Central Sierra Audubon Society

Sierra Squawker

www.centralsierraaudubon.org

May - 2018

SONORA PUBLIC MEETING

Buzzes, Trills and Tremolos: how to listen to bird sounds and make sense of what you're hearing

Presented by Tom Hahn, UC Davis

Birds make a wide variety of sounds. Bird watchers rely heavily on these sounds to help them identify birds, and ornithologists study many aspects of sound production, development, and evolutionary importance. In this presentation we'll break bird sounds into different categories based on the "kinds" of sound they are and discuss how doing this can help us to develop a better "ear" for the kinds of variation in bird sounds that can be most helpful to us in identifying birds. For example, we'll compare pure tones, noisy sounds, buzzes, trills, and tremolos, and discuss how to use an ability to recognize these different types of sounds to help us distinguish between bird sounds that might seem quite similar.

MacGillivray's Warbler
Audubon Field Guide

For instance, Calaveras (Nashville) warblers tend to have songs consisting entirely of notes that are pure tones, whereas the similarly patterned songs of MacGillivray's warblers include distinctive noisy notes that change the whole character of the song if we can learn to pick them out. We'll focus on examples from the western Sierra foothills to illustrate different categories of sounds and how to listen to them.

Tom Hahn is on the biology faculty at UC Davis. He studies behavior and physiology of a variety of birds, especially reproduction and migration of crossbills and other nomadic finches, but also vocal behavior of a variety of songbirds such as white-crowned sparrows and Cassin's finches.

Calaveras Warbler
by Radd Icenoggle

WHEN? Wednesday, May 16 at 6.30pm

WHERE? County Library, Sonora

CALAVERAS PUBLIC MEETING

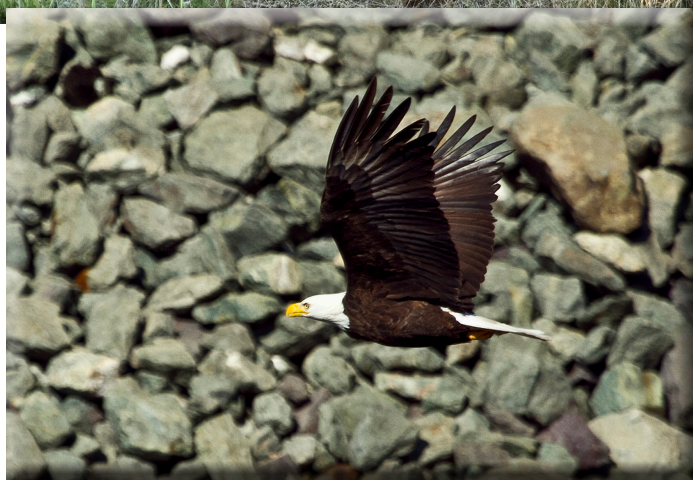
WILDLIFE ACTIVITIES AT NEW MELONES LAKE

Presented by Pat Sanders, Bureau of Reclamation

The public tends to be unaware of the full scope of activities performed by Federal agencies and I'm sure that is true of the work on-going at New Melones Lake. Through Eagle & Osprey counts, several of us at CSAS have got to know many of the staff and have been impressed at what they do and how they do it. We are indeed fortunate to have them working constructively on environmental issues that we care about, and through this presentation,we will get to learn more about them and their philosophy. New Melones Lake is one of only two Bureau of Reclamation sites in California that employees rangers and naturalists to care for the wildlife and its habitat, so we are particularly fortunate to have Pat and her colleagues doing this work here. We will enjoy many thrilling stories this evening!

Patricia (Pat) Sanders is the Natural Resource Ranger/Tech at New Melones Lake. With a degree in biology, she performs the full scope of natural resource duties including hazard tree management, wildlife enhancement projects, eagle, osprey and bat surveys, invasive species reduction and aquatic species surveys. Back in 1995, Pat and Harold Sanders worked with Al Bergeron (then President of the Central Sierra Audubon Society) on the osprey rescue project that became necessary when rising lake levels at New Melones threatened nesting ospreys.

All photos by Pat Sanders



WHEN? Tuesday, May 22 at 6pm

WHERE? Murphys Diggins Clubhouse, Murphys

FIELD TRIP REPORT

Mar. 25 – Ventana Condors

A group of CSAS members visited the Big Sur coastline on a trip organized by Gail Witzlsteiner in conjunction with the Ventana Wildlife society to track by radio and – hopefully – see Condors. Although the Big Sur coast was quiet for condors during our tour, we still received signals from three birds and saw them as indistinct specks in the far distance. The Big Sur released condors that we tracked are known as 190, 167 and 538, and if you would like to learn more about these condors and the rest of the Big Sur released condors please visit: http://mycondor.org/

If you're interested in learning about Pinnacles National Park released condors please visit: https://www.nps.gov/pinn/learn/nature/profiles.htm

Barry Boulton

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

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

On April 4, 34 species were seen. Highlights were Hutton's Vireo, Fox Sparrow, Cedar Waxwings and first of the season Barn Swallows

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**

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Saturday, May 12th, Westside Rail Trail Walk

Come join Jean Dakota for a walk along this old railroad trail for great views of the Tuolumne River below, and hawks and falcons above. This time of year we are certain to hear the distinctive sound of the Wrentit and perhaps see some Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, too. The wildflowers should still be a draw as well! Meet in the parking lot at 9:00 a.m. The walk will last from 2-4 hours and cover 2-4 miles. It is an old railroad grade and so fairly level. Muted clothing, hat, sunscreen and water are advised. Please note that there are **NO** public restrooms nearby.

From Sonora take Tuolumne Rd. intersection at Mono Way just before the Junction Shopping Center, out all the way toward the city of Tuolumne. Go through straight through the light (at the intersection of Tuolumne Rd. N. and Cherry Valley Blvd. N.) turn left on Carter St. and go 0.3 mile; turn right on Buchanan Road. Continue for 0.5 mile and you will see the parking lot on the left just past the intersection of Buchanan and Miramonte Roads. The trailhead and kiosk 1 is down the stairs.

Jean Dakota, (415) 454-8313 or (209)591-9952 (after 8:30am on May 12).

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Thursday, May 17 - Confidence Trail, Sonora

Please join Tom Hahn, our May presenter who will speak on comparing and contrasting bird sounds and how to listen to them with a goal to develop a better "ear" to aid in bird identification, for a Bird Walk where we can put his presentation material to practical use! This is always a particularly great outing with many Spring migrants to hear and see! Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the trailhead at Confidence/South Fork Rd. just north of Middle Camp Rd.

Trip leader: David Harden (209) 533-1668

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Saturday, May 19 - Rim Fire Update Birding the Rim Fire Snag Forest and Chaparral: Nature's Nurseries!

Mixed intensity fires like the Rim Fire of 2013 create some of the most productive and critical habitats for California birds and wildlife, comparable or better than even late-succession or "old growth" forest. Large, dense patches of standing dead trees and lush chaparral stands are preferred by a host of plants, insects, mammals, and keystone species such as Black-backed Woodpeckers. Surprisingly, that includes even many of our most threatened and endangered species such as spotted owls and pacific fishers. Come explore the northern side of the Rim Fire and find out more about why so many wildlife species benefit from forest conditions enhanced by mixed intensity fire.

Meet 7:30 a.m. at the east end of the Twain Harte Market to drive to Long Barn and into Rim Fire, birding several locations and returning to Sonora by 3:00 p.m. Bring lunch, water, sun protection, wear sturdy shoes and layers.

Trip leader: Christy Sherr, Coordinator for the John Muir Project of the Earth Island Institute.

Christy Sherr is a retired National and State Park Ranger, currently working as a field biologist and Education Coordinator for the John Muir Project of the Earth Island Institute. She is a past president of the Sierra Foothills Audubon Chapter, and enjoyed watching her twelve year old daughter get excited about birds while walking in a burned forest!

christysherr@johnmuirprojec

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Sunday, May 27 – 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 April 22, there were 5 adults and 2 (well behaved & beautiful) young girls for our walk, and we were soon greeted with a pair of Bullock's Orioles in the parking lot. Other highlights of the day included Black-headed Grosbeaks, Cedar Waxwing, Western Kingbird and hearing a Cassin's Vireo. A total of 39 species were seen.

On this visit, I expect some other cool warblers, vireos and flycatchers to turn up. 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

SIGHTINGS & OBSERVATIONS

Mar. 29 – Big Trees State Park

Today Jim Ross and I spent three hours birding BTSP. We had 17 species all typical resident birds. It took three hours to locate a White-headed Woodpecker and then we found a pair, male & female by the campground restroom that were exploring a snag for potential nesting site.

Unfortunately the tree is sprayed painted in red which I suppose indicates removal. The snag is located to the left side of the back side of the campgrounds rest room and has a red 191 spray painted on it. I was able to locate the park naturalist / interpreter and show him photos of the birds and the marked snag. He showed much concern and indicated he would address the maintenance supervisor to point out the trees value.

Here's the excellent response from BTSP regarding tree #191:
I am the wildlife biologist at Calaveras Big Trees State Park and I also wanted to thank you for sharing your observations. It sounds like you may be a regular visitor to our Park. Should you locate any more nests or see rare or noteworthy sightings, please share.

To let you know about our hazard tree program, dead trees are only marked for removal if they threaten life or property. I love our snags and keep as many as possible in our natural areas. Unfortunately, tree #191 could fall on our propane tank. We will not remove the tree until after fledgling to protect any potential nestlings. This will give the pair ample opportunity to create another cavity, most likely in the side of my office - they love this building!

Joe Harvey, Environmental Scientist, California State Parks, Central Valley District

Also, along the North Trail loop we counted 8 Pacific Wrens, and a Townsend Solitaire was seen while calling.

Rich Cimino, Yellowbilled Tours

Apr. 9: First-of-Season (FOS) Birds

Yesterday, we saw a male Black-headed Grosbeak, a Rufous-crowned Sparrow and are hearing Ash-throated Flycatchers. This afternoon we saw both male and female Black-chinned Hummers and continuing to see several male and female Rufous Hummingbirds. Also, on the way to Sonora along La Grange Road we are now seeing Western Kingbirds on the fence lines.

John Turner, Lake Don Pedro, Tuolumne County.

Apr. 13 – more FOS Sightings

A nice afternoon out at Horseshoe Rd. Recreation Area. I was hoping to see some Spring Migrants. I did get a chance to have a few First of Season sightings, Western Kingbird, Bullock's Oriole, American Goldfinch, Forster's Tern and Black-chinned Humming Bird!

Horseshoe Rd. Rec. Area, elev. 159 ft. Kit DeGear

Apr. 15

This morning Bill Zachman and I went to find a Mountain Bluebird reported on eBird yesterday. The location on eBird was 37.8480616,-120.1425093. It is on Ferretti Rd about 7 miles east of Groveland. We saw one female in the trees near the gate to Mourning Dove Ranch Rd.

Jeanne Ridgley, Groveland.

Apr. 24

Yea, finally, a female Grosbeak just visited the feeder. The males won't be far behind!

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

Apr. 24

We saw a female Blackheaded Grosbeak and a male Lazuli Bunting before it was chased away by an Acorn Woodpecker.

John Turner, Lake Don Pedro, Tuolumne County

April 25

Observed three Ring-necked Ducks, 2 male, 1 female, on Lakemont Pond behind the Bistro Espresso café in Arnold; they should be migrating very soon.

Barry Boulton

SIGHTINGS (cont.)

Apr. 26

This is the second year in a row I've enjoyed seeing and hearing this wonderful little bird, the Pacific Wren, as I walk along the ditch near my home in Twain Harte.

Linda Millspaugh (sighting & photo)

Apr. 21

Here's a male Osprey we saw at the Willow Springs pond on Saturday. This was my first Osprey up close and he/she seemed formidable, almost scary. The bird was watching two Canada Geese and their four young babies. Today, Monday, the four babies were still with their parents, so no baby goose lunch was had by the Osprey on Saturday. There was a Mallard with 14 ducklings two weeks prior at this same pond; however, she and her brood have disappeared. We only saw them the one time.

Jean Dakota

Apr. 26

I went out stalking on Pine Mountain Lake early this morning and, although I did not see any Ospreys, I did see both resident adult Bald Eagles, one of which had snagged a 5 lb. bass and, even though I didn't get to see the grab, I did get to see it flying with it, and I saw a handsome Great Egret also. I was the only boater on the lake. I OWNED it. T'was a good morning.

Dave Douglass

TRICOLORED BLACKBIRD UPDATE

Earlier this afternoon (April 19), the California Fish and Game Commission voted 4-0 to list the Tricolored Blackbird as Threatened under the California Endangered Species Act. This is a big step for this struggling bird that lives mostly in California. Audubon California – which has fought to protect Tricolored Blackbirds for more than a decade – supported the move, pointing to studies showing that the bird's population has declined 55 percent since 2008.

Our staff fought hard for this listing, pulling together science and working closely with the commission over many weeks and months. And many thousands of you sent emails to the commission in support of this action. The truth is that it's never good news when a bird goes on an endangered species list, but today's decision by the California Fish and Game Commission provides an important tool in the fight to stave off extinction for Tricolored Blackbirds. Now we can chart a course for this unique bird's rebound and eventual removal from the list.

Today was an important policy win, but we're also in the middle of Tricolored Blackbird nesting season, which means our staff is out in the field locating and protecting breeding colonies. If you would like to support our efforts to protect California's Tricolored Blackbirds, please consider making a donation at:

https://secure.everyaction.com/QpM-i2QXFkCb5zkrOseUzA2?emci=a3fce914-2d44-e811-80c3-00155da785e4&emdi=5fd6e16b-2f44-e811-80c3-00155da785e4&fn=Barry&ln=Boulton&em=rbarryboulton%40gmail.com&add1=PO+Box+1017+&ci=Arnold&st=CA&pc=95223&p=Mr.&hp=2095960612

Sincerely,
Sarah Rose
Executive Director, Audubon California

Annual Potluck & Election of Officers

Saturday, June 23 at 5:00pm
At the County Ambulance Center on Striker Court, Sonora

Every year in June we hold our annual meeting and potluck where we celebrate our past year's many activities, and look forward to the next year with the new (or not-so-new!) Board of Officers. In some years the existing Officers continue on but, this year, we will be losing three who have served their terms and more, so the time is ripe for fresh faces.

As you know from last month's Squawker, Ken Smith, our previous Field Trip Chair has resigned because he's moved down to Borrego Springs permanently. Fortunately, Kit DeGear our current Programs VP will take over as Field Trip Chair because Ralph Retherford will join us as the Programs VP. Jeanne Ridgley who has been our Secretary for several years is calling it a day and so we must replace her. Then, Walt Kruse, our current Conservation VP and has represented CSAS on various agencies is calling it a day after some years on the job. So, these are the immediate openings that we need to guarantee a functional Audubon chapter. Finally, but by no means least, Linda Millspaugh our current Treasurer will be departing the Board in December, 2018.

Although our bylaws provide for up to 11 officers, our election comprises only 5 specific roles to be voted on by the general membership, while the remainder are appointed by the Board. Candidates in the election are as follows:

- President - Barry Boulton (incumbent)
- Programs VP - Ralph Retherford (new)
- Secretary - no candidate
- (• Conservation VP - no candidate) * see below
- Treasure - Linda Millspaugh (incumbent)

Now, let me discuss the two vacant roles so that you can consider whether you wish to fill them.
Secretary - perhaps the most important function for the Secretary is to record the minutes of our monthly Board meetings. This is actually not too onerous, amounting to less that 2 full pages of notes per month.
* I regard the **Conservation VP** position as most problematic because conservation activities are very time consuming that really need involvement several of several Officers rather than just the one. Therefore, at this annual meeting, I will offer an amendment to modify the bylaws to change that job to a **non-elected At-large** role that is unspecific in duties.

Now, regarding the event itself, I invite you to join us and to bring along a potluck dish. I plan to do a video presentation that I think you'll very interesting as birders. In conjunction with the active support of Bureau of Reclamation staff at New Melones Lake, I'm currently video recording the breeding behaviors of a pair of Osprey at the Visitors' Center. Recording is up to 8 hours per day roughly on an alternate days schedule. This has allowed me to understand the relationship and work dynamics of this pair, and so in June with the new family growing rapidly, I shall be able to give you some fascinating updates. So, you can eat, vote, socialize and be enthralled by Osprey behaviors! Please join us for a fun evening.

Barry Boulton - President

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 Millspaugh, 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
Steven Umland, Sightings/eBird	(209)352-6985