

Central Sierra Audubon Society

Sierra Squawker



www.centralsierraaudubon.org

MARCH - 2016

PUBLIC PROGRAM - MARCH 16

“SOUTH GEORGIA ISLAND”

Presented by **Tonya Nilsson**

The Falkland Islands, South Georgia Island and the Antarctic Peninsula provided abundant and inspiring wildlife including the world's largest **Black-browed Albatross** colony and a **King Penguin** colony with 250,000 mating pairs. Enjoy photos of the wide variety of Southern Ocean birds including Tern, Caracara, Skua, Gull, Albatross, Petrel and Penguin taken by Tonya on her recent travels to these magnificent locations.



A visit to these wild lands would not be complete without also viewing some of the impressive mammals that share these waters and shores including Leopard, Fur and Elephant seals.

Tonya Nilsson is a Professor of civil engineering at Santa Clara University, and spends as much time as possible traveling, rock climbing and trail running. She lives in San Jose with her husband, Alan, and Shaido, “the most awesome dog in the world.” Shaido likes to watch slide shows and power point presentations and says that “this is a good one, everyone should come!” Tonya has visited 49 out of the 50 states, 22 different countries and the southernmost continent.

For further information, please call **David Harden** at (209)533-1668 or email dharden@sonnet.com

UPCOMING 2016 PUBLIC PROGRAMS

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

June 15, 2016: Annual Meeting & Potluck

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

The potluck will include a video presentation on “Birds and their Behaviors at Merced Wildlife Refuge”.
Video by Barry Boulton

FIELD TRIP REPORT - MERCED NWR, Feb 13 by Paolo Maffei

Eighteen intrepid birders headed to Merced NWR on a very foggy Saturday morning, arriving late but, as it turned out, due for a fabulous experience. Those that stopped at Dawson Lake were rewarded with lots of Widgeon and two Golden Eagles as well as a couple of Mute Swans. The Refuge itself was a riot of noise and color as many thousands of raucous Ross's Geese and Lesser Sandhill Cranes festooned the sky and water.



Wilson's Snipe



Ross's Goose with neck and leg bands

Of the perhaps 10,000 geese at the refuge, most were Ross's plus some small groups of Snow Geese, including a few Blue Morph variants, as well as a number of Greater White-fronted Geese. The mid-thousands of Sandhill Cranes were displaying elegant and spectacular courting and pair-bonding routines on the grasslands in preparation for their northward migration to breed.

Many duck species were present in quite large numbers: Gadwall, Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Cinnamon Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead and Ruddy Duck as well as many Eared Grebes. Meanwhile, a Great Horned Owl sitting on her nest high up in a tree confidently and almost disinterestedly watched us taking photos of her, surely well aware by now of these strange creatures that watch but don't threaten her.

As the sun set, a dozen Wilson's Snipe materialized beneath our feet under the viewing deck. We totaled 73 species and, thoroughly "birded out" after a full and exhilarating day, we retired to a pleasant meal at a Thai restaurant in Merced.

Paolo Maffei

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CSAS FIELD TRIPS - March & April

GCSD Wednesday Walks - March 2 & April 6

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 March 2 and April 6. The property encompasses an area of more than 200 acres of oak, pine and willow habitat with three water storage ponds.

On the Feb 3rd Bird Walk 17 species were seen. Wood Ducks have returned to the large pond and were swimming in front of the three Wood Duck nest boxes.

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.

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 Road, 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

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ATTENTION WOODWORKERS!

On April 16th we will join CNPS (California Native Plant Society) for their annual plant sale in San Andreas at which we will be selling bird boxes to raise money for our educational scholarship fund.

Of course, to have bird boxes for sale means that we must make them, so if you have the talent, energy and time to follow straightforward building plans, we have the necessary wood for you to make them.

If you're willing and able to do this, please contact **Tom Harrington at (209)694-8564** who will be delighted to provide build plans and wood.

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HIGHWAY CLEAN-UP

As many of you know, CSAS has adopted a stretch of Highway 120 overlooking Lake Don Pedro in order to keep it clear of garbage, and we do that once every two months or so. Our next Adopt-a-Highway cleanup will be on Friday, March 18th, and we invite you to join us for a pleasant social couple of hours.

Meet at Perko's in Sonora 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 (209)694-8564

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OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS - JOIN OUR BOARD!

Each year CSAS, must renew or reconfirm our Board of Directors and that time has come around once more. The positions to be filled are President, First VP, Second VP, Secretary and Treasurer.

If you are interested in serving, please contact our nominating committee members **David Harden, Linda Millsbaugh** and **Ron McDow**. (Contact info on page 4).

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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.

**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 questions, call **Pamela Blair at 533-1668**.

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THE SANDHILL CRANE



Crane species in general have been important cultural icons because of their graceful lines and dances as for example in Japanese traditional arts, while the Sandhill Crane itself is celebrated in native North American painting and dance cultures for the same reasons. In our time, we are fortunate that there is a Central Valley population which we can view and appreciate at Merced NWR and also in the Lodi area; in each case several thousands over-winter each year. The Merced NWR that we visited has an estimated 9,000 mostly Lesser Sandhills in residence, most of whom were probably there during our visit. This Central Valley population will very shortly depart to breed in the Arctic and Northern Canada, so if you wish to see them, you should visit by mid-March.



Sandhill Cranes can live for up to 35 years in the wild. Courting, and mating usually starts during the 3rd or 4th year, and until then, juveniles stay with their parents as a family unit. Since they establish life-long pair bonds, the courting stage in which they establish that bond is critically important for reproductive success. However, not all of the displays that we observe are solely for the purpose of establishing a new long-term relationship. An important aspect is to maintain and strengthen the existing pair relationship through those elegant displays.

There is also another aspect that is less well-known; outside of the breeding season, birds' reproductive organs shrink to reduce weight, but must regrow for breeding purposes. While length of day and ambient temperature certainly play a part in initiating the hormonal flows necessary for regrowth, it seems very likely that courting displays also play a part in enhancing those flows. We surely know about displays and hormones in humans!

Barry Boulton

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/

YOUR AUDUBON BOARD

Tom Parrington, President	(209)928-3835
Walt Kruse, VP Conservation	(707)548-1829
David Harden, VP Programs	(209)533-1668
Tom Harrington, Secretary	(209)694-8564
Linda Millsbaugh, Treasurer	(209)586-9557
Ken Smith, Field Trips	(949)922-1455
Pattie Henderson, Membership	(209)586-2169
Pamela Blair, Education	(209)533-1668
Jan Jorn-Baird, Publicity	(209)532-1106
Barry Boulton, Newsletter Editor	(209)596-0612

rbarryboulton@gmail.com

YOUR AUDUBON COMMITTEES

Ron & Barbara McDow, Bird Box Trail	(650)391-5277
Tom Harrington, Book Sales	(209)694-8564
Anthea Neilson, Hospitality	(209)533-0360
Pamela Blair, Scholarship	(209)533-1668