

Central Sierra Audubon Society

# Sierra Squawker



[www.centralsierraaudubon.org](http://www.centralsierraaudubon.org)

February - 2019

## SONORA PUBLIC MEETING

### **Wildlife Rehabilitation - Problem Solving 101**

**Presented by Laura Murphy**

**I**n 2014, Laura Murphy founded Mother Lode Wildlife Care, an all-volunteer, non-profit organization dedicated to the care and rehabilitation of injured/diseased/orphaned wildlife, specializing in birds, squirrels and other small mammals. She has been a wildlife rehabilitator for 24 years, volunteering for many different wildlife centers in the bay area before moving to Tuolumne and continuing her passion.

**T**his has provided a wide variety of experiences, working with many different species; a nest of Bushtits that fell onto a car, a nestling Prairie Falcon found at the bottom of the cliffs of Sonora pass, an injured Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel, and a just-born Bobcat unable to be reunited with its mother. From the moment an animal arrives, the question is 'how to get that animal back out into the wild, capable of surviving on its own'. Each animal presents a different set of problems that need to be solved; how to care for, house, feed, medicate, train, and keep that animal wild. Laura hopes this presentation will give you a better understanding of what wildlife rehabilitation is all about.



**Wednesday, February 20 at 6:30 pm**

**At the County Library, Sonora (Greenley Rd)**

# CALAVERAS PUBLIC MEETING

## **The Sensory World of Birds**

**Presented by John Harris**

Anyone who watches birds knows that they live in a rich sensory world, as their bright colors and varied songs and calls attest. We'll explore some of the new knowledge about these senses, while also delving into other senses that are less well appreciated for birds: touch, taste, and smell. We'll learn that birds have even greater sensory capabilities than was thought to be the case not long ago, and hopefully this will enrich our experience of enjoying birds in nature.

John Harris is Professor Emeritus of Biology at Mills College in Oakland, California, where he taught courses in ecology, evolution, natural history and vertebrate zoology from 1986-2013. As a graduate student at UC Davis he studied kangaroo mice and other small mammals on Mono Lake's dunes. His research included studies of desert rodents at Mono Lake, Willow Flycatchers at the Nature Conservancy's Kern River Preserve, San Joaquin antelope squirrels and Mojave ground squirrels. John is the author of *Mammals of the Mono Lake-Tioga Pass Region* as well as a number of scientific publications.

John lives near Oakdale and is active in Stanislaus Audubon Society, the Central Valley Bird Club, and Western Field Ornithologists.



*Hooded Oriole*



*Wilson's Snipe*

**Thursday, February 21 at 6:00 pm**

**(Gate & doors open at 5:30pm)**

**At Murphys Diggins Clubhouse, Tom Bell Road, Murphys.**

From Angels Camp, turn right at the only traffic lights in Murphys.  
The Diggins entry gate (open) and clubhouse are straight ahead.

## FIELD TRIP REPORTS

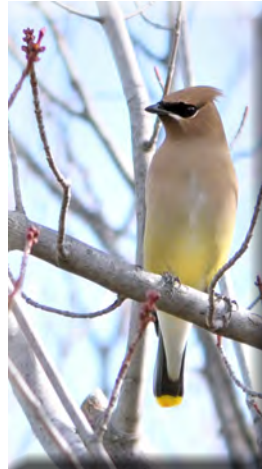
### **Ironstone, Murphys - Jan. 26**



*Group photo courtesy Bill Bowie*

Our first trip, of what we plan to be a monthly outing at the lovely Ironstone Winery, was a great success. Apparently this was a well-advertised event and Calaveras Birders are ready to have trips in their neck of the woods! 48 birders showed up, perhaps breaking a record on field trip attendees. Many did leave the group and went exploring on their own. We still had close to 30 for the morning. While we did not see any particularly unusual birds, it was a very nice walk within the beautiful grounds of the winery. 30 bird species were seen. Highlights included a Red-shouldered Hawk where new birders could take note of his checkered markings on his back, a Hermit Thrush, 2 separate Great Blue Heron flyovers and many Cedar Waxwings, a few providing an up close and personal view while eating some berries in some shorter trees. Sal Salerno, the president of the Stanislaus Audubon group, joined us providing enriching details of the birds we were viewing. We are fortunate that he will be returning to be the trip leader next month!

**Kit DeGear**



*Cedar Waxwing  
photo courtesy  
Greg Robbins*

### **Indigeny - Jan. 27**

A glorious morning at Indigeny. 25 Birders showed up to wander the beautiful grounds. Another record attendance. Our publicity chair, Jan Jorn-Baird must be doing a great job! Sal Salerno, the President of the Stanislaus Audubon Society, also joined us. He added his exceptional bird knowledge to our walk. A total of 38 species were seen, and highlights included a Bald Eagle, 5 different



*Group photo courtesy Sal Salerno*

woodpeckers and Cedar Waxwings but all agreed that the Lark Sparrows were particularly cool! Hope you will join me next month.

**Kit DeGear**

## FEBRUARY FIELD TRIPS

### **Feb. 6 (Wednesday) - 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 February 6, 2019. 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 our last walk on January 2 was 22, including Wood Ducks, Buffleheads and Golden-crowned Sparrows.

**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**

### **Feb. 16 (Saturday) - Salt Spring Valley**

Salt Spring Valley is primarily an auto tour, although we will stop at certain vantage points where we expect to see several species. This valley has different habitats - water, open rangelands and oak forests plus a stand of eucalyptus that, all-in-all, offer many species. I'm particularly looking for the Ferruginous Hawk, White-tailed Kite and Burrowing Owl - but who knows?

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 - but if you need to depart earlier, we'll get to the resort around 11:30am. Rain will cancel the trip.

**Barry Boulton (209)596-0612**

### **Feb. 23 (Saturday) - Ironstone Winery, Murphys**

The Ironstone Winery in Murphys has a rich habitat comprising many oaks of various ages and sizes, wetlands and pond, open lawns and vines where we will see many species,

Our leader for this birding trip will be **Sal Salerno** who is not only President of Stanislaus Audubon and a great birder (both sight and sound), but he's also a poet and writer. He is the author of a very informative book on birds and birding culture that he will have available for sale.

(Ironstone continued)

We'll meet in the lower parking lot at 9:00am and our walk will last 2 - 3 hours. Rain will cancel the trip. From highway 4 at Murphys take Main Street and turn left at Scott Street until you bear left where Scott Street ends to become 6 Mile Road. From here the formal entrance to Ironstone is just one mile on the right (don't take what looks like an entrance halfway on the right as it's simply a working gate). Just inside the Ironstone entrance, bear left and park on the left side.

**Barry Boulton (209)596-0612**

### Feb. 24 (Sunday) - 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](mailto:kdegear@gmail.com)  
(Field Trip Chair)

## SIGHTINGS & OBSERVATIONS

Jan. 4

We saw this American Dipper at the PG&E drainage ditch in Twaine Hart this morning.



*Photo courtesy Greg Robbins*

**Jean Dakota**

Jan. 11

One splendid Ferruginous Hawk sitting atop a pole alongside Hwy. 49 near the RR Tracks. It was easily identified with near-white breast, rufous shoulders, tail near-white with slight rufous tint at tips.

**John Turner**

Jan. 20 - Merced NWR

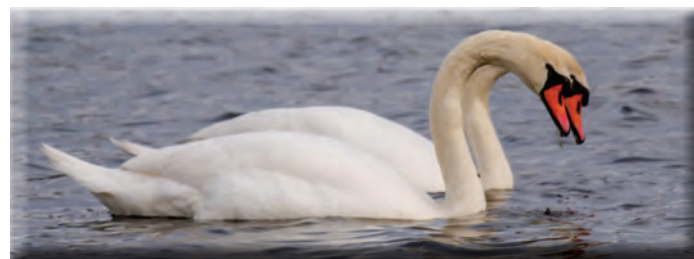
Down at the Merced Refuge there were tons of Snow Geese to check out. I shot a fine looking male Cinnamon Teal, a White-faced Ibis, a male Northern Shoveler, and a Black-headed Stilt. If I was asked for a bird count there I would say: a gazillion Snow Geese, 300 Sandhills (that we could see... heard more), 1000 Coots, 50 Northern Shovelers, 10 Cinnamon Teals, 30 Black Headed Stilts, 6 White-faced Ibises, 8 Red-tails, 6 Northern Harriers, 30 Redwinged Blackbirds, 10 Meadowlarks, 8 Kestrels, 6 Great Egrets, 2 White-tailed Kites, and 2 Great Horned Owls. I was really hoping to see some Burrowing Owls that the McDows told me about, and where to look for them (just past the cornfield on the right on the backend of the loop) - but no luck!



**Dave Douglass**

Jan. 8

On the lake beside my property near Angels Camp, this pair of Mute Swans have been here for several weeks. Occasionally another couple come over to take a look, but they never stay.



*Photo courtesy Barry Boulton*

Jan. 10.

Today, while out for my late afternoon walk, I had a once-in-a-lifetime experience; a group of 10 wild swans (probably Tundra) came out of the north and flew directly overhead only about 60 feet high. I could hear the powerful beating of their wings over 100 yds away, and they were also making some soft guttural sounds. They apparently spotted the two on my lake and circled once, but didn't stop to visit. They continued on straight towards Melones Lake. The two on my lake didn't join them and it looks as if they may stay here to breed - here's hoping!

**Lew Beilanowski, Angels Camp**

## Mergansers around Arnold

Jan. 26

Up here around Arnold, Hooded Mergansers over-winter at White Pines Lake and Lakemont, sometimes on one and sometimes on the other. When White Pines Lake is frozen over, they go down to Lakemont, and then return in varying numbers when it thaws. The number in each lake does vary, but for several weeks there have been a fixed total between the two lakes of 19. Today, a mild day, there were 19 at White Pines and zero at Lakemont, but a week ago (colder temperatures), there were 11 at White Pines and 8 at Lakemont. Since the lakes are only 8 minutes apart by driving, I quickly go from one to the other to check numbers and ensure no duplications. Their location for the day depends not only on water temperature and probably food availability, but also on human activity since they're very shy birds. At Lakemont in particular which is much smaller than White Pines, they are easily spooked by the presence of people.



*Hooded Merganser pair at Lakemont  
Photo courtesy Barry Boulton*

Today, some males appeared to be performing competitive displays consisting of typical head-bobbing and throwing their heads back; however, it was all male-to-male implying male competition.

Common Mergansers also over-winter at the same lakes. For the last month or so a lonely male has been located at Lakemont and then, a week ago, he was joined by a female. Today they appeared to be performing early courtship activities involving synchronized drinking and preening; normally a merganser takes a short sip of water after swallowing its prey, but on this occasion, they were not feeding. Synchronization is, of course, a strong sign of joint activity. Common Mergansers begin to form pair bonds from December onwards, although only for the one season; next season they will select another mate.

Another interesting question is – from where did these birds come? Many breed in Canada and Alaska and around the Great Lakes and migrate south across most of the U.S. for the winter. However, there is a year-round population in the North-West US states including Northern California. We have seen breeding families at the northern end of Lake Alpine, and it is likely that they have ‘migrated’ downslope for the winter, and so the 7 Common Mergansers at White Pines Lake today and the two at Lakemont could be a combination of north-south and downslope migrators.

**John Sutake, Arnold & Berkeley**

## **Bob Schieferstein**

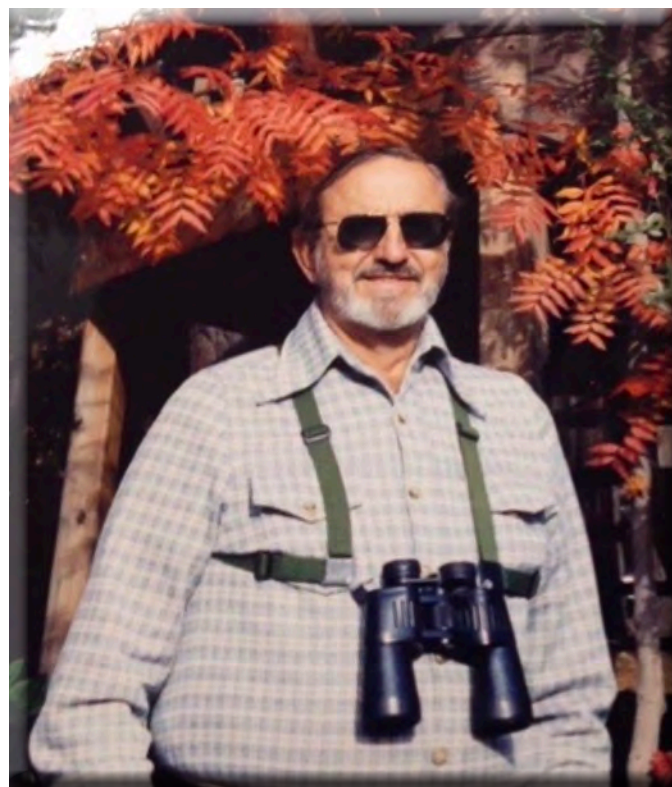
Bob passed away in early January. He had gotten involved in Audubon in the early 1990's thanks to Al Bergeron and Fred Prunte. Bob was the club's Field Trip Chair and conducted the yearly Audubon Christmas Bird Count for at least five years and then became for club's president, until 2002. He was also instrumental in creating the first edition of our Tuolumne & Calaveras Counties bird list, and in its revision along with Steven Umland in 2007.

In October of 2000, Bob and his wife, Joyce, organized a three-week birding trip to Costa Rica which Sandi and I attended. In ensuing years we have joined Bob and Joyce on trips to Peru, Hawaii, Central Oregon and more local ones like Yuba Pass and Sierra Valley on the eastern side of the Sierra.

Bob loved the outdoors, enjoying backpacking and about anything to get outside to enjoy all of nature.

If Bob would leave you with one suggestion, he would say "get outside, look at the birds and animals and enjoy the outdoors".

John Turner



*Bob out birding*

*Photo courtesy Joyce Schieferstein*

## GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT 2019

For those of you who can't join one of our Christmas Birds Counts, whether because you're doing something else, you're unwell, or you don't want to be out all day birdwatching, this event in February might just be your "cup of tea". It can be as short as you like, but all birds observed and uploaded still add to the database to extend our knowledge of bird populations - a very important set of data.

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings on-line at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org). Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year, more than 160,000 participants submitted their bird observations on-line, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

The 21st annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 16, through Monday, February 19, 2018. Please visit the official website at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org) for more information and be sure to check out the latest educational and promotional resources.

**This count is so much fun because anyone can take part—we all learn and watch birds together—whether you are an expert, novice, or feeder watcher. "I like to invite new birders to join me and share the experience. Get involved, invite your friends, and see how your favorite spot stacks up"** Says Gary Langham, Audubon's Chief Scientist.

Bird populations are always shifting and changing. For example, 2014 GBBC data highlighted a large irruption of Snowy Owls across the northeastern, mid-Atlantic, and Great Lakes areas of the United States. The data also showed the effects that warm weather patterns have had on bird movement around the country. For more on the results of the latest GBBC, take a look at the GBBC Summary, and be sure to check out some of the images in the 2017 GBBC Photo Contest Gallery.

### 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/](http://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
Barry Boulton, Website Manager	(209)596-0612
Walt Kruse, YSS delegate	(707)548-1829
Chris Laddish, Calaveras County Contact	(209)728-3871
Steven Umland, Sightings/eBird	(209)352-6985