

Sierra Squawker



PUBLIC PROGRAM - APRIL 19th at 7pm

“eBird - Please Use It”

Presented by Steven Umland

As we know, many birds are under threat of extinction and even those not threatened in the short-term have question marks about their long term sustainability. In order to construct and justify conservation programs, particularly for migratory birds that use breeding and over-winter territories separated by great distances, knowledge of their migratory routes and timing are critical because that tells us where we need to conserve or restore suitable habitats. This is where eBird, a database of observations by thousands of birdwatchers like you and me, is the **only** tool that can provide the vast amounts of data required. That's why the birds need us to participate by adding our individual observations.

Whenever I see a bird or flock that I can identify, I enter that information – location, time, species and number – into the database through my smartphone or computer and, hey presto, I've added more data into the system. Multiply my observation by thousands of other citizens and you can see that we very quickly have a comprehensive view for any bird species of how, when and where it travels throughout the year.

By clicking on the eBird icon here at right, you will be taken to the Cornell web page that shows you the migration pattern over a full twelve months (i.e. migrations to and from breeding habitats) for 118 species. If you scroll further down the web page you can see individual species movements. The point is, of course, that this is only possible because thousands of birders like you and me have entered their observations in the eBird database.



REQUEST: please install eBird on your smartphone and bring it to the meeting so that we can run through some exercises together to get you comfortable with using the eBird app. You can find the app (free) in your iPhone or Android app store.

Join us at **7 PM, April 19th** in the **Tuolumne County Library on Greenley Road in Sonora** to enjoy this 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 2017 PUBLIC PROGRAMS

May 17, 2017: Tom Hahn
Birds of the High Sierra

June 14, 2017: Annual Meeting, Potluck and
Election of CSAS Officers

July - August Summer break

September Timothy Manolis
Dragonflies

**PLEASE DON'T FORGET:
CSAS OFFICERS NEEDED**

After June, two of our current Officers will not be continuing on the Board and so we are looking for "new blood". As a new Officer, you would not suddenly become responsible for CSAS! Rather, you would learn the different roles and think about taking over one of them at a future date.

If you are interested in serving, please contact one of our nominating Committee members:

- Linda Millspaugh.....(209)586-9557**
- Kit DeGear.....(925)822-5215**
- Barry Boulton.....(209)596-0612**



In his "spare time", Steven Umland updated the list of birds that you can see in our two counties. Our original list is now rather long in the tooth with some new entrants, changed names and different relationships between species, all of which Steven has updated in this attractive new version.

It will be available for sale at the public meeting on April 19th when Steven will make his eBird presentation. You can discuss changes in avian families and names with him at that time.

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SIGHTINGS & BEHAVIORS

Mar. 1

Was out on this beautiful start to March. Phoenix Lake was busy with two hunting Bald Eagles and two species of Teal, Cinnamon and Green-winged.

Steven Umland.

Mar. 4

Bright, sunny spring day here in Chinese Camp. Four Bald Eagles, 1 adult and 3 juveniles, were in a tussle over a critter in the pasture – they looked like a bunch of vultures! One grabbed it and tried to fly away, but dropped it on the corral fence. He couldn't figure out what to do, so left it there.

Charlotte Ginn, Red Hills, Chinese Camp.

Mar. 11

Made a brief stop on the south Tulloch Lake road where it comes close to the marshy areas along the margin of Goodwin Reservoir. I was following up on reports of Marsh Wren there. Found a Marsh Wren - initially heard calls, then a couple of song phrases during my time there. Eventually saw the bird moving around in the cattails. While doing so heard a single "whinny" call of a Sora that seemed to be responding to movements of gallinules in a patch of the marsh. That was a surprise to me.

John Harris, Oakdale.

Mar. 13

At home, observed a first year Sharp-shinned Hawk eating a sparrow-sized bird in a tree just off our deck. Also saw FOS (first of season) female Rufous Hummingbird.

Mar. 14

Heard the unmistakable voices of many Snow Geese high above who were heading northward. Because of their height I could not discern if it was a mixed flock, though I did not hear the higher and slightly different calls of Ross's Geese.

Mar. 16

Our FOS male Bullock's Oriole appeared this morning in our blue oaks as they are just leafing out and showing catkins. Because of the colder than normal February, the trees were later to leaf out and our yearly Orioles were a bit later too. Last year they first appeared on March 1st.

Mar. 17

I heard and finally sighted two skeins of Snow Geese flying northward parallel to the foothills high above.

Mar. 23

We had our FOS hood Oriole male. I also saw the first female Bullock's Oriole, and I again saw another long skein of snow geese. We have at least one male and one female Rufous Hummingbird at our home.

John Turner, Lake Don Pedro, Tuolumne County.

Mar. 13

Took a short walk on the Confidence Trail today. Mountain Quail strolled by less than 30' away! Later, I noticed a large bird fly into a tree - a Pileated Woodpecker. A Townsend's Warbler was icing on the cake.

Steven Umland, Tuolumne Co.

Mar. 18

Saw my FOS Western Kingbird. He chased the poor little Says Phoebe who has been my companion for the last few months. Also spotted FOS Bullocks Oriole! Male came to my suet feeder.

Charlotte Ginn, Red Hills, Chinese Camp.

Mar. 19

I saw a White-headed Woodpecker along Cherry Lake Road which is a new species for me at this location.

Jeanne Ridgley, Groveland.

Mar. 21

Amazing day for Swallows! I have never seen so many at one time. 4 species were after some kind of insects that were coming from the creek. Blackbirds were after them too. The rain must have stirred up the creek. After the thunderstorm, dozens of the swallows sat on the fence so I had a good look at them. There were 4 Northern Rough-winged, 60 Tree, 10 Violet-green and 2 Barn Swallows.

Charlotte Ginn, Jamestown - Six-bit Ranch Rd.

Mar. 23

Observed 40 Tri-colored Blackbirds at Two Mile Bar Recreation Area. White median coverts and calls lower pitched and more nasal. Feeding on ground in pasture next to road.

Ron McDow.

Mar. 25

Just minutes ago at least a dozen Yellow-rump Warblers flew in to the trees beside my back deck. They are combing the branches looking for food. So great to see so many, they are obviously migrating, from/to unknown.

Carol Rosalind, Groveland.

Mar. 29

I have been keeping my ears primed and was rewarded with a FOS sighting of a beautiful male Bullock's Oriole.

Kit DeGear, At home near Phoenix Lake.

FIELD TRIPS & ACTIVITIES

April 5 & May 3 - GCS D 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 April 5 and May 3.

On the March 1 Bird Walk, 25 species were seen including a Great Blue Heron and a Lincoln's Sparrow.

Birders who wish to bird at GCS D must be accompanied by an authorized birder and have signed an Agreement and Release from Liability Form.

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 about two-three hours.

Jeanne Ridgley (209)962-7598

April 1 - East Sonora Bird Walk

I will lead a walk along Fitch Ranch Road off of Yosemite Road. This area is through pastures, oaks, past a pond and seasonal stream where the usual foothill birds can be seen such as Acorn Woodpeckers, Red-tailed Hawks and Sparrows. Last year we saw 31 species including Phainopepla, Western Tanager, Bullock's Oriole, Western Bluebird and many others, not forgetting a kettle of White Pelicans! This will be a walking tour on a gravel road of about 2 miles.

Those interested can meet to carpool at Perko's at 8:30am or go directly to the start at 16901 Yosemite Road by 9:00am where there will be a limited area for parking. Carpools are encouraged. Bring lunch, water, binoculars, field guides, scopes if available. Rain cancels.

Tom Parrington 928-3835 or eattep@sbcglobal.net

April 7 - 9: Tri-colored Blackbird Survey

As you know, the Tricolored Blackbird is having a tough time surviving because of loss of breeding habitats. In order to take local conservation measures, we need to know where they are breeding and so during these three days we will visit all known sites in our two counties to count them.

We could use a few extra observers - and you don't have to commit to 3 days, although you can! Participating for one day will give you a good insight into their activities and, of course, we'll see many other species too. If you are interested in participating in this important conservation effort, please call our coordinator **Ken Smith (949)922-1455**, or myself **Barry Boulton (209)596-0612**.

REMINDER: Saturday, April 8 - Bird Box Sale

Location: Calaveras County Water District (CCWD) at 120 Toma Court in San Andreas. From Hwy 49 at the north end of San Andreas, turn south onto Pool Station Road, left on George Reed Court to Toma Court.

Time: 10:00am - 1:00pm, and if anybody wishes to come and assist for all or part of that time, call:

Tom Harrington at (209)694-8564.

April 29 - Lambert Lake Field Trip

Meet at my address, 18288 Lambert Lake Rd., Sonora at 8:00am and we can walk or carpool about 1/4 mile to this small TUD reservoir. On the private property of Dr. Charles Bennett, DVM, Sonora Veterinary Group, CSAS has been given permission to conduct this field trip with access to about 1/2 the lake. Rain cancels.

Tom Harrington, 694-8564.

BARN OWL SURPRISE - 10 EGGS!

Last year a Barn Owl pair bred a family of four out of seven eggs in an owl box in the garage at our home at La Grange; well, they're back in an even bigger way this year!

Mar. 4

I checked out the owls this evening and both male and female were in the box and would not leave as they usually do - when I climb up the ladder to open the back of the owl box, I usually can hear the owls thumping around in preparation for exiting through the front opening. This time there was absolutely no sound and so I expected the box to be empty or possibly an egg or two. When I opened the box, the male was standing upright to the left and the female was prone in the corner. By the time I took the picture, the male quickly positioned himself atop the female to seemingly protect her, who possibly was protecting her eggs.

Mar. 4



Mar. 20



Mar. 20

Now I believe the reason the female was prone in the corner of the box was to protect this mass of eggs. Ten eggs is an incredible number of eggs and more than we've ever seen for a Barn Owl.

Mar. 24



Mar. 24

I checked on the owl box last night and all I can say is, "So far, so good!" We're not sure if there are five or six hatchlings, but we can identify one egg that is cracked and three un-opened eggs.

Mar. 29

There are now eight hatchlings (not all in view) and two eggs

remain to hatch, though one has a lot of cracking and a hole pecked in it. In the lower left of the corner is a fresh-caught vole. The parents were again screeching and flying around, very upset. When I exited the carport, the male swooped down over my head, but still at least 10 feet above.



Report & photos by John Turner

Long-billed Curlew at Pine Mountain Lake

Seen on March 27, this may be a first sighting in Tuolumne County; eBird asked for a photo and details for verification because it's rare up here.

Jeanne Ridgley

*Long-billed Curlew at Pine Mountain Lake
photo by Carol Rosalind*



FIELD TRIP REPORT

Merced NWR, March 1 & 2 (Overnight trip)



American Bittern

A small group of CSASers spent two glorious days at the Merced NWR so that we could observe and enjoy avian activities at both sunset and sunrise - and we were not disappointed. With low thousands of Lesser Sandhill Cranes and many thousands of Snow and Ross's Geese, constant movement and noise was the norm, with that beautiful crane song being the audible centerpiece.

But cranes and geese weren't the whole action by any means; there's always the possibility of seeing a reclusive **American Bittern** and, sure enough, we passed close by one that was hiding in the reeds on the south side. Despite attempting to look like a reed, John Sutake's eagle eyes realized it wasn't plant matter and there it was, the upright neck and head with two anxious eyes watching us and wishing we were gone. I was intrigued by the small ball of fluff on its bill tip, perhaps a ruse to look more plant-like?



Inscrutable female GHO



Yellow-headed BB

Great Horned Owls were easily seen; three incubating on nests, and one male out in the open just looking around and beginning to think about foraging at sunset. We also saw a Cooper's Hawk on the way in - not an everyday sight, and Kit DeGear caught a glimpse of a Burrowing Owl among the ground squirrels.

As always, Northern Harriers were constantly spooking the waterbirds, although all the Harriers that we observed were females - no "gray ghosts" as the males are known.

Among all of the Red-winged Blackbirds, were just three **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** and no Tri-colored (although I did observe the latter here just a few weeks ago).



Wilson's Snipe

Many Killdeer were prancing along the road and constantly calling in their trademark fashion, while Western Meadowlarks were chasing insects in the meadow. Cryptically-colored **Wilson's Snipe** were unusually plentiful and we flushed several along the auto-route. Very soon they will be winging their way back down to Mexico and South America to breed. Interestingly, when their eggs are hatched and the young ready, the male takes the oldest two (usually but not always 2) to care for them and teach them survival skills, leaving the female to do the same with the rest of the brood.

Report & photos by Barry Boulton

Band-tailed Pigeon - Cooper's Hawk Fatal Encounter

There were 20 Bandtails on the railing that I use as a platform feeder. The whole flock, two Western Grey Squirrels, and a couple of Dark-eyed Juncos were feeding. The group flushed in a second, but sadly this guy did not move fast enough and took the second best option, freeze in place. At first the Cooper's did not see the Bandtail, he was facing the opposite direction, so the plan was working. But though frozen the Bandtail stood out.



The Cooper's turned and watched the Bandtail for 5 minutes, perhaps trying to decide if it was prey. When the Coopers came in, talons first, the Bandtail flew off to the left, forced towards the ground and caught.

He was taken into a small pine very close by, and plucked - I see the small feathers on the ground. I assume they were the breast feathers and he didn't clean any more than that. There are no primaries or large feathers. I would have stopped this if I could, because my feeding caused it; however, I knew if I moved the pigeon would flush, and that would be it.

Carol Rosalind



Osprey building nest at New Melones

Photos - Alan Beymer

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 Starbucks conference room at Tuolumne Road just off Mono Way/108.

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/

Your CSAS Officers

Tom Parrington, President	(209)928-3835
Walt Kruse, VP Conservation	(707)548-1829
David Harden, VP Programs	(209)533-1668
Jeanne Ridgley, Secretary	(209)962-7598
Linda Millspaugh, Treasurer	(209)586-9557
Ken Smith, Field Trips	(949)922-1455
Pattie Henderson, Membership	(209)586-2169
Jan Jorn-Baird, Publicity	(209)532-1106
Barry Boulton, Newsletter Editor	(209)596-0612

Your CSAS 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
John Turner, Website	(209)852-2348
Steven Umland, Sonora/Groveland CBCs	(209)352-6985