Central Sierra Audubon Society

Sierra Squawker

www.centralsierraaudubon.org November - 2018

SONORA PUBLIC MEETING

"Baja and Belize, Beaches and Birds"

Presented by David Harden & Pamela Blair

David Harden and Pamela Blair will show pictures of numerous trips south of the border, looking at birds, mammals and reptiles, along with kayaking, beach camping, Mayan ruins, and general goofing off. Bonus countries might include Costa Rica, Panama and Ecuador!

David and Pamela are long-time CSAS members and active local birders. Retired from the fire service and teaching respectively, they actively pursue a number of interests and when not out exploring the world, love their home base in Tuolumne County.

Photos courtesy David Harden & Pamela Blair

Wednesday, November 28 at 6.30pm

At the County Library, Sonora (Greenley Rd)

CALAVERAS PUBLIC MEETING

"A Family Affair"

Presented by Barry Boulton

The Osprey, along with the Bald Eagle, is one of our most iconic species since its recovery from DDT, and it's easier than most to observe because it nests in the open and tolerates humans – even if it doesn't like us! This Spring, with great support from Bureau of Reclamation staff, I've been video recording a family at the New Melones Visitors Center because I wanted to understand their behavior patterns and actions.

Family of 6 - photo courtesy of Pat Sanders, USBR

How the adults relate to each other and rebuild their pair bond for breeding when they return after being separated for the winter? How do they cooperate to prepare the nest, and who performs the various tasks involved in that effort? What happens when a young, unattached, male arrives and is intent on taking over the nest and female? How do the adults relate to each other over these six months? How do they relate to the young, and how do the siblings relate to each other?

The 4 juveniles waiting for food - photo courtesy of Elissa Wall

I will be presenting the breeding story of this family and answering those questions and many more. As with human families, it all has meaning and comedy, familial bonds and competition, intrigue and suspense, along with many questions.

Lady Fortune has smiled on this project – there are 4 young in this family, an almost unheard-of number; you can see how crowded the nest is. It gets crazy when one flaps its wings to exercise its muscles in preparation for that first flight!

Barry Boulton is President of the Central Sierra Audubon Society that is responsible for Calaveras and Tuolumne Counties. He is fascinated with bird behaviors and uses video techniques to record and analyze behaviors and activities. He turns those recordings into video presentations that allow us to better understand what birds are doing, how they evolved, and what they need for survival.

Tuesday, November 27 at 6pm

at Manzanita Arts Emporium, Angels Camp

1211 S Main St, Angels Camp

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Westside Rail Trail, Tuolumne

On Saturday, September 29th, six bird lovers braved the 7:00 am start time to walk the Westside Rail Trail in Tuolumne. The temperature started in the high 50's getting to 61° by the end of the walk. The trip began with evidence (feathers) of a wild turkey kill. This 3 hour walk along the old railroad trail yielded 23 bird species (spotted and heard). Bird sightings included Violet-green swallows, Western bluebirds, Pacific Wrens, and the Nuttall's Woodpecker. The highlight of the walk was a clear sighting of a Pygmy Owl. Also seen was a California Digger squirrel (a new species for Jean). Our resident bird identification specialists for this walk were Ron and Barbara McDow, Tom Parrington, and Suzanne Kilburn. Many thanks to them for their knowledge and participation.

Jean Dakota

Salt Springs Valley, Copperopolis

On Saturday, October 27th, eight happy birders visited the bucolic Salt Springs Valley near Copperopolis which is always a productive birding mecca. So it was today, with the highlight being a gorgeous Ferruginous Hawk that happily posed right at the top of a tree as if desiring our admiring glances. Well, we surely did enjoy what is a relatively uncommon bird. We even had the temerity to hope and expect to see another one further along the valley - but that was expecting too much!

The grasslands carried today's most numerous bird, Western Meadowlarks, which darted hither and thither at our approach, while up above numerous American Kestrels were keeping a close eye on things.

Far off in the reservoir backwaters was small flock of American Pelicans and there too was a nice surprise - a Mute Swan.

The sightings ended on another high note when eagle-eyed Paolo Maffei spotted a Lewis' Woodpecker, another of our successful target species for the day.

Barry Boulton

Regular Calaveras County Field Trips

We will be conducting field trips from the New Year both here in Salt Springs Valley, and at the Ironstone Vineyard in Murphys. Chris Laddish and I are coordinating with Ironstone to set up suitable regular monthly dates and leaders.

These locations will enable Calaveras County birders to enjoy a regular field trip within easy driving distance.

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

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

The species count on October 3 was 33, including Spotted Sandpiper, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwing, Orange-crowned Warbler and three species of Sparrows---White-crowned, Golden-crowned, Song and Lincoln's.

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**

Thursday, November 15th
Horseshoe Road Recreation Area

This is often a stop on our String of Pearls trip, and I thought it would be nice to devote a little more time to this unique site. From the parking area a 1/4 mile level walk takes you along the Stanislaus River on your right out to a large pond. Many cool waterfowl can be observed here including migrating ducks, herons and egrets. I have seen the Mute Swan here more than once. Walking another 1/4 mile will take you to the campground located right on the river - a lovely spot for a snack or lunch. There are many other birds to be seen in the trees and shrubs along the way. I hope you will join me!

We will meet at 8:00 AM at Perko's to car pool, or, you can meet us at the site at 8:45 AM. I expect the trip to last a couple of hours. Please bring your binoculars and a scope if you have one, water, a snack or lunch, wear muted clothing and a hat and sunscreen as needed. There is a restroom at the parking lot. Rain will cancel the trip. **Trip Leader: Kit DeGear, 925-822-5215 or email kdegear@gmail.com**

Directions: To get to Horseshoe Road Recreation Area, take 108 West from Sonora, turn right on Sonora Road and go through the town of Knights Ferry, stay straight to turn onto Orange Blossom Rd. where Sonora Rd. veers off to the right. Horseshoe is between Knights Ferry and Orange Blossom Recreation Areas. You will see the large pond area on your left, then drive past the actual Horseshoe Rd. on your right and the entrance to the Recreation Area will be shortly on your left. Drive down to the parking area by the river.

.....

Sunday, Nov. 25 – 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 October 28th I was joined by Ron and Barbara McDow. We enjoyed a leisurely walk taking in the wonderful fall colors as well as the birds on hand. The Golden-crowned and White-crowned Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos and Ruby-crowned Kinglets have returned for the Winter. Other highlights included a Red-breasted Sapsucker and Cedar Waxwings. American Robins were out in full force! A total of 38 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

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.

Photo courtesy Jean Dakota

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 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.

Jean Dakota, (209)591-9952 or **jdakota002@comcast.net**

SIGHTINGS & OBSERVATIONS

October 19 - 24

I've had the great pleasure of watching first of season Hooded Mergansers up here at 4,000 ft. in Calaveras County. I've seen two little groups, one with three males and the other with two males and a female. They've been variously at White Pines Lake and Lakemont lake. In my experience, this is a little early for this species – but I'm only too happy to see them!

Meanwhile, in my backyard, this has been a bumper year for dogwood seeds and thus bird food. I have several dogwood trees and I've watched Band-tailed Pigeons, Robins and Hermit Thrushes enjoying the seeds. The pigeons are so heavy that the slender dogwood stems bend and the birds are literally hanging there. Interestingly, I've placed cracked corn on the ground for the pigeons but, right now, they much prefer dogwood seeds! Good for them – keeps them independent.

As a matter of interest, I counted the number of seeds on a dogwood flower – it came out between 25 – 30 seeds, so a single dogwood tree supplies thousands of seeds.

In addition, I've had the pleasure of three migrating Myrtle Warblers that have, perhaps surprisingly, been using my bird bath for several days. This is the first time that I've seen them up here in Arnold, although I have seen them in Berkeley where they sometimes over-winter.

John Sutake, Arnold. 4,000 ft.

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 Sal Salerno, President of Stanislaus Audubon.**

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

BIRD ID QUIZ

Here's the pair of birds shown in the October Squawker. I think that I made it difficult by keeping the photo too small for accurate identification - sorry!

The question in my mind when I saw this photo of two apparent Spotted Owls in what seemed an unlikely location for a shy bird was whether they were actually Barred Owls which are bolder than the Spotted. When I looked at the photo and my guides, indeed it seemed to me that they were more like Barred Owls, but when I looked at the distribution map it seemed most unlikely - but I'd forgotten that the Barred Owl is encroaching and threatening the Spotted Owl, and that range maps are often out of date (my guide books are now several years old). Well, for me, the question was still up in the air so I needed to consult with experts and I asked Dan Airola of the Central Valley Bird Club and his response was: ***"I'm pretty confident that they are Spotted owls. The one on the right shows the diagnostic spotting pattern on the breast. Barred owls have vertical stripes or "bars" on the underparts. The amount of white around the eyes appears to favor Spotted Owl".*** Then I checked with my gurus, John & Sandi Turner and they agreed with Dan - Spotted Owl.

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 Millspaugh, 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