

Central Sierra Audubon Society

Sierra Squawker



SONORA PUBLIC MEETING

THE LIFE OF AN OAK WOODLAND

Presented by Mike McGraw, USBoR New Melones



What's the difference between a woodland and a savannah? What gregarious bird's chatter "*Jacob, Jacob, Jacob*" lends a distinctive call to our oak communities?

Join Bureau of Reclamation Park Ranger Mike McGraw to explore the Blue Oak Woodland and the plants and animals that call this uniquely California foothill ecosystem home.

Mike McGraw has worked as a Park Ranger with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) since 2005 at both Lake Berryessa and New Melones Lake.



He's provided interpretive programming for both adults and children, specifically water and natural history education. Prior to his service with BOR, Mike conducted vegetation surveys for the National Park Service in the Santa Monica Mountains. He also worked for the park service as a ranger in such diverse locations as the Grand Canyon, Hawaii Volcanoes, Death Valley and Hot Springs Arkansas. A passion for environmental education led to a stint as an Outdoor Science School teacher in Los Angeles County, teaching at a Wildlife College in Kenya, and working as a Peace Corps volunteer at a national park in Malawi, Africa. Mike grew-up in Southern California and went to college up at Humboldt State University where he received a bachelor's degree in biology and a master's in education.

He went to college up at Humboldt State University where he

WHEN? Wednesday, April 18 at 6.30pm

WHERE? County Library, Sonora

CALAVERAS PUBLIC MEETING

BIRDS & WATER

Presented by Barry Boulton

A living creature that can fly is already way ahead in the “that’s amazing” stakes, but for some birds, amazing doesn’t quite get you there.....take the Black Skimmer that so elegantly floats at a precise height above the water’s surface with only its longer lower mandible cutting through the water; it’s hoping to hit a small fish whereupon its bill automatically closes and, hey presto, here’s a meal! You have to wonder – where did that idea come from?



Then there’s the Black Turnstone (yes, the name does actually mean something) that nonchalantly flips stones over with its bill, seeking anything tasty hidden underneath. It all happens so quickly – the flip of the stone, the check for food and the decision that something is edible or not. It happens in a continuous movement followed by a quick run to the next stone .

Or the Sanderling flocks following the waves that recede from shore, as they forage for small worms and so on revealed by the receding water – and then they scamper back as the next wave comes in.

Using high definition video techniques, we will watch these birds and others as they revel in their water environments to display these fascinating behaviors – they don’t mean to entertain us, but they surely do.

Barry Boulton is President of the Central Sierra Audubon Society and an avid videographer and presenter of bird behaviors and their stories.



WHEN? Thursday, April 19 at 6pm

WHERE? Manzanita Arts Emporium, Angels Camp

FIELD TRIP REPORT

March 18 - Wards Ferry Road

A Field Trip along Wards Ferry Road from the Parringtons' barn to Richards' Ranch Road and return was changed from Saturday March 17 to Sunday March 18 due to wet pastures from prior rains. Our happy band of 15 birders started out at 9:00am past a pond with several Red-winged Blackbirds, then toward open areas with good viewing of raptors including a Cooper's Hawk and Red-tailed Hawks. In all we saw 34 species including the usual White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows, plus Savannah Sparrows, a Lincoln's Sparrow, and Rufous-crowned Sparrows.



Photo - Kit DeGear

After lunch in the barn, most hiked a few hills through pastures to an overlook into Turnback Creek. One birder tracked our mileage at over 4 miles. **Tom Parrington**

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Wednesday, April 4 - GCSD

The first Wednesday of the month Bird Walk at Groveland Community Services property at 18966 Ferretti Road, Groveland, will be led by Jeanne Ridgley on April 4. The property encompasses an area of more than 200 acres of oak, pine and willow habitat with three water storage ponds.

On the March bird walk we saw 26 species. The highlights were a Cooper's Hawk and ten Wood Ducks on the large pond.

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. **Jeanne Ridgley**

Sunday, April 15 - Ospreys at New Melones

Several Osprey pairs are breeding at New Melones Lake, and we will observe nests at comfortable distances for the Ospreys so as to not disturb them. I have been observing and taking extensive video recordings to understand their very interesting behaviors, and will share my observations with you.

We will meet at 9am at the Visitors Center where we will be greeted by Natural Resources Ranger Pat Sanders who has watched Ospreys nesting at New Melones for many years.

The Visitors Center is located on the Tuolumne side of the Stanislaus River along highway 49. As we enter the Tutletown area there is an entrance fee of \$10 unless you have a Golden Age Passport or similar. No fee at the Visitors' Center.

Barry Boulton (209)596-0612

Sunday, April 22 - Indigeny Reserve

Please join me as we bird through the beautiful grounds at Indigeny. Besides the apple orchards, there are large oaks, some pines, stream-side thickets and a marshy area with reeds that provide some great habitats for birds. As always, bring your binoculars and/or scopes, wear muted colors and you may wish to include a hat, sunscreen and water.

On our last visit on March Sunday, Mar. 25 four of us braved the recent snow and chilly start. Highlights included a Fox Sparrow, a Lincoln's Sparrow, Bewick's Wrens, a pair of quite vocal Red-shouldered Hawks and 2 pairs of Red-tailed Hawks (one of which was "foot dragging"). A total of 32 species were seen.

The walk will last 2-3 hrs. Children are welcome! Meet in the parking lot at 8:00 AM. Rain will cancel the trip. Follow the signs from the intersection of Greenley and Lyons/Bald Mountain Roads in Sonora. After a few miles on Lyons/Bald Mountain Road, turn right onto Apple Hill Drive where there is a large sign that says "Apple Valley Ranches." A quick left turn onto Summers Lane leads you to Indigeny.

Kit DeGear (925) 822-5215 or kdegear@gmail.com

ACTION ALERT

In April, the California Fish & Game Commission will vote on whether to list the **Tricolored Blackbird** under the California Endangered Species Act. Found almost exclusively in California, Tricolored Blackbird breeding colonies can teem with more than 20,000 birds, sometimes all settled into a single 10-acre field or wetland to raise their young. In the 19th Century, Tricolored Blackbirds numbered in the millions, but today there are only about 178,000 remaining.

It would be helpful if you can go to this URL to submit a letter supporting such listing to the Commission: https://act.biologicaldiversity.org/onlineactions/Ayf3lt66pEe0Qlhgk-G_6qq2?&sourceID=1004352&utm_source=ad&utm_medium=website&utm_campaign=currentalerts

As you'll see, there is a draft letter that you can use as is or modify before submitting.

Where the heck is Borrego Springs?

This is the most frequent response I get when tell people we are moving there. For several years I have occupied the CSAS Field Trip chair. I've enjoyed planning and encouraging members and the public to participate and lead field trips locally and beyond Tuolumne and Calaveras counties. It has been a wonderful and stimulating flight for this old birder.

There are currently vacancies on the CSAS Board and my leaving creates another gap to fill. I hope and believe birders will step forward to fill these positions and carry on the excellent work of this chapter. CSAS is a small chapter, but mighty in their support of bird watching, environmental issues, educational opportunities and college scholarships for promising local science students.

I thank the CSAS Board and membership for their support and encouragement over the years.

Eve and I will miss you - Birding is for the Birds!

Ken Smith, Ex-Field Trip Chair



President's note:

On behalf of the CSAS Board and membership, I wish to thank Ken for all of his enthusiasm and energy that he has devoted to us and to the birds that he and Eve love so much.

I've always enjoyed so much seeing Ken walk into the room with his big, infectious smile and booming voice that brought so much life into the room; I shall miss that very, very much.

Meanwhile, we hope that Ken and Eve are very happy in Borrego Springs, and we hope to keep in good contact with them. Actually, there's an annual bird festival in Borrego Springs so perhaps next March a group of us might meet them there?

Barry Boulton

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS!

New Melones Volunteers

The Bureau of Reclamation's New Melones Lake is seeking volunteers to assist at the New Melones Lake Visitor Center and Museum. Located off of Highway 49, approximately ten miles north from downtown Sonora, the New Melones Lake Visitor Center and Museum presents exhibits which showcase the area's rich natural and cultural history and Reclamation's role in creating New Melones Lake. The Visitor Center also provides information on recreational opportunities both inside Reclamation managed areas and the surrounding region.

Volunteer opportunities at the Visitor Center include:

- Working as an Information Desk Specialist: greeting visitors, answering phone calls, questions, and providing resources such as maps and guides of New Melones Lake and the surrounding areas.
- Assisting park rangers with school programs and special events.
- Helping to care for drought-tolerant native plants in the garden and nursery.

Volunteers have an opportunity to work towards acquiring annual day use, boat launch and Federal Park passes with hours worked. Experience working with diverse populations, enjoying people and being reliable are desired attributes. Work shift opportunities are available seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The New Melones Lake Visitor Center and Museum is located at 6850 Studhorse Flat Road, Sonora, CA 95370.

For information on becoming a Visitor Center Volunteer, please contact Park Ranger Mike McGraw at 209-536-9094 at extension 233 or email mmcgraw@usbr.gov

CSAS & Audubon California endorse Prop. 68

Audubon California has long fought to protect California's birds and natural landscapes, and that is why we emphatically support Proposition 68 - the California Clean Water & Safe Parks Act that will be on the June 5 ballot.

The passage of Prop. 68 will further Audubon California's conservation goals around water, the Salton Sea, coastal habitat protection, working lands, and the conservation of priority bird species.

Audubon California was part of a broad coalition working closely with lawmakers to put this \$4 billion bond on the June 5 primary ballot in California.

Please vote for Prop. 68 on June 5

SIGHTINGS & OBSERVATIONS

Mar. 11

I decided to check out the Tulloch Dam Recreation Area this afternoon (elev. ~500'). On the way I spotted a Ferruginous Hawk about a mile before the Rec Area. Perched in a tree on Tulloch Rd. about half way from Hwy 108 to Goodwin Dam Recreation Area. White breast and pale head with a little darker gray by eyeline; its back, that I could see, was lightish brown. I have previously seen this species not all that far away on Wilms Rd., Rock River Road and Cooperstown Road, so when it came up as rare in eBird I was surprised. I was much more thrilled with my sighting of the Peregrine Falcon!

Kit DeGear

Mar. 20

We've had Ravens all winter, but last week we saw the first Grosbeaks, five of them, foraging on the ground next door, and this morning, on the day of the Equinox, two Mourning Doves on the snow behind our back deck. Today, March 22, our first Junco of the year, standing on a rock in the rain.

Steve Lauterbach, Big Trees Village, 5,000ft.

Mar. 25

First-of-season sightings - this past week we've had a total of three Rufous Hummingbirds seen at once, two Pine Siskins and a male Bullock's and a male Hooded Oriole. Also seen and heard were two large skeins of Snow Geese fly over our house on Friday and again on Saturday.

John Turner, Lake Don Pedro.

American Coots on Lake Tulloch

I wanted to share an observation that you might find interesting. We have a home on Lake Tulloch that we visit occasionally during the winter months. It is my practice to paddle in my kayak about a mile to a mile and a half up to the northern reaches of the lake. This year, because of work on the dam, the water levels in the reservoir are about 25 feet lower than usual. This had a dramatic impact on the Coot population at the lake.

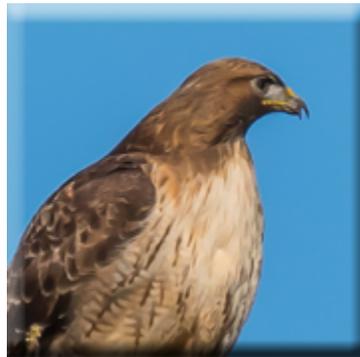
Looking at my eBird logs that I have been keeping since the fall of 2015, this is what I have been able to determine. In the winter of 2015/16, the coots arrived at the lake in October and the population at the north end of the reservoir peaked at 160 birds in January. In the winter of 2016/17, the coots once again returned in October and the population peaked at 425 in January. This winter, with the reduced water levels, the coots arrived in October and the population swelled to 457 by November (meaningfully higher than is typical for that month). With the dramatically lower water levels in December and January when work was being done on the dam, the population declined to less than 30. I am curious what the population will look like next year.

Bill Donahoe

Comments on the Coot situation by John Sutake:

Although an omnivore that eats crustaceans, mollusks, insects and their larvae as well as grasses and grains, the Coot is primarily a shallow-water plant feeder. Suitable plants grow only down to a few feet because they require sunlight to synthesize the starches, sugars and nutrients that keep them alive, so they exist only around the periphery of the lake. When the water level dropped quickly by 25 feet, it reached a level where there were no plants so, no food - no Coots!

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Red-tailed Hawk with an odd-shaped Bill

Dave Douglass has been observing this Red-tailed Hawk near the River Road and the Jacksonville Road intersection that has a very odd-shaped beak as you see here. He contacted Hawkwatch International for an explanation, and

here's what they said: "That's quite an interesting image! There's a deformity sometimes seen in Red-tailed Hawks called *Long-billed hawk Syndrome* where an over growth of keratin results in horrendously deformed beaks. The deformity can become so severe that it results in death due to starvation. However, this bird doesn't fit that pattern. The bill looks different than a keratin overgrowth and the bird appears to be a healthy adult. Dave Oleyar, our senior scientist, had this to say about it: "I'd go with either a natural genetic defect, a contaminant-related defect, or an injury to the beak at some point in this bird's life. I'd probably put my money on an injury that resulted in double growth - think two finger/toe nails growing after an injury or the like. Sometimes there's no definitive answer for unique occurrences like this, we just have to marvel at it and appreciate that this individual seems to be doing well".

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Dave has also been observing very aggressive behavior at the Osprey nest on Jacksonville Road. This has occurred on two days to his knowledge, and also occurred there last year.



eBird

OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU COMPETITIVE TYPES!!!

GLOBAL BIRD DAY MAY 5TH

**How many birds can a world of birders find in one day?
You can help answer that question on 5 May 2018!**

Click to see Global Big Day 

Last year's **Global Big Day** featured more than 20,000 people across 162 countries, collectively reporting 6,637 species of birds—more than 60% of the world's bird diversity. This May, you can be a part of the fun. All you have to do is spend a few minutes birding, and tell eBird what you find.

Here are three quick ways to have the most fun: Scout your birding spots for 5 May. Finding where the birds are ahead of time makes the big day birding more fun, and also gives you more chances to be out enjoying birds.

Click to learn how to use eBird to find birds - 

Use eBird Mobile. eBird's free data-entry app takes the time out of data entry, with tools like **Quick Entry** - 

Click to try eBird Mobile - 

Get a friend involved. Perhaps this is a good birding buddy, or someone who has never been birding. Make it a friendly competition, or join forces as a Global Big Day team, and put your marker on the **global participation map** at - 

Share on social media using #GlobalBigDay.

Click to check out the **Facebook event** - 

No matter what you do, have a great time, enjoy the birds around you, and let us know what you find! We're excited to see what we can achieve together on Global Big Day.

Enjoy! Chris, Marshall, Brian, and Ian—for Team eBird

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, August, and December), 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

Barry Boulton, President (209)596-0612

Tom Parrington, Past President (209)928-3835

Walt Kruse, VP Conservation (707)548-1829

Kit DeGear, VP Programs (925)822-5215

Jeanne Ridgley, Secretary (209)962-7598

Linda Millsbaugh, Treasurer (209)586-9557

XXX, Field Trips

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

Pamela Blair, Scholarship (209)533-1668

John Turner, Website (209)852-2348

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