

Central Sierra Audubon Society

Sierra Squawker



www.centralsierraaudubon.org

October - 2018

SONORA PUBLIC MEETING

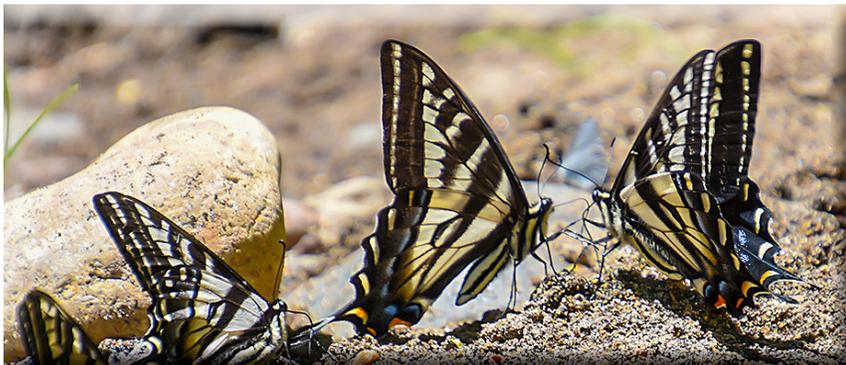
"Butterflies of the Sierra Nevada"

Presented by Jim Mori

In their short but rich lives, butterflies perform many ecological functions in addition to thrilling us with their delicate beauty and grace. It's always a special moment when they stop to drink nectar and you enjoy their spectacular open wings like the Milbert's Tortoiseshell, the Western Tiger Swallowtail, and the Swallowtails swarming at the edge of Beaver Creek in Big Trees State Park.

Jim Mori will guide us through their lifestyles, habitats and needs as he focuses on the butterflies that we can see in the Sierra Nevada.

Jim's lifetime fascination with butterflies and all insects led to his profession as an entomologist and toxicologist. Accompanied by his wife, Glenna, he traveled to many parts of the world collecting and studying thousands of butterflies, which were identified, labeled, and donated to MJC's Great Valley Museum, UC Davis, and other museums throughout the world.



Over these years, they pitched tents in search of their butterfly treasures in mountain ranges, plains, forests, deserts, and tundras in North America from southern Mexico to northern Alaska. Not content at that, they have floated down the Amazon, hiked over the Himalayas, climbed the highest mountain in Borneo and were stoned by angry Arab sheep herders in the Middle East who

thought they were going to harm their animals with butterfly nets!

Jim's extensive resume includes two terms as Director of the Great Valley Museum at Modesto Junior College, and service on the Board of Directors at Big Trees State Park.

Photos courtesy Lucia Gonzalez



Wednesday, October 17 at 6.30pm
At the County Library, Sonora (Greenley Rd)

CALAVERAS PUBLIC MEETING

"Birds of Big Trees State Park"

Presented by Alan Beymer

Growing up in Fresno in the 1950s, I wanted the most coveted job in America: playing center field in Yankee stadium. Thank goodness for junior high school electives. A photo class changed my life. Upon arriving at Bullard High School it became apparent I could not hit a fastball and a baseball career faded. Perhaps I could get to Yankee Stadium on the strength of camera skills.

My camera accompanied me to Fresno State where I discovered that photographs could fill gaping holes in student publications and that prompted me to select journalism as a major. The professors spent countless hours attempting to teach me writing and editing. Upon graduation I took a job with The Fresno Bee as a valley correspondent. In 1974 I began teaching photography at Merced Community College.



While at Merced College I embarked on a new personal photo project about every two years. My final photo project at Merced College was shooting action stills for the sports teams. I retired in 2007 and moved to Arnold in 2011. Upon arriving in Arnold, I discovered there

were not many organized sporting events, but there were lots of trees and birds so I changed my photography theme to birds and trees.



Calaveras Big Trees State Park is a 10-minute drive from our home, so I settled on the park as a location for my photo adventures. Early on I had some luck taking photographs of canyon wrens and I was hooked! For seven years the birds of Calaveras big Trees SP have been entertaining me and challenging my camera skills.

This show is a compilation of some of the most entertaining moments I have had while meandering through Calaveras Big Trees with my camera.

Photos courtesy Alan Beymer



Wednesday, October 24 at 6pm
At Bistro Espresso, Arnold (Cedar Circle)

'TIS MIGRATION TIME!

4 Billion Birds will Fly through American Airspace this Fall



Full migration will bring 4 billion birds into the skies over the United States. That's not a guess—it's hard data, gleaned from the first-ever national bird count using weather radar. Cornell Lab of Ornithology scientists picked through data from 143 weather radar stations from 2013 to 2017 to provide the first large-scale counts of migratory bird activity across the United States.

An average of 4 billion birds passed from Canada across the northern border of the U.S. in autumn, with 2.6 billion birds returning across the Canada–U.S. border in spring. Activity across the southern border was on an even grander scale: an average of 4.7 billion birds left the U.S. for Mexico and other points south each autumn, with 3.5 billion birds heading north across the U.S. southern border each spring.

Radar ornithology is an emerging field that extracts avian activity from weather-radar data to track birds' nocturnal movements. Researchers in this field employ the power of cloud computing and use algorithms to identify bird activity among meteorological phenomena, such as thunderstorms and drizzle. Scientists can then estimate flight altitude, speed, direction, and number of birds per unit of airspace using a wide assortment of radar tools along with existing knowledge of flight behavior, such as how close together migrant birds fly.

The numbers from this study provide a measure of year-to-year bird survival. By comparing the number of birds moving back and forth each autumn and spring, researchers were able to determine an average annual return rate. For birds crossing the U.S. northern border—which includes many short-distance migrants such as sparrows, Snow Buntings, and Dark-eyed Juncos that fly from Canada to spend winter in the Lower 48 states—the average rate of return was 64 percent. But for birds crossing the U.S. southern border—which includes more of the long-distance migrants such as warblers, tanagers, and orioles that travel to Central and South America, three to four times farther than the short-distance migrants—the average rate of return was 76 percent.

For the full story, visit:

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/4-billion-birds-will-fly-through-american-airspace-this-fall/?utm_source=Cornell%20Lab%20eNews&utm_campaign=207c2f8651-Living_Bird_Autumn_2018_TOC_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_47588b5758-207c2f8651-283538329

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Sept. 8 - Salt Spring Valley

Recently, a group of birders from Arnold, who had not been able to go on any of the bird walks at Rock Creek and Salt Springs before, decided to go it on their own. We gathered a group of six, some in our Audubon group and some not, and picked a day to go. I called Barry Boulton and asked if he had any pointers for us, since none of us had ever been there before. I was so happy when he said he could join us and would see if anyone else could come. Kit DeGear, Field Trip Chair, and her husband were also able to go. Nine of us met on September 8th and had what was to be my best birding experience ever. We saw 44 species that day and had a wonderful time. It was so great to have Kit and Barry's help and expertise. It definitely enhanced the experience by leaps and bounds. Our thanks to both of them for making this an experience we all thoroughly enjoyed. It seemed like it worked very well for a group to get a time and place worked out that fit their schedules and then enlisted some help from some knowledgeable people from the group.

Callye Caccamo

Additional comments from Barry Boulton:

The sheer number of species was quite surprising because recent eBird reports indicated far less. The highlights were a Barn Owl resting in a palm tree that startled us as it suddenly flew out; two Double-crested Cormorants and a single White-faced Ibis.



Breeding Western Grebes
Photo courtesy Alan Beymer

But, the real surprise was breeding Western Grebes, 7 nests in all, the first time that this species has been observed breeding here. But, the story has a sad ending because on Sept. 3 Dan Airola saw 13 nests while on Sept. 8 we saw 7. On Sept. 11 there were only 3 nests, and then on Sept. 14 only one remained - I saw one egg in the nest. Finally, on Sept. 20, no nests remained. For several reasons, I'm pretty sure that all nests were unsuccessful: first, all nests were being constantly repaired with additional weeds; second, there was very little vegetation in the reservoir and so repair was performed by taking material from an existing nest. Third, at no time were any

juveniles observed. Finally, as the number of breeding nests declined, the deserted ones were simply gone - they must have sunk. My guess is that the amount of available plant material was insufficient to keep the nests afloat.



Surprise Barn Owl
Photo courtesy Alan Beymer

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Wednesday, Oct. 3 - GCSO

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

Wintering sparrows and waterfowl should be arriving very soon.

Access for birders here is limited. Birders must be accompanied by an authorized birder.

Meet the group in the GCSO 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

Saturday, Oct. 27 - Salt Spring Valley

This valley is so prolific with a wide variety of birds (as in the trip report) that we will return again this month - in fact, I'm planning on this valley being a regular monthly field trip. I'm hoping that on this visit we will see the resident pair of White-tailed Kites - no guarantees though!

Meet at 8am opposite the pond about 1/4 mile along Rock Creek Road off highway 4 near Copperopolis. Bring water, lunch **and** radios (for convoying) if you have them. Lunch at the resort (\$10 per car). Finish by 2pm.

Barry Boulton (209)596-0612

Sunday, Oct. 28 – 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.

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

Tuesday, Dec. 4 - Lodi Sandhill Crane Trip

Beat the weekend crowds to observe both Greater and Lesser Sandhill Cranes resting, eating and dancing in flooded farm fields. We will meet in Sonora and carpool to Lodi, a 90 minute drive, on Tuesday, December 4. We will stop for bathroom breaks and coffee before arriving at Woodbridge Road. There we can view/ photograph the Sandhill cranes and numerous other birds at several spots along this public road. After, we will proceed a few miles north to the Cosumnes River Preserve.

The 2,000 acres of wetlands of the Cosumnes River Preserve are jointly managed by private and government agencies. The Preserve hosts a rich variety of up to 90 seasonal bird species including shore birds and migrating ducks. Expect to see Black-bellied Plover, Black-necked Stilt, Greater Yellowlegs, Dunlin, Long-billed Dowitcher, and many other species. We will stay on the asphalt paths and not venture into the restricted and/or muddy areas. There are restrooms and a covered picnic area that should be available for use. Bring lunch, snacks and water. We will be back in Sonora by dinnertime.

More details will be forthcoming in the November issue of the CSAS Squawker.

Jean Dakota



*Greater Sandhill Cranes taking off at
Cosumnes River Preserve*

Photo courtesy Barry Boulton

SIGHTINGS & OBSERVATIONS

Aug. 11

I do not know if the extremely dense smoke delayed the nesting, but surprisingly today, August 11th, I saw this Dark-eyed Junco feeding a fledgling. Surprise - more so as the juvenile is actually a parasitic Brown-headed Cowbird!



Carol Rosalind, Groveland

Sept. 10

Every day as the water sprinkler timer clicks into action, the Ribbon of Bushtits fly in. They spend about 10 minutes all bathing and enjoying the brief cool down. Occasionally, in the late afternoon, when a different garden sprinkler goes on, they are waiting there, as well.



Carol Rosalind, Groveland

Sept. 18

Fall is here! Just saw the FOS White-crowned Sparrow in my yard. Almost to the day every year.

Charlotte Ginn, Red Hills, Chinese Camp

Charlotte and group:

We too had our first White-crowns today, two immatures. I was just wondering yesterday if yours had arrived yet! Our arrival dates usually fall between the 16th-20th of September, but in 2014, our first one showed up on September 10. In our yard (between Oakdale and Knights Ferry), the numbers slowly build up through the early part of the fall, and we don't usually reach our maximum number till late October.

John Harris

SIGHTINGS & OBSERVATIONS (cont)

Sept. 19

This little Western Screech Owl roosted on our covered porch here today in Rancho Calaveras, Valley Springs area. It stayed a few hours, then flew away at sunset.



Ailene Hughes Garrido, Rancho Calaveras - Valley Springs, 800 ft elevation.

Sept. 21

Just three days in the 3rd week of September up here in Arnold produced a mixture of summer birds and migrants newly arrived – or passing through. Hermit Thrush, Warbling Vireos, Yellow-rumped and Wilson's Warblers joined the Calaveras (Nashville) and Black-throated Gray Warblers along with the Western Tanager (which will shortly migrate).

Because the mountain dogwood (*cornus nuttallii*) has experienced a bumper crop this year, the birds are feasting on them, including Robins and Spotted Towhees. Many others will do so soon, including the Pileated Woodpecker and Cedar Waxwings that I normally see. Many birds that are normally insect eaters use these and other berries in the fall as insect numbers decline, and their young have grown sufficiently that they can survive on fruit.

My bird bath has also been a popular location, attracting both a male and female White-headed Woodpecker, and a Northern Flicker in just those three days. Other birds that use it when I'm there for longer periods hadn't realized my presence before it was time to leave again and didn't use the bath! However, a Red-breasted Nuthatch, Junco, Mountain Chickadee, Steller's Jay, Purple Finch, Brown Creeper did show themselves. Not to be outdone, a Red-shouldered Hawk called out very noisily while Ravens and Turkey vultures patrolled overhead.

All-in-all, a very good visit to Arnold! John Sutake

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin"

William Shakespeare

ANNUAL BIRD HOUSE SALE

Saturday, Oct. 20 at Rocca Park, Jamestown

Join us for our annual bird house sale held in conjunction with the California Native Plant Society's annual plant sale so you can "kill two birds with one stone"!

Fall is the time to install bird boxes so that the boxes have time to weather and appear ageless, and the birds have time to acclimatize themselves to this new object. This maximizes the chance of a breeding pair using the box in 2019.

You can join us at the event and ask our gurus about bird boxes, feeders and baths that will enable you to attract more birds into your gardens and yards - opportunity knocks!

The sale will take place from 9am - 12noon and if you are able to join us at the CSAS booth, please call Tom Harrington to let him know at (209)694-8564.

BIRD ID QUIZ

Now here's a bird - well, actually two of course - that you probably wouldn't expect to see in the Arnold area in early September, although you would be delighted at the sight.



The question then is - what species are we looking at here? In your excitement you may be tempted to make a quick decision but, be careful, because there are actually two real possibilities.

The answer and ID info will be in the November Squawker.

TUOLUMNE COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE - ACTION REQUESTED

The County Community Development Department is revising the existing General Plan (GP) as adopted in 1996 which will dramatically weaken environmental protections for birds and habitat.

The existing GP currently provides for 'no net loss' of certain unique habitat values - Section 4.J. 6 of the Conservation Element reads: "Require new development which is subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to achieve 'no net loss' of habitat values for Valley Oak Woodland (VOW), Serpentine Soils (SER), Old Growth Coniferous Forest (OGC), Big Trees Forest (BTF), Old Growth Oak (OGO), Aspen Grove (ASP), Native Perennial Grasslands (N.G.), Native Grasslands (N.S.), and Cliff (C.F.) habitats through avoidance or appropriate mitigation through mitigation in accordance with the County's Biological Resources Conservation Program referenced in Implementation Program 4.J.a and through the CEQA process."

Under the proposed revisions, the existing Conservation Element of the GP is renamed as the National Resources Element, now section 16, and **eliminates the goal of 'no net loss'** of unique habitat values. From our perspective, where maintaining quantity and quality of suitable habitat for wildlife and specifically bird populations is important, this is a devastating local attack on the environment, one that extends much of what is already happening at both national and state level.

A very weak oak woodland provision is included which ignores existing protections for old oak growth, oak and valley oaks, and does the minimum in an attempt to satisfy the oak woodland provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) The draft Recirculated Environmental Impact Report (also known as an DEIR) attempts to justify destruction of oak woodland on much of the land that could be developed to a less than significant impact on the environment.

The 2018 draft Natural Resources Element ignores the mitigation of cumulative impacts on biological resources including:

- Map of and mitigation measures for impacts to important deer migration corridors;
- Minimum acreage preservation standards for Chamise chaparral, Mixed chaparral, and Montane chaparral;
- Minimum criteria for establishing and/or preserving existing species movement corridors between communities and buffers along riparian corridors;
- Any requirement to identify mitigation for the inherent conflicts between wildlife and roadways.

In short, this draft plan is designed to promote development in Tuolumne County by such things as providing "incentives to developers", "waiving fees for certain projects" and designating "adequate land" for development even though the County has sufficient vacant parcels to cover predicted growth over the next 20 years.

A date has not yet been determined for a public hearing before Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors on the GP update, but a deadline for comments on the DEIR has been set as October 11, 2018. The DEIR attempts to justify such dramatic changes - just as you'd expect.

Tuolumne County Residents can comment on this disastrous plan by sending your comments by October 11 to:
Tuolumne County Community Resources Agency
2 S. Green St.
Sonora, CA 95370.

Tom Parrington,
CSAS Representative,
Tuolumne County General Plan Update Process.

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Fall Colors - High Sierra & East Side



September 26, 2018: Fall color season is officially in full swing across many areas of Mono County this week! Plan your trip within the next three weeks to catch peak color splendor at all your favorite destinations.

GO NOW! 75-100% Peaking. The four must-see destinations this week are Lobdell Lake Road, Rock Creek Road, Virginia Lakes Road and Sagehen Summit. Sagehen Summit, in particular, has never been more brilliant as deep oranges and reds are currently covering the mountain from top to bottom. Head to this location first as the colors won't last much longer here. Virginia Lakes Road and Rock Creek Road are both at full peak along the upper sections of the road.

Sonora Pass and Tioga Pass are both showing significant change in the upper elevations - 50-75%, near peak. You'll find peaking groves of aspens along the tops of the passes and at turnouts along the road. Golden Gate Mine Road out of Walker/Coleville was absolutely brilliant earlier this week.

Source: <https://www.monocounty.org/things-to-do/fall-colors/>

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Are You Ready to Talk?

That's probably an enigmatic title by which I mean to ask if you are willing to talk about your bird experiences. Many of you watch birds in your garden, sometimes with camera at the ready, so you have stories and photos of birds performing everyday activities that are often amusing and always interesting. Those stories are worth sharing because they provide insight to the rest of us and inspire us to watch these things too.

But, giving presentations isn't the only way in which we can talk about our experiences. I say this because I see CSAS as a community oriented around interest in birds, but one that can go beyond the one-way communication of a newsletter or monthly presentation, important as they may be. My vision of society in general is one in which we share experiences, gain new insights, and get acknowledged as full participants in society. Given that, I'm constantly thinking about how CSAS can be a part of the web of life and culture that surrounds us. There are many ways in which we can do that so that each of us is fulfilled in our own way.



For my part, I enjoy giving presentations because it inspires me to learn and go to the next level of understanding. But, but, I remember my early days when I was supremely nervous and unsure of myself, and my good luck was that John Turner was my "guru" and so we prepared presentations where he was the primary presenter and I could just chip in when I knew something. Without John, I could never have gone past the starting line – so I know what it's like to just think about making presentations.

Given my own experience, if anybody is interested in making a presentation, I'd be happy to help select photos, discuss the story, create the slide show and co-present as desired. In short, my goal is to support our members to perhaps go beyond their comfort zone to do new and exciting things.

In addition to the monthly presentation style that's our current standard, we could consider panels of members who observe the birds in their yards on a regular basis and so can exchange experience about Spring and Fall migrants, and what works for them in attracting birds into the garden; feeders, water, baths and bird boxes etc. That is, of course, a scenario in which we could offer more audience participation and feedback.

Anyway, please think about these things and email me if you wish to explore these or any other ideas with me.

Barry Boulton

Email: rbarryboulton@gmail.com

Central Sierra Audubon Society - CSAS

(Chapter of the National Audubon Society)

P.O. Box 3047, Sonora, CA 95370

General Meetings: Third Wednesday at 6:30pm (except July, August, and December), in the Tuolumne Public Library on Greenley Road, Sonora.

Board Meetings: Please call Barry Boulton (209)596-0612.

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
Ralph Retherford, VP Programs	(209)770-6124
Jean Dakota, Secretary	(209)591-9952
Linda Millsbaugh, Treasurer	(209)586-9557
Kit DeGear, Field Trips	(925)822-5215
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/Bird Box Sales	(209)694-8564
Augusta Parrington, Scholarship	(209)928-3835
OPEN, Website Manager	
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