeatedly sprayed with chemicals to limit competition as part of standard intensive forestry practice. As a consequence, early forest regrowth that occur as a part of natural processes are intentionally suppressed or eliminated. These forestry practices are a holdover from the intensive forestry days and are in need of serious revision. These outdated practices limit diversity, homogenize young forests and make them far more fire prone."*

Under the Scoping Package, many areas are to be replanted in rows with densities of up to 300 trees per acre creating yet more plantations. Such densities are not desirable and create conditions conducive to unmanageable wildfires.

CSAS is also concerned about the extensive use of herbicides including Glyphosate (ex. Roundup) on up to 26,000 acres at least three times during an initial ten year timeline. Such actions do not maintain or increase the diversity of plants and animals.

The Scoping Package is a prelude to preparation of a Federal Environmental Impact Statement which must respond to comments received.

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## **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.centralsierraudubon.org/join-us/](http://www.centralsierraudubon.org/join-us/)

## **YOUR AUDUBON BOARD**

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## **YOUR AUDUBON COMMITTEES**

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Tom Harrington, Book Sales	694-8564
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