

# Sierra Squawker



## PUBLIC PROGRAM - FEBRUARY 17

### “BIRDS OF THE MIDWAY ISLANDS”

Presented by **Richard Anderson**

This program includes videos of delightful antics of the Laysan Albatross and other beautiful birds of Midway Island, and shows the three programs of the Oceanic Society and Sierra Club that were operated there before Midway was closed to the public.

Then moving Eastward, we will look at the intriguing question of how all the Hawaiian Honeycreepers evolved, when the oldest Hawaiian island is but 5 million years old.

Richard has graduate degrees from USC in marine fishes and from UCSB in plant cell structure and function. With a 2 year interlude of subsistence farming in Belize, he taught college biology classes for 38 years in 5 California colleges. Between 1977 and 1989 he lived in Columbia, participated in Tuolumne County civic activities and taught part-time classes at Columbia College.

Teaching at Modesto Junior College from 1989 to 2009 enabled Richard and his wife Lynn Hansen to travel and videotape diverse wildlife that we so much need to protect. These programs combine his love of nature travel and video making.



*Laysan Albatross dance*

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 2016 PUBLIC PROGRAMS

- |                      |   |                       |   |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Mar 16, 2016:</b> | <b>Tonya Nilsson</b> “South Georgia Island” | <b>May 18, 2016:</b>  | <b>Tom Hahn</b> “The White-crowned Sparrow” |
| <b>Apr 20, 2016:</b> | <b>Pete Devine</b> as Galen Clark           | <b>June 16, 2016:</b> | Annual Meeting & Potluck                    |

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT REPORTS

### Sonora and Groveland CBC Results

December 16th was an excellent day to restart the Groveland CBC. Although it began as a cold, clear day, it quickly warmed up to a chilly, clear day. Eighteen participants found 4372 birds of 81 species. The number of birds seen is roughly mid way between the high of 9765 in 2007 and the low of 2374 in 2011. Those same two years also saw, respectively, a high of 99 species and a low of 61.

Looking at the data, there do not appear to be any trends that can be discerned. Highlights of the day included a Greater Roadrunner and Red-naped Sapsucker.

In contrast, the Sonora CBC was a wet affair. The rain/drizzle fell all day. No owls were encountered in the damp, dark, pre-down hours. 9063 birds of 83 species were seen. Of those, only 12 species were found in greater numbers than the 10-yr average. Of the 73 species left, 23 saw their lowest number of the past 10 years. With the inclement weather it would be risky to mention any trends or blame anything other than the weather for the poor showing. Highlights of the day included the continuing Snow Goose on Phoenix Lake, a Pacific Wren, and the American Dipper found on the Tuolumne River near Riverside Campground.

I want to thank all of you who participated in both of the Counts. Please set aside December 18, 2016 for the Sonora Count. The Groveland will be announced at a later date.

**Steven Umland**

### Calaveras CBC Results

Trying to discern trends from these annual bird counts is difficult, but if we look at the results over the past 11 years, the good news is that there doesn't appear to be a significant change in number of birds or number of species as you can see in the table.

We can see that this year the species count was quite good at 83 compared with a high of 94 and low of 65. But, it was low in actual bird count although we have had worse years.

YEAR	# SPECIES	# BIRDS
2005	65	4287
2006	94	9655
2007	69	7203
2008	83	5851
2009	82	7293
2010	67	6188
2011	78	5649
2012	91	7232
2013	75	7345
2014	94	6545
2015	83	6185

It's interesting to note that last year's count on a delightful day had the equal highest species count in these eleven years, but the bird count wasn't much greater than this year; it is impossible to determine what that signifies, if anything.

And so, the question is that we hear and read a lot about bird populations in decline, and species in danger, and so why would we not see anything surely indicating those trends in Calaveras County? I think the answer lies in the causes of species and population declines which are generally industrial developments such as large housing tracts, warehousing, business or industrial units and conversion of habitat to agriculture, both of which destroy large amounts of habitat suitable for birds. However, the Calaveras CBC is actually only a small part of the County, extending from Big Trees SP down to Murphys, and from the Middle Fork of the Stanislaus to Mountain Ranch where these developments haven't occurred. In this case then, the period 2005 – 2015 is just too short to pick out any real trends.

So, thanks to all the birders who turned out for the day to keep this important long-term citizen-science program running.

**Barry Boulton**



*Hermit Thrush shot by Jake Baker during the Calaveras CBC*

## New Melones Eagle Count, January 6th

On a beautiful although chilly morning, 6 CSAS members joined with others to participate in the New Melones Annual Eagle Count. The lake was even lower than last year as a result of the continuing drought. We observed 15 Bald Eagles, of which 12 were mature and 3 juveniles - one of whom flew to a dead tree close to the water and stayed put while we spent about 10 minutes observing him/her. There were no Golden Eagles and just 1 Osprey.

As usual at New Melones at this time of year we saw lots of Western and Clarks Grebes plus a few Eared Grebes, and several Double-crested Cormorants. The weather held and we all had a great day birding. **Ken Smith**

## Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), Feb 12-15

Speaking of bird counts, you can join in this annual count in your own backyard, park or favorite location - and it doesn't take up too much of your time!

Essentially, you count birds for at least 15 minutes on any or all of the days during this period and then upload your results into an on-line account that you set up. See more details at: <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

**Questions? Call Barry Boulton at (209)596-0612**

## GLOBAL WARMING AND BIRDS

Global warming is the greatest threat to birds and other wildlife in human history. The rate of global warming is already impacting birds, their prey, and their habitat. Those impacts will become more severe over the coming decades, leading to the loss of one-quarter to one-third of all species on earth, including many bird species.

Although some amount of change is inevitable, we can still take steps to prevent the most dangerous impacts of global warming and begin to stabilize the climate again. In the meantime, conservation, especially of larger areas with migratory corridors and buffer zones; better control of invasive species; and adaptive management are critical to stem the loss of bird and wildlife species.

*This is the introduction from the Audubon Society's fact sheet of the same name. To read, please go to <http://centralsierraaudubon.org/> and download the Global Warming and Birds pdf at the bottom of the Home page.*

## CSAS FIELD TRIPS - Feb & March

### GCSD Wednesday Walks - Feb 3rd & March 2nd

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 Feb 3 and Mar 2. The property encompasses an area of more than 200 acres of oak, pine and willow habitat with three water storage ponds.

Meet 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.

## Merced NWR, Saturday, Feb. 13th.

Come join Paolo Maffei and co-leader Carol Rosalind for a spectacular day of birding at Merced NWR. We expect to see vast numbers of Snow geese, with the Ross's mixed in, Sandhill cranes, probably also Tundra Swans. No promises, but in past years we have had lots of owls (including Long-eared as well as Great-horned) as well as not-so-common Common Yellowthroats and Soras.

Fresno Audubon just visited the refuge and here's their trip summary to entice you to join us:

*Cranes were light in numbers but nice showing, while Ross and Snow Geese are everywhere. Speaking of which, there is a large number of juvenile Blue or Morph geese this year which are very large and quite unusual. Swans--15 count - Pintails in large numbers as well as plenty of Cinnamon and Green-winged Teals as well a few Blue-winged Teals and American Wigeon.*

*Fun sightings were 150 Black-bellied Plovers in a cow pasture along Sandy Mush Rd. In the center of the same field spaced out respectfully on the ground were mature Bald Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Red Tail Hawk and Northern Harrier. Our total count for the day was 82 species.*

After the spectacular show of the cranes coming in to land at sundown, we will probably finish the day in a local restaurant.

Meet at Perko's in Sonora at 9.30AM. Bring snacks, raingear, warm layers and scopes if you have them. We will not cancel unless the weather is truly awful. These birds don't seem to mind the weather and most of the tour around the Preserve is limited to viewing from our cars.

**For info call Paolo at 532-8426**

## Salt Springs Valley, March 5

Jan and Rick Baird will lead an outing to Salt Springs Valley area. On previous outings to this area we have seen meadowlarks, eagles, falcons, various types of hawks and many other species. We will have lunch in the picnic area at Salt Springs Valley Reservoir and probably walk out onto the dam. Salt Springs Valley Resort has a nice picnic

area and restrooms. There is a \$10 per car charge for day use, so we will try to carpool as much as possible.

The Bairds will meet interested persons by Perko's in Sonora at 8 a.m. to carpool, or meet other participants at the pond on Rock Creek Rd., just off Highway 4 at Copperopolis at about 8:30 a.m. Bring a lunch, water, binoculars, field guides, spotting scopes if available and wear layered clothing to accommodate the weather.

Rick and Jan at 532-1106 or [janjornbaird@gmail.com](mailto:janjornbaird@gmail.com)

### GCSD Wood Duck Box Cleaning

Cleaning out nesting boxes is one of those activities that give us insight into how the birds are doing. In early January, Jeanne Ridgley and myself, along with local birders Bill Zachman, Joe Hopkins and Gary Metz visited GCSD to clean out three Wood Duck boxes and put in new nesting material. With the pond higher than we have seen it in many years, we were only able to get to one of the three boxes. We found it was used, successfully, with many hatched eggs. There were a few eggs



which didn't hatch, which we do see each year. It is quite possible that a second female came in, but was unable to brood the eggs. Here we see Jeanne working on the box.

We haven't seen any Wood Ducks since early December, so we're hoping! Happy to report that all the small ponds that are scattered around the GCSD property were almost full. They have been dry for 4 years, so great excitement for the birds.

Carol Rosalind

### IMPORTANT ----- SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships are a focus for CSAS because it is important for the birds and the environment in general that we inspire and support a new generation to protect these things that we love and value. If you know a student who is qualified and may be interested, please let them know about this opportunity.

#### EDYE DINGMAN CENTRAL SIERRA AUDUBON and MACK WAGGONER SIERRA CLUB SCHOLARSHIP

Central Sierra Audubon is offering two \$2,000 scholarships and Tuolumne Group Sierra Club is offering one \$1,000 scholarship to students pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree in natural sciences. The recipients may apply for renewal of the scholarships upon the successful completion of the first academic year.

Preference will be given to graduates from a high school in either Calaveras or Tuolumne County or those who have attended Columbia College and will have completed two years of undergraduate college work with a minimum of a 2.5 GPA.

Deadline for applications is March 15, 2016. The application form can be downloaded from the CSAS website at: <http://centralsierraaudubon.org/> After filling out the form, please mail to the address shown.

If you have any questions, please call **Pamela Blair at 533-1668.**

### 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/)

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