

Central Sierra Audubon Society

# Sierra Squawker

[www.centralsierraaudubon.org](http://www.centralsierraaudubon.org)



DECEMBER - 2015

## CALIFORNIA CONDOR RECOVERY PROGRAM

The Condor Recovery Program is certainly a qualified success; that is, while the species is not yet out-of-the-woods, sufficient progress has been made to make us feel reasonably confident over the long term. I look forward to the next step in their progress which I think will be the time that they don't have to carry numbers to identify them; that they can be individuals again. It's all too easy to anthropomorphize birds when we see them close-up, but it really is difficult to look at these photos and not see individual personalities peering back at us! These exceptional photos were shot by Peggy Sells in October at Big Sur, and they surely make me wish that I'd been there. You can see a host of Peggy's Condor shots on her website at: <http://www.peggysellsphotography.com/-/peggysellsphotography/gallery.asp?LID=&cat=196402&pID=1&row=15&photoID=15031433>



## UPCOMING 2015 - 2016 PUBLIC PROGRAMS

**Jan 20, 2016:** **John Harris:** "Sierra Mammals"

**Mar 16, 2016:** **Tonya Nilsson:** "South Georgia Island"

**Feb 17, 2016:** **Richard Anderson:** "Birds of the Midway Islands"

**Apr 20, 2016:** **Pete Devine** as Galen Clark

**May 18, 2016:** **Tom Hahn:** "The White-crowned Sparrow"

## RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS

October 7

This morning five birders joined me at the Groveland Community Services District. We saw 32 species, and highlights were several First of Season species: **Eared Grebe**, **Golden-crowned Sparrow**, **Dark-eyed Junco**, and species not seen often here were: **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, **Cedar Waxwing**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler** and **Band-tailed Pigeon**.

Jeanne Ridgley, Groveland

October 8

**Pine Siskins** are making their migration through Chinese Camp. It started with one yesterday and at least 8 today.

Charlotte Ginn, Red Hills, Chinese Camp, 970 elev.

October 14

Most awesome sighting today on my front patio - a **Road Runner!** He must have come in for some water. I was inside looking through the slider, and saw this huge bird and thought at first that he looked like a grouse. He then heard me and went up the yard trying to find a way out through the fence, finally finding a hole to get out.

Charlotte Ginn, Red Hills, Chinese Camp

November 5

This morning we both saw two **Steller's Jays** in our Chinese Pistache. The last time a Steller's was seen here was Jan. 1, 1996. Also seen were two **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** which are often seen here in the fall and winter.

Two days ago eight **Pine Siskins** were first seen on our thistle feeder, and are still here today.



John Turner, Lake Don Pedro, 1075-ft., blue-oak savanna

November 17

One male **Hooded Merganser** has been resident on Lakemont Pond in Arnold since I first observed it exactly one month ago.

The first-of-season **Varied Thrush** has arrived at my house and I'm wondering (hoping!) if this winter will offer us another irruption like last winter. That was the largest irruption of these birds since 1977 which happened to be the time of the worst drought in California prior to the current one, which makes me wonder if there might be a correlation between drought and irruption at least of this species - cause or simply coincidence? We might never know.

**F**-O-S female **Goldeneye** on Utica pond in Murphys, but whether Common or Barrows still unclear (Nov 23).

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

November 23

**J**uvenile **Snow Goose** has been hanging around for several days now with Canada Geese at Phoenix Lake.

Kit DeGear, Phoenix Lake, 2,400 ft. elev.

## CSAS FIELD TRIPS

### December 2 & January 6 GCSD Bird Walks

The first Wednesday of the month Bird Walk at the Groveland Community Services property at 18966 Ferretti Road, Groveland will be led by Jeanne Ridgley on Dec 2 and Jan 6. The property encompasses more than 200 acres of oak, pine and willow habitat with three water storage ponds.

**W**inter ducks should be on the large pond and wintering sparrows should be seen.

**M**eet the group in the GCSD 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 about two-three hours.

If you have any questions, call Jeanne at 962-7598.

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

**A**s you know by now (if you've been dutifully reading the Squawker!) we shall be running 3 CBCs this year, so please sign up as follows:

### **Groveland CBC, December 16, 2015**

Steven Umland (209)352-6985 or stevenum71@gmail.com

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

Jeanne Ridgley at jeanneridgley1@sbcglobal.net

### **Sonora CBC, December 19, 2015**

Steven Umland (209)352-6985 or stevenum71@gmail.com

### **Calaveras CBC, January 2, 2016**

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

## A PILEATED PAIR

We are **Mother Lode Wildlife Care**, an all-volunteer organization headquartered in Tuolumne, with additional caging around the county at volunteers' homes. We rescue, rehabilitate, and release injured and/or orphaned wildlife, specializing in birds and squirrels, with the occasional bat. We operate under county, state, and federal permits and can be reached at 209-677-7249. At our website, [www.mlwild.org](http://www.mlwild.org) you can learn more and sign up for our quarterly email newsletter. Our Facebook page, ML Wildlife Care, shares photos and stories of animals in care.

This year we received a Pileated Woodpecker, a first for us. Brought in by a Calaveras Co. Park Ranger, the adult male had been found far down a dirt fire road above Arnold. He had extensive damage to his feathers and no tail, cause unknown. Even though he wasn't a songbird, he went



to Sharon, our songbird team leader, who has a fondness for woodpeckers. Her previous woodpecker patients, Nuttall's, Downys and Acorns, weighed at the most 80g, whereas the Pileated was a whopping 263g. Housing him like the other woodpeckers did not work. First he shredded the laundry basket. That was followed by a playpen, with sheets on the sides so he couldn't see out, and netting and sheeting on top. One morning he was found loose in the bird hospital, having torn through the side. He was rehoused with hunks of firewood in each corner to keep him busy, and which he rapidly demolished, earning him the name "Flying Beaver"!

In care for six weeks, but unable to be placed in our wood-framed flight cages, he was released when his feathers were sufficiently grown out. Sharon returned him as close as possible to his source, and he flew up into a nearby tree, disappearing into the forest.

The very next day a juvenile female Pileated came to us from near Long Barn. She was found being attacked by ravens and was rescued by a local woman. The woodpecker was dehydrated, malnourished, and the primary feathers on the left wing were damaged beyond repair. She went into the same playpen and happily dined on crickets and mealworms for several weeks, regaining strength. Meanwhile, we built a large all wire cage, lined with shade cloth to prevent more feather damage, and furnished with lots of hefty branches, more chunks of firewood, and a nest box for her to hide in.



Keeping this bird in captivity until she molted was not an option, so a local veterinarian pulled the damaged wing feathers. As her feathers regrew, she worked with great enthusiasm, turning the wood into wood chips. Once her feathers had grown in, she was also released where she was found. Sharon enjoyed working with these woodpeckers but complained they cleaned out her entire mealworm colony!

The Pileated Woodpecker is by far the largest woodpecker in the Sierra with a wingspan up to 29". They are regarded as widespread but are not often seen, as they are furtive, which is why having two come to us so close together was unexpected. They can certainly be heard, however, whether it is their loud calls or drumming on trees. That chiseling is to reach their favorite food, carpenter ants, and beetle larvae, which they supplement with berries and nuts in the late summer and autumn. They prefer large trees, so they are quite at home in our coniferous forests. Each pair requires several hundred acres of mature forest, so logging, especially clear-cutting, has no doubt caused their numbers to decline, as has removal of snags and logs, which they use for feeding and nesting.

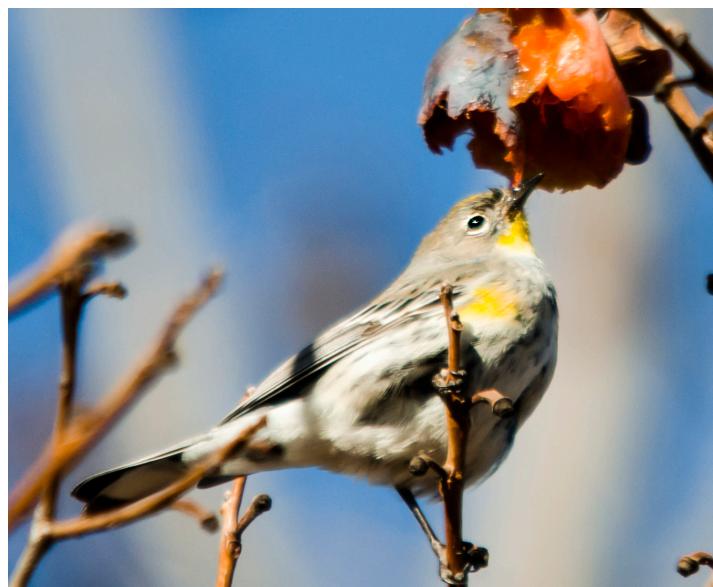
## THE OMNIVORE'S MIGRATORY ADVANTAGE

### Diet is a driver in fall bird migration

**S**trict insectivores (such as most warblers, vireos and flycatchers) migrate early, from August to September, because their food supply runs low as summer wanes.

**O**mivores that also eat fruit and seeds (such as most sparrows) have the luxury of waiting all the way through November for optimal travel conditions (fair skies and a favorable tail wind), which can make for a less dangerous migration than insectivorous birds often encounter.

**T**hen there's a third group of species – including the Hermit Thrush, Eastern Phoebe, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Red-eyed Vireo – that possess a physiological adaptation in their digestive systems that enables them to switch in the fall from a diet of insects to fruits and seeds.



*Yellow-rumped Warbler eating fruit in the Fall*

*Barry Boulton*

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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.centralsierraaudubon.org/join-us/](http://www.centralsierraaudubon.org/join-us/)

**N**ew research by Cornell Lab scientist Frank La Sorte, using eBird data and weather radar images of massive flocks of birds, has provided the first documented evidence that insectivores-turned-omnivores migrate on the omnivore's later schedule, with a migration window that extends into November. "Dietary flexibility promotes a more flexible migration strategy" say La Sorte. "This allows species that are insectivorous during the breeding season to gain additional resources before attempting their autumn migration journey".

This article was published in the Autumn 2015 issue of **Living Bird**, published by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and used with permission. To read a longer version of this article, visit their **All About Birds** website at: <http://bit.ly/migrants-and-diet>

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### Natural History of the Sierra Nevada

**D**r. Nancy Muleady-Mecham, who has trained some of our field trip leaders, will be leading a ride into the John Muir Wilderness over five days, July 25 - 29, 2016 where "We will explore the night sky in the truly dark skies of the backcountry. We'll learn about animal adaptations, birds and mammals; Sierra geology, glaciation, and weather; dendrochronology, the mixed conifer and alpine forests, wildflowers, fire ecology; and indigenous people through time".

You can view details at:

[http://www.rockcreekpackstation.com/trailride\\_nat\\_history.shtml#page=overview](http://www.rockcreekpackstation.com/trailride_nat_history.shtml#page=overview)

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