

Sierra Squawker



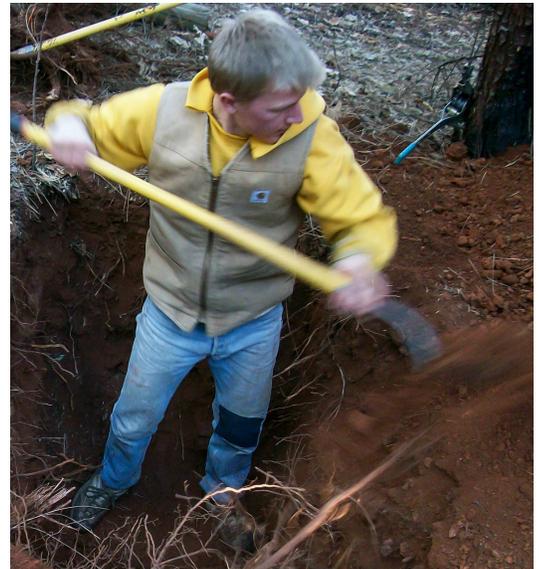
PUBLIC PROGRAM - NOVEMBER 16th at 7pm

“HABITAT RESTORATION IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY”

Presented by Clancy McConnell

The three most influential factors affecting species loss worldwide are habitat degradation, climate change, and the proliferation of invasive species; nowhere is this more evident than in California's Central Valley, where intensive land development and use has threatened or extirpated dozens of native plant and wildlife species. The loss of such a great amount of biodiversity is not simply sentimental. With each dwindling native population, ecological integrity weakens, leaving entire ecosystems more susceptible to collapse from other threats, such as climate change and pollution. In this presentation, I will examine how Central Valley restoration projects benefit native birds, how the projects are designed and implemented, and how bird species are used as ecological indicators in conservation science.

Clancy is a Sonora High graduate and devoted Sierra Nevada local, though he currently resides in Davis for school. In June, he received a B.S. in Environmental Science and Management from UC Davis, with a concentration in ecology, biodiversity, and conservation. He has completed restoration implementation and coursework with Sacramento Audubon and the Stanislaus National Forest, as well as long-term pollinator restoration research with an entomology lab on the UC Davis campus. Currently, he is a Master's student in the Geography Graduate Group at the same university and is a teaching assistant for classes in ecology, geographic information systems (GIS), and other related undergraduate courses. In the graduate program, he researches conservation and restoration in California from a spatial perspective, using GIS and local conservation policy



Clancy doing restoration work

Join us at 7 PM, November 16th in the **Tuolumne County Library on Greenley Road in Sonora** to enjoy Clancy'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

December 14:	Groveland CBC Steven Umland (209)352-6985	January 18, 2017:	Gavin Emmons and Alacia Welch Condors at Pinnacles NP
December 17:	Sonora CBC Steven Umland (209)352-6985	February 15, 2017:	Tori Seher Birds of Alcatraz
January 1, 2017	Calaveras CBC Barry Boulton (209)596-0612		

eBIRD for SMARTPHONE - a Primer

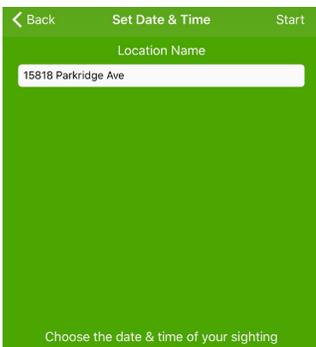
Entering information into the various programs that have been historically available to the common birder—AviSys, Thayer, BirdBrain, etc., has always been helpful to those who prefer to keep track of their sightings. Entering information into eBird, using your computer, is even easier. eBird has the added advantage of being free AND your data is then available for researchers, or the curious, and YOU to use. You log into the website, enter your data and you are done. However, many times when I come in from the field, I do not want to sit down, fire up the computer, and transfer written notes. Thank goodness for the eBird app for your smartphone.



The eBird app is available at the AppStore for iPhone or Android. I have never used eBird on an android, so this will be about using the iPhone and I hope this is the same for both platforms (*I will comment on variations - Ed*). When you open the app for the first time you are asked to sign in. Do so. When you get to the home screen, choose **Start**.

You are then directed to choose one of several options. For your first time, select **Choose a Location From Map**. If you have reception, you will then be shown a map of your location and nearby “Hotspots”, if there are any. It is always best to choose an established Hotspot. If there is not one you can then use it as a **Personal Location**.

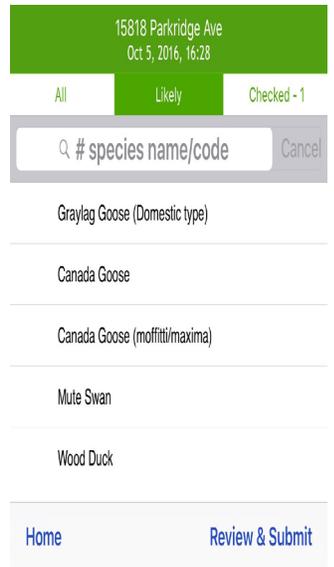
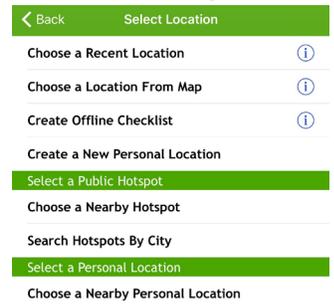
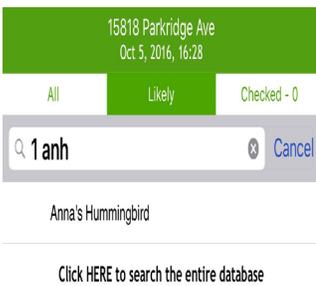
Once the location is established, check the information on the screen. If you need to adjust the time, do so by spinning the wheel at the bottom (*android slightly different but is quite intuitive on-screen - Ed*). Then select **Start**.



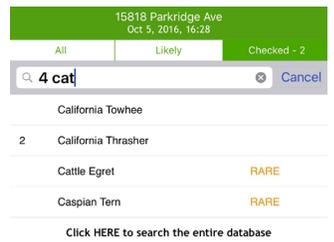
A list of birds for the area appears. There are 3 tabs at the top: “All”, “Likely”, and “Checked”. You are at the screen where you can begin entering the birds you id. If you see a few birds, just tap the blank area to the left of the name. Each tap will add one individual for that species. If you see many birds at a time, tap into the **# species name/code** and enter the number followed by the name.



When entering names, there is no need to input the entire name of the bird. If you know its 4 digit code, you can use that. For instance, the Anna’s Hummingbird would be ANHU. California Scrub Jay is entered as CSJA. Once you get to the third letter, the app generates a list of likely candidates. In this case you will get a list of one. Tap on the name of the bird and the number appears in front of the name. Many birds have a unique code.



However, if the code is NOT unique, you see a list of possibles. If you see two California Thrashers and type in the code, you get a list, California Towhee, California Thrasher, and two rare birds. Tap on the Thrasher and it shows up on your list.



At the end of your session, tap on the **Checked** tab at the top and you see a list of all you saw. Check over your list and make any necessary corrections. Scroll to the top of the page and enter in the pertinent information.



If you hit the **Calculate** button, the time spent will be automatically added. Distance is entered manually. Make as accurate an entry as you can if you were doing a traveling count. If you were stationary, as if you were enjoying the birds in your backyard, tap the **Stationary** tab near the top. The comments window is there for you to put in anything you wish to share. On most of my checklists I put in the temperature, cloud cover, and wind info.



Hit the **Submit** button on the bottom and you are done! If at any time you want to amend your checklist, you can do so by going to the eBird website.



Of course, as you go through this, you will learn a lot more to make your reporting a lot more streamlined. **USE** it whenever you go out birding!

See you on November 16th at our Public Meeting,
Steven Umland

[eBIRD WORKSHOP](#)

Please note that Steven will be giving a short hands-on class after Clancy's presentation at the meeting on November 16th. The idea is that you will be able to do a real-time eBird example yourself with Steven's guidance so you'll see just how quick and easy it is to do. This is our chance to become citizen scientists in a way that provides a database that's useful in understanding avian movements and trends, and thus to be used in real conservation efforts. For most of us, this is our best opportunity to assist in bird conservation.

Given that, please do two things:

Download and install the free eBird app from Cornell in whatever way you install apps. If you're not an existing member of Cornell, generally through their Birds of North America On-line, you will set up a free account - simply name and password that you choose.

Bring your smartphone to the meeting!

SIGHTINGS & BEHAVIORS

Oct. 2

Tonight in my plum tree I saw my First-Of-Season Ruby-crowned Kinglet. On Sept. 26th, I had a Black-throated Gray Warbler - first sighting of this bird, got to add it to my Life List!

Kit DeGear, Sonora, elev. 2400 feet (near Phoenix Lake)

Oct. 5

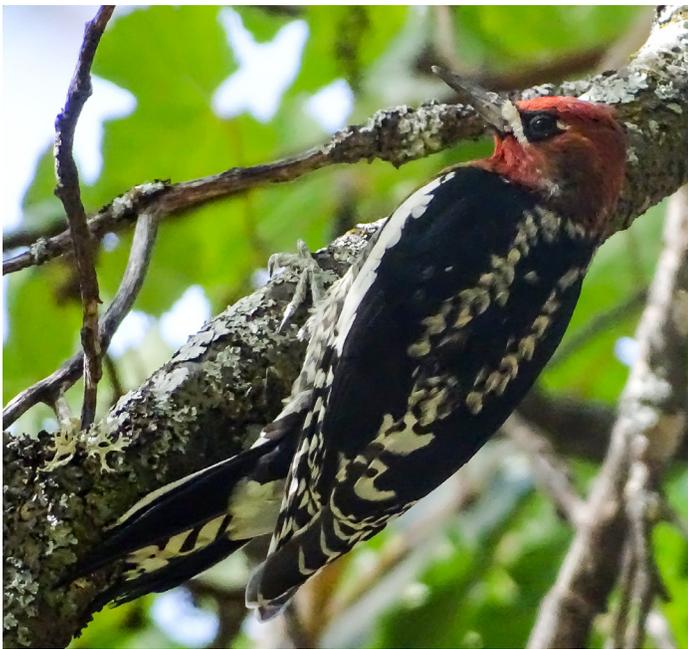
GCS D - eight birders joined me this morning. We watched a kettle of about 500 Turkey Vultures circling high over the ball field on their migration south. We saw a Great Horned Owl perched on a Wood Duck nest box. First of the season Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Yellow-rumped Warblers were seen. A few birders had already left the parking lot when Steven Umland spotted a Brown Creeper. It has only been seen twice here, in 2007 and 2012.

Jeanne Ridgley, Groveland

Oct. 7

Red-breasted Sapsucker arrived today into my garden. He spied the grapes hanging high from a vine climbing a Black Oak. An American Robin who has already staked out the grapes ran the Sapsucker off.

Carol Rosalind, Groveland



Red-breasted Sapsucker - Carol Rosalind

Oct. 8

Just looked out the window and there was a Williamson's Sapsucker. Life bird for me, rare in Tuolumne Co., I would think. He was back and forth trying to fly in to the pond, but was pushed off after a quick drink by the Band-tailed Pigeons.

Carol Rosalind

Oct. 3 - 7

First-year female Hooded Oriole has been seen this past week Monday through Friday in our blue oaks around a hummingbird feeder.

John Turner, blue oak savannah, elev. 1050 ft.

Oct. 8

Female Williamson's Sapsucker seen today flying back and forth over pond and finally landing for a drink. This could be the first verified sighting of a Williamson's in Groveland.

Oct. 9

Female American Goldfinch seen on black oil sunflower seed feeder, and later with a group of Yellow-rumped Warblers, who have been here for a couple of weeks. I believe this is the first sighting of an American Goldfinch in Groveland.

Carol Rosalind, Pine Mountain Lake, Groveland

Oct. 18

This morning I birded the first 2.5 miles of Cherry Lake Road from Highway 120 east of Groveland. I saw 16 species including first-of-season Dark-eyed Juncos, Bell's Sparrow and two Wrentits. All species entered into eBird.

Jeanne Ridgley, Cherry Lake Rd., Tuolumne

Oct. 20

While using a water hose in my yard today, I was delighted to hear and see a White-headed Woodpecker drinking from my bird bath. It seemed to me that the sound of running water attracted the Woodpecker. This is the first White-headed Woodpecker that I've seen here in a year, so a special delight.

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

Oct. 24th., 8:00am-12:00pm

Two first-of-season Dark-eyed Juncos showed up in my Plum tree near the feeder today. 22 species in all.

Oct. 25

While watching a Brown Creeper (an infrequent visitor) moving up a Cypress trunk near my deck, I spied a Townsend's Warbler in some branches a few feet away. My first sighting here at home. Not sure if it is just the season, or our recent rain, or the fact that our HOA is trimming the oak trees down by the lake, that is creating some of my unusual sightings.

Kit DeGear, near Phoenix Lake, elev. 2400 ft.

20th ANNUAL CENTRAL VALLEY BIRDING SYMPOSIUM

November 17 - 20, 2016

Registration is now open at:

<http://www.cvbsreg.org/hotel-registration-info>

FIELD TRIP REPORT

Merced NWR – Oct. 6

On this glorious autumn day, Tom Harrington, Kit and Walt DeGear and myself arrived at the refuge at 10am just as the Sandhill Cranes were returning to the safety of the wetlands after finding breakfast in the surrounding croplands. Many were quite close to the auto tour road, especially at and just beyond the far overlook platform where we also got glimpses of a Common Yellowthroat and a least two Marsh Wrens.

Not many ducks have arrived yet, but there were several hundred Northern Shovelers resting contentedly with heads folded back into their backs. As autumn progresses, we can expect many more duck species. Just one **Eared Grebe** showed itself in a location along with lots of Coots.



Eared Grebe, winter plumage - Barry Boulton

White-faced Ibis, Black-necked Stilts and Killdeer were all floating around in various places. Although we saw a handful of Greater White-fronted Geese, no Snow or Ross' Geese had yet arrived.

Two days later, Paolo & Janet Maffei visited the refuge and observed two Merlins fairly close-up, two Sora and half a dozen or more Wilson's Snipes in addition to a Peregrine Falcon; a good day's birding I'd say!

Note: Oct. 14 :I talked to the Refuge Biologist and he told me there are now 8,000 cranes in residence, so when you read this, there will be many more in addition to the geese who should be arriving before the end of October in great numbers.

Barry Boulton

MERCED NWR VIDEO

Just before this field trip I spent several days at the Refuge and created a short 8 minutes video that you might like to view on YouTube at:

<https://youtu.be/heQZv7U1Ybw>

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Nov. 2 & Dec. 7 - 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 Nov 2 and Dec 7. The property encompasses an area of more than 200 acres of oak, pine and willow habitat with three water storage ponds.

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

Saturday, November 5, 2016

Knights Ferry "String of Pearls"

This will be our annual field trip to the "String of Pearls" along the San Joaquin River near Oakdale. The fall migration is at its peak so we hope to see lots of waterbirds plus others too.

Meet either at Perko's Sonora, at 8 am to carpool, or at the Knights Ferry Visitors Center at 8.30am. Some of the walking will be over stony walkways, so boots are recommended. Bring water, food and scopes if available since some of the birds will be rather distant.

Trip leader: Paolo Maffei 532-842

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CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Again this year we shall be running 3 CBCs, and are as always looking for eager volunteers, so if that means you, please sign up as follows with one of these maestros:

Groveland CBC, December 14, 2016

Steven Umland (209)352-6985 or stevenum71@gmail.com

Jeanne Ridgley at jeanneridgley1@sbcglobal.net

Sonora CBC, December 17, 2016

Steven Umland (209)352-6985 or stevenum71@gmail.com

Calaveras CBC, January 1, 2017

Barry Boulton (209)596-0612 or rbarryboulton@gmail.com

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BIRDS AND THEIR BILLS

Eating is obviously critical to survival so we can assume that birds' bills are very successful implements since birds have been around much longer than our homo species; indeed, birds do much more with their bills than we do with our mouths because they have no other bodily tools like our hands. Yet those bills vary so much from the spear-like bill of the Egrets to the fine needle-like bills of Hummingbirds; from the deadly killing bill of the Hawk to the wide insect-catching gape of the Swallow, or the crossed bill of the Red Crossbill to the surprising asymmetry of the Black Skimmer's bill that quite amazingly skims the water's surface with lower mandible in the water which then snaps shut when it encounters prey. How can we account for all of those successful variations?



Black Skimmer's asymmetric mandibles\ (see text)

Well, evolution, natural selection and adaptation over 150 million years since transitional ancestor *archaeopteryx* have been the process; all living organisms adapt in response to opportunity, environment and competition. Over those many eons, tectonic forces and climate change have isolated groups of birds and provided environmental changes, opportunities and challenges so that those that adapted in both biological (genetic) and behavioral terms survived and reproduced; many didn't make it.

Competition is an interesting adaptation force. I just watched a mixed group of Greater and Snowy Egrets plus one Great Blue Heron foraging in the wet grasslands at Merced NWR for similar foods in similar ways – spearing the prey. There were frequent episodes of intimidation – the GBH on any egret and the Greats on the Snowies; frequent outbursts



Great Egret's spear-like bill

followed by feeding and then more provocation. Probably because of massive human-induced habitat losses they all feed in closer proximity than in past times and haven't had time to adapt non-confrontational feeding methods either morphological or behavioral. Confrontations are counter-productive because they take energy from birds that are essentially always in survival mode.

Now, contrast that confrontational behavior with what I see along the bayshore at Berkeley when I visit. Here I'll see an Oystercatcher, Whimbrel, six or eight Black Turnstones, Sandpipers, Willetts and others feeding in close proximity at low tide but there's no competition or confrontation because they've all evolved and adapted to maximize feeding efficiency with different shaped bills and techniques that minimize the competition.



Whimbrel's decurved bill

When I watch those shorebird birds feeding, I'm always fascinated by that machine-like speed of pecking blindly into wet sand and mud and I wonder, how on earth do they find and select food morsels?



Red Crossbill's crossed mandibles used to open closed pine cones



Wide gape of the Cliff Swallow is adapted for catching insects in mid-air. It is also used to construct intricate mud nests

Well, the answer is in small pressure pads that are located in the tips of shorebirds' bills. When the bird thrusts its bill in the wet sand or mud, it produces a pressure wave in the water - rather like dropping a stone in a pond. The pressure pads, known as Herbst corpuscles, detect the change in pressure gradient in the water produced by an object larger than the grains of sand, and this change or distortion is amplified by the repeated probing. So, in this way, shorebirds can detect mussels and other food - of course, this means they can only forage in stone-free locations!

Bills have a very long evolutionary history that provides a multitude of successful shapes and thus foraging techniques. I will talk more about foraging techniques in a future article.

Text and photographs by Barry Boulton

STANISLAUS TREE MORTALITY

A SERIOUS SITUATION

On October 6, 2016 I attended the Tree Mortality Tour of the Stanislaus National Forest along Highway 108 jointly sponsored by Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources and Environment (TuCARE) a coalition of timber, mining, and ranching interests, and Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions (YSS) which represents a broader coalition including timber interests, the Forest Service, and environmental groups such as Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center (CSERC) and Central Sierra Audubon Society.

The tour concentrated on lower elevation portions of the forest including the Sugar Pine area above Twain Harte, and a research forest below Pinecrest Lake. There were a number of presentations by Forest Service personnel. The most depressing presentation was by Ramiro Rojas, District Silviculturist from the Sierra National Forest. He observed that if you see dying trees in the Stanislaus National Forest now just wait. The Sierra National Forest below 5,000 feet has lost over 85% of its Ponderosa Pines, 80% of its Sugar Pines, and 40% of its firs. The drought has been far worse in Sierra forests below Yosemite National Park.

From the presentations, I concluded that the greatest need is for large, older, mixed tree forests. The Forest Service demonstration forest has an area that was extensively thinned leaving large individual trees, groups of small trees, and open space. After thinning, a control burn was used to reduce the brush and debris remaining to reduce the risk of hotter fires in the future.

Large trees sequester much more carbon than trees in plantations.. Older larger tree forests better protect water in soil and creeks, and shade snowpack longer. They also are more fire and beetle resistant, support more wildlife, and their presence makes their forest communities more resilient.

A very informative program was presented earlier this year by the Tuolumne Group of the Sierra Club Christopher J. Fettig, Ph.D., research etymologist at the Pacific Southwest Research at Davis, California on the Western Pine Bark Beetle which is a Sierra native. His conclusion was that if the forests become overgrown due to the lack of thinning, and policies which prevent natural fires to burn in such a way that will not consume the forest, then the beetles will thin the forest..

Two recent articles on tree mortality by Alex MacLean were in the October 6th and October 8-10 Weekend editions of the Union Democrat. The essence of those articles was stated in the October 8th article titled Bark beetle outbreak may be signal of larger shift. "A century's worth of fire suppression that has created unnatural tree density in California forests compounded by increasing global temperatures and prolonged drought periods will lead to big changes for the Sierra Nevada landscape in the coming decades. ... the beloved pines of the Sierra Nevada may be dominated more by oaks, cedars, and other types of trees that are better adapted to survive a drier, warmer climate."

For birders, we can anticipate that birds in the lower foothills will be moving up as the pine forests decline and are replaced by more oaks and lower elevation trees.

Tom Parrington, President

BOOKS AS CHRISTMAS GIFTS

It's coming up to that time of the year when we think of gifts for our loved ones and friends, and so I decided to share thoughts on some of my recent book purchases. In recent months there have been some exciting ground-breaking books that speak to mammal and bird behaviors, identities, personalities, intelligence, awareness and so on that incidentally highlight the many similarities between we humans and them rather than the traditional model of highlighting our uniqueness, our supposed superiority.

The Hidden Lives of Owls: The Science and Spirit of Nature's Most Elusive Birds by Leigh Calvez.

"In the dim light of evening, you step into the forest. A sudden movement startles you as a large bird on silent wings flies in front of you. Your heart pounds in your chest, not in fear, but with the thrill of seeing a wild owl....." so begins this book in a poetic and deeply personal way.

For Carl Safina's **Beyond Words, What Animals Think and Feel**, I'll use the words on the book's cover that succinctly clues you in to his work: *"Beyond Words offers an intimate view of animal behavior to challenge the fixed boundary between humans and nonhuman animals"* and *"Beyond Words brings forth powerful and illuminating insight into the unique personalities of animals through extraordinary stories of animal joy, grief, jealousy, anger, and love. The similarity between human and nonhuman consciousness, self-awareness, and empathy calls us to re-evaluate how we interact with animals"*.

Roger Lederer's **Beaks, Bones and Bird Songs: How the Struggle for Survival has Shaped Birds and their Behavior** offers us deep insights into what is happening at any waking or sleeping moment in a bird's life, how the bird adapts to its surroundings moment-by-moment, and its con-

sequent decision-making. Survival for birds mean making decisions in ways and timeframes that are now foreign to us in our protected communities unless we're in a war zone or similar rapidly-changing circumstances.

What the Robin Knows: How Birds Reveal the Secrets of the Natural World by Jon Young speaks to how birds communicate not just with each other but also with other wildlife in terms of danger calls and so on.

Bernd Heinrich is a well known and very articulate East Coast writer on bird topics and his latest book **One Wild Bird at a Time: Portrait of Individual Lives** is one of those books that's difficult to lay down. He details close, day-to-day observations of individual wild birds in his own backyard, describing their behavior and then interpreting it; incredibly fascinating and creative.

Frans de Waal, the famous primatologist, has written a masterpiece entitled **Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?** in which he challenges our assumptions of human superiority and shows many cases such as memory where we're actually the slowpokes. He explores the scope and depth of animal intelligence and guides us in how to think about it in objective terms.

Peter Wohlleben a German former forester turned scientist stumbled into the amazing realization that trees communicate, support and nurture each other in natural forests and wrote **The Hidden Life of Trees** which is fascinating - I just received it and it's tough to lay down!

I suggest that, if interested, you might like to review them on Amazon.com to read detailed reviews. Needless to say, I have bought each one of these excellent books and confidently recommend them.

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 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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rbarryboulton@gmail.com

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