

Central Sierra Audubon Society

Sierra Squawker



www.centralsierraaudubon.org

December - 2018

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

That time of the year is upon us. The days are getting shorter and the winter birds are arriving. Speaking of birds, the Christmas Bird Count Season is rapidly approaching. This is the annual call for much-needed participants. We are in desperate need of birders of ALL skill levels. Heck, any non-birder (are there actually ANY?) who wants to get outside and walk around for a day will be of great help.

The CBC is conducted within a 15-mile diameter circle which comprises about 177 sq.miles. Each Count is broken into different areas with each area being led by an experienced birder. Roving groups of partakers count every bird seen or heard during a 24 hr. period. Some people start during the dark hours and count owls. During the day, we walk and drive each area. At the end of the day, participants meet at a restaurant to compile the work done that day and share stories over food*. The compiler for each Count will then send in the results to CBC headquarters where it will join with the data from all Counts worldwide. This data is then used by researchers who look at population trends, species ranges (are they growing or shrinking), and population numbers, among other research topics.



There are three local Counts—Sonora, Groveland, and Calaveras County. The Groveland Count will be held on Friday, December 14 with the Sonora Count on the following day, Saturday, December 15. The Calaveras Count will take place on Saturday, December 29.

Please make a point to join us (again) this year!

Steven Umland

For more information, please contact the following:

Sonora and Groveland Counts

Steven Umland

stevenum71@gmail.com, (209)352.6985

Calaveras Count

Keith & Sandra Maurer

kandsmaurer@goldrush.com, (209)728-8979

**Eyes-on-the-Ground
Volunteers needed!**

For various reasons, it looks as if we'll be short of counters for the CBCs this year, so please think about joining one - or even all of them.

You don't need to be a good birder because each team will have one of those; **BUT**, it's always good to have the extra pairs of eyes that see the birds.

PS

The food location after the Sonora CBC will be Cochina Michoacana, 14715 Mono Way, Sonora near the small store area which has the Sears store and just west of Mike's Pizza, at 5pm.

PPS

There are no public meetings in December because the Christmas Bird Counts are our public outreach for the month.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Horseshoe Road Recreation Area

On Thursday, November 15, ten of us enjoyed the nice fall morning at Horseshoe Rd. Recreation Area. The Mute Swan was in residence as (hopefully) predicted! Other highlights included 2 active Green Herons, a Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cedar Waxwings and the first time sightings of some Phainopeplas and Ruby-crowned Kinglets for some members of our group. In all, 39 species were seen. I hope to lead another trip here in the late Winter or Spring.

Kit DeGear



*Trumpeter Swan at Horseshoe
Photo courtesy Greg Robbins*

Indigency Reserve

On Sunday, November 25, six of us enjoyed a glorious Sunday morning after the recent rains. It was particularly nice to get outdoors and work off some of the Thanksgiving Day feast calories! Although a relatively quiet morning, the fall colors were at their peak. Highlights included a flock of almost 50 Band-tailed Pigeons, Lincoln Sparrow, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Cedar Waxwings, Bewick's Wrens and actually seeing the "ruby crown" on one of the Ruby-crowned Kinglets! We saw a total of 36 species. There will be no walk in December. Hope to see some of you at the next walk on Sunday, January 27th.

Kit DeGear

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

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.

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.

We will meet at Perko's in Sonora at 7:30am to form a carpool and then meet Calaveras people at the Shell gas station in the Copperopolis Town Square (half a mile west of the O'Byrnes Ferry Road/highway 4 junction) at 8:15am. Then on to Lodi, taking a stop for bathroom 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 Woodbridge Road, we will proceed a few miles north to the Cosumnes River Preserve.

If you plan on joining us, please let me know so that no-one gets left behind!
Jean Dakota, (209)591-9952

Wednesday, Dec. 5 - GCSD

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

Species count of 31 on the November 7 Bird Walk included a Sharp-shinned Hawk perched in a tree, a Red-shouldered Hawk and a Hermit Thrush.

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

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 (209)962-7598

Saturday, Dec. 8

Stanislaus Audubon Trip to Merced NWR

This auto route tour gives birders an opportunity to see many species of waterfowl returning to the San Joaquin Valley for the winter. There are also a few trails where we may encounter some passerine species. Meet at the first overlook platform and parking lot in the refuge at 8:30am.

Location is 7430 W Sandy Mush Rd, Merced, CA 95341

Trip leader, Sal Salerno, President of Stanislaus Audubon.

This will be an excellent complementary trip to the one that Jean Dakota will be leading to Lodi/Cosumnes just a few days before, on December 4. You can contrast and compare the species and environments at the two locations.

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CSAS at the SALMON FESTIVAL

Our Education Program is focused on introducing birds and their habitats to children, but since we do not currently have classroom volunteers, we are providing our educational outreach at weekend festivals and events when volunteers are available.

Our first event was the Salmon Festival in Knights Ferry on November 10th where more than 120 children made turkey vulture paper puppets to “munch on” a paper salmon carcass on a stick. The lesson was the role of turkey vultures in the salmon spawn. We talked with the children and their surrounding family members about turkey vulture facts and the role that vultures play in world.

The event was very successful as we were able to visually see many turkey vultures flying above us all day long and we reached hundreds more people than actually made puppets. Children were seen “flying” their turkey vultures all around the festival.

The event was led by Bridgette Vandries-Hobbs who was aided by Gail Witzlsteiner, David Tozier and Dusty Hobbs.



Photo courtesy Gail Witzlsteiner

SIGHTINGS & OBSERVATIONS

Nov. 14

If you want birds in your yard, plant a native grape - this Townsend's Solitaire loves it!



Photo and observation courtesy Carol Rosalind

Nov. 18

Here is a little Hermit Thrush that we saw on Friday. He came for a drink of water on our deck, but did not feed at the feeder. We saw this bird again today at the Willow Springs pond, along with a lovely, young red shouldered hawk. We are at 3100 feet.

Jean Dakota

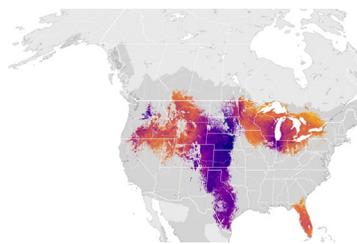


Photo courtesy Greg Robbins

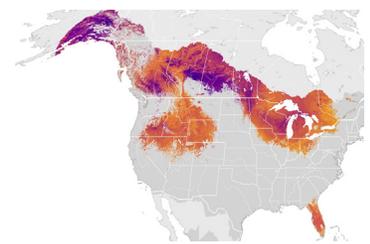
SPECIES MIGRATION PATTERNS

As you know, the system named eBird whereby individuals like you and I (along with thousands of other birders) upload our bird sightings into the eBird database so that, over time, trends can be identified such as population numbers and migratory movements. Well eBird has now published migratory patterns for 107 species whereby they dynamically show the combined observations week by week over 12 months, superposed on a map of North America. It really is fascinating to watch those movements.

For instance, I'm particularly interested in the Sandhill Cranes as they migrate north as far as the Arctic circle (some to Siberia) to breed. Here you can see how, between March 21 and April 25, well over half a million cranes change locations.



March 21



April 25

Another bird that caught my attention here was the beautiful Lazuli Bunting that over-winters in Mexico and Baja California but then, come breeding time, extends across the Western US into Canada - quite a spectacular dispersal. So, it's well worth spending some time looking at your favorite species. Now I wish they would enable us to focus at a smaller scale - I'd like to see just the Pacific Flyway and, of course, just California. View at:

<https://ebird.org/science/status-and-trends>

Barry Boulton

Sandhill Cranes at Bosque del Apache



Having spent a lot of time watching cranes and geese at Merced NWR, as well as less frequent trips to Lodi/Cosumnes, I decided to visit one of the premiere crane-watching places in the U.S. at Bosque del Apache in New Mexico. I have spent time at the Audubon sanctuary in Nebraska along the Platte River where over half a million cranes stopover on their way to breed in Canada, Alaska, the Arctic, even over to Siberia, and those numbers are absolutely staggering to behold but, Apache del Apache has one major advantage - you can spend time fairly close to the cranes without stressing them. If you want to watch some of their interesting behaviors such as the "unison call", you need to be close, and Bosque is the place for that.

The refuge, run by the Federal Fish & Wildlife Service, is now very self-sufficient in terms of forage for the cranes. For a period of time there was a cooperative program with local farmers to provide grain off the refuge in exchange for some financial compensation, but it never worked to the satisfaction of FWS so they moved towards self-sufficiency for the 20,000 or so cranes (80% or so being Greater Sandhills) that over-winter on the refuge.

I had never before seen so much unison calling as here - this is where the committed pair perform a duet in which the male throws his head back to bugle slowly, while his partner keeps her head horizontal and calls twice as fast at a higher pitch. I was quite amused to watch one pair when the male trumpeted while the female was feeding and although she was instinctively forced to respond, it was clear that her attention was really on the food!



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 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
Gail Witzlsteiner, Education	(209)586-4025
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	
Walt Kruse, YSS delegate	(707)548-1829
Chris Laddish, Calaveras County Contact	(209)728-3871
Steven Umland, Sightings/eBird	(209)352-6985