

Sierra Squawker



PUBLIC PROGRAM - OCTOBER 19th at 7pm

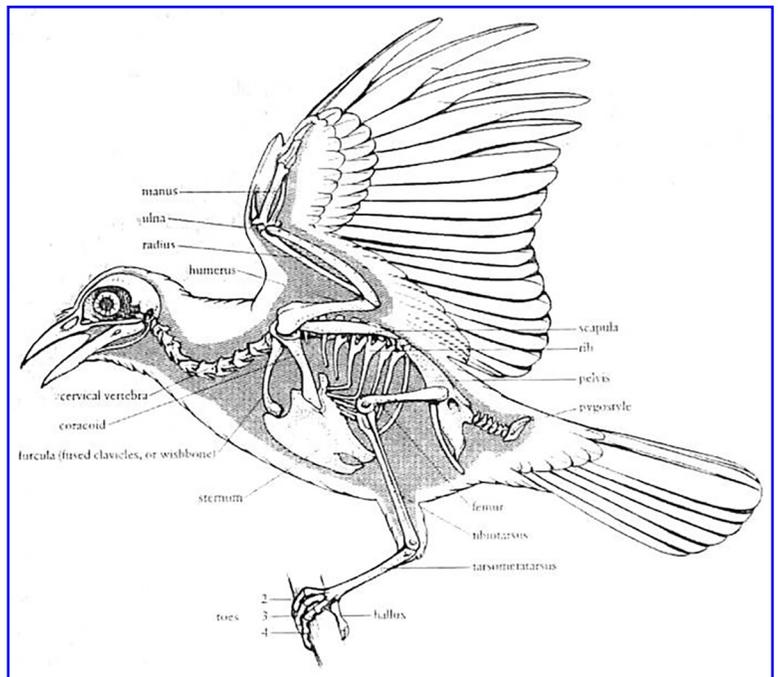
“INSIDE BIRDS: AVIAN STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION”

Presented by **NANCY MULEADY-MECHAM, Ph.D.**

Join Doc. Nancy for a literal look inside birds. How have they evolved to be the unique class they are today? From skeleton to muscles, digestion to their varied senses, we will explore these wonderful co-inhabitants of planet earth.

Doc. Nancy is an Adjunct Professor of Biology at Northern Arizona University as well as a Visiting Lecturer for the University of Virginia Semester At Sea Program where she taught biology around the world. Doc Nancy was selected by the United States as a Fulbright Scholar and traveled to the Russian Federation to teach at Gorno-Altai State University in southwest Siberia and to conduct research in remote protected areas.

Nancy is a retired United States National Park Ranger and lives in the Sierra Nevada with her family. When not working on her research on Giant Sequoias she loves to backpack. She also teaches at Columbia College, and is the author of several books. She has completed solo hikes of the John Muir and High Sierra Trails through the Sierra Nevada, hiked through the Alps on The Haute Route from Chamonix to Zermatt, and is a Pacific Crest Trail section hiker.



Join us at **7 PM, October 19th** in the **Tuolumne County Library on Greenley Road in Sonora** to enjoy Nancy'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.

UPCOMING 2016/2017 PUBLIC PROGRAMS

<p>November 16, 2016: Clancy McConnell Avian Restoration in the Central Valley</p>	<p>January 18, 2017: Gavin Emmons and Alacia Welch Condors at Pinnacles NP</p>
<p>December 14: Groveland CBC</p>	<p>February 15, 2017: Tori Seher Birds of Alcatraz</p>
<p>December 17: Sonora CBC</p>	
<p>January 1, 2017: Calaveras CBC</p>	

A PELAGIC TRIP - 9/15/16

by Steven Umland

I treated myself to a pelagic trip for my birthday. The day dawned bright and clear as I approached Monterey's Fisherman's Wharf. I had signed up with Shearwater Journeys as I have been out with them several times before. At 7, Debi Shearwater commenced with the safety talk and introduced us all to the captain, Tinker, and all the expert spotters.

Leaving the harbor, there were dozens of Brown Pelicans, Brandt's Cormorants, and cacophonous California Sea Lions. While we were scanning the jetty, we picked up several Black Turnstones and a lone Surfbird.

Out in Monterey Bay, we spied a few Pigeon Guillemots, Common Murres and a couple of Great Egrets that were hunting on the kelp beds. We immediately picked up a contingent of Western Gulls that followed the boat snapping up the anchovies that we were using to chum. As we got farther out to the edge of the bay, we started seeing **Black-vented Shearwaters**, the first tubenoses of the day. These are seen in large numbers off the coast of Southern California.



Black-vented Shearwater

We saw 3 more species of shearwaters during the day, the ubiquitous Sooty, the Pink-footed, and Buller's. We saw more Buller's on that trip than had been seen on all the trips so far this year. To round out the tubenoses for the day, a couple of Black-footed Albatross came to the boat, Pacific Fulmar, and South Polar Skua were seen.

Several Rhinoceros Auklets appeared on the water and then quickly flew away, while dozens of delicate Red-necked Phalaropes skittered by during the day to delight the crowd.

For me, being out on the ocean is wondrous. The birds are all so different than the ones that inhabit our area. Watching the shearwaters skim effortlessly just above the surface of the water then pull up, turn, and drop back down to glide some more fills me with awe. When I catch a glimpse of a totally different world than the one in which I live, I feel like I am witness to a special event and I am glad I am actually there and not watching it on the tube.

As if birds weren't enough, breaching Humpback Whales put on a show the entire day. Whales were erupting from the water within 200 yds of the boat. Pack of Sea Lions and Dolphins were seen intermittently to round out the day.

There are several companies around that cater to pelagic birders. Schedule a trip with one and join in on a journey into a different and phenomenal world!

Steven Umland

"BIRDS OF THE PACIFIC SLOPE"

by Andrew Grayson

Now available for viewing

On July 12, 2016, Stanislaus Audubon Society donated "Birds of the Pacific Slope" to the Vasche Library at California State University, Stanislaus. The two-volume set of Andrew Jackson Grayson's works is housed in Special Collections. Members of the public who wish to review the books can call the Reference Department and make an appointment to see them. Appointments should be made at least 24 hours prior to the visit. Photo identification will be required upon arrival. Tel: (209)667-3232.

The second volume consists of 156 plates of his splendid watercolors. Those of you who attended our annual potluck in June will remember that Sal Salerno, President of the Stanislaus Audubon Society, showed them to us. What Sal showed then is available for individual library patrons who make the trip to view.

EFFECTS OF THE DROUGHT

by John Turner

The past several years of drought have brought about many observable changes. We've lost a couple of blue oak trees on our property here at Lake Don Pedro and also several more on neighboring properties. The toyons and holly cherry we've planted during in the 22 years we've lived here are holding their own. The redbuds have mostly gone into dormancy to survive or are dying.

The seasonal bird population has changed in that the summer-only residents here – Ash-throated Flycatchers, Western Kingbirds, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Bullock's and Hooded Orioles seemed to have arrived a few weeks earlier

than “normal” – and all but the Hooded Orioles had departed earlier. The populations are smaller, with the exception of the Bullock’s and Hooded Orioles. They have increased over the years with the Hooded Orioles making the most notable increase. We have seen as many as seven at one time.

The California Quail have remained about the same. The good crop of lupines this spring is said to be indicative of good quail populations. The Anna’s Hummingbirds are here year-around with populations swelling in the spring – except this year, where the population did not increase beyond only about a dozen. In years past we had been going through a gallon and a half of sugar water a day – and now only about a quart every two or three days.

Our “typical” late-summer hummingbird migration was non-existent. This year for the first time since we’ve kept track of the hummers, we did not see a single Black-chinned or Rufous Hummingbird. The population of Anna’s hummers have reduced to only a half dozen. So, now we are wondering what winter will bring.

John Turner, August 29
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SIGHTINGS & BEHAVIORS

Sept. 9

At GCSD, eight curious Killdeer follow the rattlesnake up the hill; he was surrounded and in striking range. A Black Phoebe flew in and perched on a branch above the snake watching. As the snake made cover, a ground squirrel came out to challenge him. As rattlesnakes are ambush predators, once they’ve been spotted, the jig is up and, their ability to strike is greatly diminished when not coiled. More than curious, it’s very likely the Killdeer and squirrel were attempting to drive the snake out of their respective territories

Carol Rosalind

Sept 9

First-of-season White-crowned Sparrow juvenile in my yard today. Seems migration is on. Also had a juvenile Black-throated Sparrow, the first of this species that I’ve seen in a couple of years. Had a flycatcher in the yard that I can’t for sure ID - maybe a Gray Flycatcher as it acts like a Phoebe and has a yellow lower mandible with no eye ring.

Charlotte Ginn, Red Hills. Chinese Camp

Sept. 13

Well, the fall migration is well under way; the last Western Tanager has gone while a Wilson’s Warbler and Black-throated Gray Warbler recharged themselves on the way south. I observed a Warbling Vireo feeding on aphids on one of my impatiens plants.

This year for the first time I had no Chestnut-backed Chickadees in summer or fall, but just the opposite for the Spotted Towhee that apparently had an exceptional breeding year here in Arnold, while the numbers of Golden-crowned Kinglets have been lower than usual. Unusually, there have been no Band-tailed Pigeons this fall that normally appreciate my well-stocked feeder but, as an irruptive species, it’s probably found another provider.

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

Sept. 21

Today while down at the lake I saw a White-faced Ibis! At first I thought I was looking at a strange Double-crested Cormorant. When it finally moved its head I could see the distinctive curved beak. It had the brownish-black with green hue plumage that I recalled from prior sightings down at NWRs in the valley. An unexpected surprise!

Kit DeGear, Phoenix Lake Reservoir, elev. 2400'

Sept. 18

This week has brought first-of-season arrivals at our home, a Say’s Phoebe and Spotted Towhee. Today there were a couple White-crowned Sparrows. The last sighting of the Hooded Orioles was Sept. 7 and that is the latest we’ve ever seen them here.

John Turner

Lake Don Pedro, elev. 1075 ft., blue-oak savannah

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Oct. 5 & Nov. 2: GCSD Wednesday Walk

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 Oct 5 and Nov 2. The property encompasses an area of more than 200 acres of oak, pine and willow habitat with three water storage ponds.

On the Sept 7 Bird Walk, 31 species were seen. Highlights included an early Ring-necked Duck, a Cooper’s Hawk, an American Kestrel, Band-tailed Pigeon, House Wren, Orange-crowned Warbler, Wilson’s Warbler and Black-throated Gray Warbler.

Meeet 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.

Jeanne Ridgley (209)962-7598

In the September issue of the Squawker, our resident eBird expert, Steven Umland, introduced and briefly explained the value of eBird in understanding avian trends which leads to better understanding of how conservation programs might work for endangered species - almost all birds species.

CITIZEN SCIENCE - USING eBIRD WITH YOUR HOME COMPUTER

Let's say you just came in from the field and you are perusing your copious notes. You want to get them into eBird immediately. After you sign in, click the "**Submit My Observations**" tab from near the top of the page. You are then asked to designate where you birded. You are given two choices: "**Choose from Your Locations**" is a drop-down list of places you have already submitted checklists from. If you birded a previously submitted site, simply choose it and continue.

Use "**Find it on a Map**" if you have not birded this site before. You will then be asked to name the county you were in. A map of the county is then displayed along with "**Hotspots**" marked. Clicking on a hotspot will then enter the name of the hotspot in the "**Chosen Location**" box to the right. Always use an already established hotspot when available. If one is not available, name the site. Hit the Continue button and you will be asked to enter some more information. Enter it all as best you can. For comments, I usually put in temperature, cloud cover, and wind. You can put in anything you think is relevant.

On the next screen you are given a list. You can have it displayed alphabetically, or taxonomically. Your choice. Put in the number of individuals you saw for each species. When you add a number to a box, an **Add Details** button appears after the species name. This is where you can add pictures, age data, breeding data, and other items as you see fit.

There are three boxes in the right-hand column that will be of interest to you - **Show Rarities**, **Show Subspecies**, and **Group by Most Likely**. If you click **Show Rarities**, likely rare species are added to the list. If you spot one of these you must provide details before you submit your checklist. If you click **Show Subspecies**, birds with different local subspecies are presented (think: Dark-eyed Junco). Lastly, **Group by Most Likely** presents the list by the abundance of each species seen at the site. It gleans all the checklists from the site and orders sightings by how "common" they are.

When finished, decide whether you are submitting a complete checklist (you are reporting ALL the birds you were able to identify) or not. Hit the **Submit** button and you will get a summary of what you just entered AND you have added your sightings to the eBird database. If nothing is flagged by the automatic threshold numbers in the database, you will be done. If you submit something that IS flagged, a local reviewer will get in touch with you at a later date (it could be months or years later).

Next Month: Submitting data on your smart phone.

Contributed by Steven Umland

FALL BIRD-HOUSE SALE - OCTOBER 22

October 22 is the day for the fall birdhouse sale, so it's not too early to start building a birdhouse, bat house or bird feeder to donate to the sale. For wood and/or plans, call Tom Harrington at 209 694-8564 or John Turner at 209 852-2348. We also will need volunteers to help with the sale, which will be held at Rocca Park, Jamestown, between 9am and 12pm.

Sales of bird houses is one of our major sources of income to fund natural science college students as they go off to face increasingly burdensome tuition fees. We are proud of our increasing investment in local students who have a purpose beyond money-making. At the same time, if you've been thinking of installing a bird box, this is the perfect time because the box will be in place and appearing natural to the birds as they move into their 2017 breeding season.

Tom Harrington

NOW IS THE TIME.....SANDHILL CRANES
AT MERCED NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

by Barry Boulton

September 27 & 28

I visited the Refuge on Sandy Mush Road to find Lesser Sandhill Cranes, White-faced Ibis and Egrets (Great and Snowy) in abundance. This is a good time to visit because the center sections of the refuge are not yet flooded, which means that the cranes have fewer options than later in the season so they are fairly close to the auto tour road. Being cranes they're not right beside the road, but close enough to observe comfortably and obtain good photos. In fact, I was lucky



White-faced Ibis

enough to observe and video a couple that was performing one of the cranes' classic bowing dances; very spectacular and, indeed, romantic. Right now there are probably about 200 cranes with at least the same number of ibis and egrets all dispersed but within easy viewing distance. There are also several hundred Black-necked Stilts plus many Killdeer and a few Greater Yellowlegs.



Dragonflies without number are coupled for breeding while feeding on mosquito nymphs in the brackish edge waters. Fortunately no mosquitoes had emerged to eat me!

At the far end of the refuge I saw two Peregrine Falcons foraging in their usual area; I've seen them several times previously.

MERCED NWR FIELD TRIP
THURSDAY, OCT. 5 at 10:00am

I shall visit the refuge this day so if you wish to join me, meet me at the first overlook platform near the entrance (and near the restrooms!) at 10am. If you wish to get there earlier, please do so and we'll catch up with you - or not. In either case, you will have a good birding day. Bring lunch and drinks (and probably mosquito repellent!).

Please let me know if you plan to be there.

Barry Boulton (209)596-0612



Greater Yellowlegs

SAY GOODBYE TO THE WESTERN SCRUB-JAY

Remember when there was the Scrub Jay? Ahhhh! Those were the "good ol' days". It was then split into three: The Western Scrub-Jay, the Florida Scrub-Jay, and the Island Scrub-Jay. Well, I was at Phoenix Lake the other day and when I tried to enter WSJA into my list, I was met with "California/Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay" which was listed as "Rare" for our area. Hmmmmm. Stupid smart phone.

A bit of research on my smart computer at home informed me that, indeed, the Scrub-Jays have gone through another split. Due to several differences, we now have the **California Scrub-Jay** and the Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay.

As you can probably tell, the California Scrub-Jay can be found from Baja California to Washington. Easy! As a rule of thumb, if the Scrub-Jay is encountered west of the Sierra/Cascades it will be a California. Woodhouse's is found east of the mountains to Texas. There is a small overlap in ranges in western Nevada.

The California Scrub-Jay is a deeper richer blue with brighter gray-white underparts. It also has a more distinct blue necklace. The Woodhouse's, on the other hand, is dimmer blue and dingier gray.

Thought you'd like to know! Steven Umland

HERE'S ANOTHER ONE - "BUTTERBUTTS"

Affectionately known to bird watchers as "butterbutts," Yellow-rumped Warblers are at the center of another discussion over what defines a species. In 1973, the Myrtle and Audubon's warbler species were lumped into one to create the yellow-rumped. But ornithologists may have had it right the first time as suggested by DNA evidence. We must await the American Ornithological Union decision.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS!!!

Merced NWR Needs your Help **Volunteers Needed for Cleanup**

Merced National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) has some light duties on the preserve that they are unable to handle with their limited staff. We in Fresno Audubon could help with these "housekeeping" duties. They need help one to two hours a month on a Saturday. We can tie fall birding in with the cleaning.

We will be cleaning the walking trails, washing down the signs, picking up trash, etc. Saturday is when Madeline from San Luis can join us and give us some info on the preserve. Tara (the Merced manager) will assign work areas and tasks, and they will furnish all bags and any cleaning supplies. Bring gloves, rakes, hand clippers and larger pruning tools, and shovels (no chainsaws please). We can meet up in the morning, do our cleaning then bird together later (and of course bird as you make the rounds).

The first cleaning day is Saturday 15 October 2016. We will meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Merced NWR parking lot by the viewing platform, Sandy Mush Road entrance. The Rangers are wanting to do an ice cream party or something else fun for all of us as a "thank you" for our efforts.

Contact:

Jane Manning

Conservation Chair, Fresno Audubon Society

cjmanning2@gmail.com

cell 559-978-0192

PS

As I indicated in my article, this is the time to visit, and you'll meet refuge staff as well - a great opportunity.

BB

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/

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