

Central Sierra Audubon Society

Sierra Squawker



www.centralsierraaudubon.org

June - 2019

ANNUAL MEETING & ELECTIONS POTLUCK

June 19th at 6pm

At the Tuolumne County Ambulance HQ,
18440 Striker Ct, Sonora, CA 95370

In accord with our bylaws, we meet every June to celebrate another active year, and to elect our slate of on-going and new officers for the ensuing year. For those who were not able to attend our monthly meetings, this is an opportunity to renew old friendships and to make new acquaintances in a very social setting. As most of us are either retired or close to, the social aspect of CSAS is an important part of our lives since we no longer have the work environment to keep us occupied and socially engaged. So, please join us for a convivial evening of celebration.

Speaking of celebration, we will take this opportunity to thank and honor John & Sandi Turner, Tom & Kathy Harrington and Anthea Neilson for their long and dedicated activities for CSAS.

John has variously been President, Programs VP, Newsletter Editor and, until recently, Website Manager in addition to leading many, many field trips over the years. Sandi was Treasurer for many years. John & Sandi have been my bird "gurus" over the years; any time I had a question or an ID issue, I would turn to them for resolution, and that support is just what a new birder needs. I also had the privilege of joining them for many Sonora Christmas Bird Counts over the years.

Tom has been President, Secretary, Bird Box Sales Manager, Book Sales Manager and Highway Cleanup Manager - plus, probably, several more roles! And Kathy has not only assisted Tom in many of these functions, but was also our Education Chair for several years. Unfortunately, Tom & Kathy cannot be with us, but it is fitting to speak to their contributions at this annual celebratory event.

Anthea Neilson was our Hospitality Chair for a staggering 17 years! I just wonder how many brownies and other cookies she baked over those years.....what I can say is that I enjoyed many of them! Perhaps we can persuade us to rekindle brownie memories at this potluck!!!

Also at this celebration we will be pleased to hear from our two 2019 scholarship recipients, **Caitlyn Rich** and **Brittany Klein-Schmitz**. You may remember that Caitlyn was our sole recipient last year. Both ladies will give us a short presentation on their academic activities.

Please join us on the 19th!

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Westside Rail Trail - May 7

On Tuesday, May 7th, six bird lovers walked the Westside Rail Trail in Tuolumne. 16 bird species were spotted and heard on this 2+ hour walk along the old railroad trail. Before even leaving the parking area we were treated to Western Tanagers in nearby trees. Other highlights included the perennial call of the Wrentit and a sighting of the Bewick's Wren. In addition to the spectacular views of the river canyon and the Tuolumne River below, the group counted over 30 different wildflowers. Yellow Matia seemed to be everywhere. The wildflowers, including the Harlequin Lupine, the Mariposa Lily (in both pink and white) and the purple "Chinese Houses" (*Collinsia heterophylla*) were in bloom. Kit DeGear, Suzanne Kilburn, Pattie Henderson and Tom Parrington were our resident bird identification and wildflower specialists. We thank them for their expertise and participation. This was a fun walk that we will repeat this fall.

Jean Dakota

Confidence Trail with Tom Hahn - May 16

What a cold, wet and drizzly morning! I showed up to find just David Harden and Tom Hahn. I think others assumed it had been canceled. Although David was ready to go home after about 15 minutes, Tom and I optimistically assured him the sun was sure to break through any minute. We lasted over an hour and a half but even my optimism eventually waned. True to form, Tom once again impressed us with his "Birding by Ear" abilities and great information. We heard or saw 23 species, highlights included Cassin's Vireo, Western Tanager, Nashville and Wilson's Warblers. We were also treated to two Purple Finches singing in stereo on either side of the trail. Glad I went!

Kit DeGear

Big Trees SP - May 18

Sal Salerno and David Froba of Stanislaus Audubon joined seven members of Central Sierra Audubon Society at Calaveras Big Trees State Park on Saturday, May 18. The chief feature of this outing was the unseasonably cool, cloudy weather. The temperature stayed in the 50's, at least 20° less than customary. It was surmised that many birds migrating up to the mountains may have lingered at downslope foraging areas due to the successive storms.



Photo - Sal Salerno

Nevertheless, we saw or heard twenty-eight species of birds at North Grove, campground meadow, Dardenelles Overlook, and South Grove. There were singing MacGillivray's Warblers and Pacific Wrens. Flycatchers were in abundance, with Pacific-slope, Olive-sided, Dusky, Western Wood-Pewee, and Black Phoebe. We saw a Steller's Jay with nesting material and a Red-breasted Nuthatch at its nest cavity. We also heard the drumming of a Pileated Woodpecker near the campground. The group enjoyed the company of birds and each other, and everyone left well before the rain migrated uphill.

Sal Salerno

Ironstone Vineyard - May 25

The weather cooperated providing a lovely morning for the 5 of us. An added bonus was the unexpected attendance of Guy VanCleeve who taught many years at Columbia Community College. Chris Laddish, our Audubon Calaveras Contact, was thrilled as she had taken classes from him. I, too, was pleased as I had heard about him for years and hope to take one of the classes he still gives out of Baker Station up near Kennedy Meadows. It is always a joy to have an expert along on these outings who share their knowledge and experience. While we did not see the 59 species from the previous month we did see or hear 42. Highlights included the Western Tanager, Bullock's Oriole and a Robin sitting on her nest. This was the last walk here before our summer break. We hope to return in the Fall.



Robin on nest.

Photo by

Kit DeGear

Kit DeGear

Red Hills Romp - May 10th

Tom Harrington, Jan Jorn-Baird and I spent another fine morning working with the 3 teaching staff and 26 students grades 3-6 from the Science Academy in Chinese Camp. We had 2 scopes along so the children did get to see some birds up close. The colorful Western Kingbird was a favorite as it was easy to see and watch its flycatching behavior. The highlight of the day for both the children and us was an absolutely stunning Lazuli Bunting singing his heart out! 17 species were seen. (Tom, Jan and I made one more pass at the creek area across the road after the students left and were treated to a Yellow-breasted chat also singing away.) While not all the children displayed the same level of enthusiasm, it did give us pleasure to observe the spark of interest in some. Two of the boys got quite adept at using the scope. A morning well spent!

Kit DeGear

JUNE FIELD TRIPS

June 5 (Wednesday) - 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 June 5. The property encompasses an area of more than 200 acres of oak, pine and willow habitat with three water storage ponds.

On the May 1 walk, we saw 42 species including Mallards, Wood Ducks and Canada Geese with young, a Great Horned Owl, two Eared Grebes and two Ash-throated Flycatchers.

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

June 11 (Tuesday) - Fahey Meadow

I am hoping you will join me as we explore this interesting habitat out of Long Barn. I have scouted out this area before, and while we may not see a high number of species, I believe we will see some more unusual ones. Last year in June my highlights included Calliope Hummingbird, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Chipping Sparrow, Green-tailed Towhee and a Yellow and Hermit Warbler. Please bring snacks or lunch, water, hat and sunscreen

We will meet to carpool in the east end of the Twain Harte Market parking lot (near the CSERC office) on Tiffeni Dr. at 7:45 am. It is about a 45 minute drive from Twain Harte. We will make a brief stop at the North Fork Day Use Picnic Area for a pit stop. We will return to the Day Use Area for our lunch. The trip will involve walking on mostly flat terrain of about a mile. We should be back to the Twain Harte lot by 1:30 or 2:00 pm.

For this trip, please RSVP (in case there are any changes) to **Kit DeGear**. Call or text my cell at #925-822-5215 or email me at kdegear@gmail.com

June 23 (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.

Please note that this will be the last field trip to Indigeny through the summer. Our next visit will be in September
Kit DeGear (925) 822-5215 or kdegear@gmail.com

Field Trips run by Sierra Foothills CNPS

June 8 - Red Hills

Red Hills has numerous plants with CNPS Rare Plant Ranking, but most of them bloom late. June is the best time to see them – if you can take the heat. To reduce the chance of heat stroke, we will start in late afternoon and spend two hours walking along the creek that runs parallel to N. Serpentine Rd. Target plants include: California Verbena (1B.1); Red Hills Ragwort (1B.2); Tripod Buckwheat (4.2); Hernandez Bluecurls (4.3); Red Hills Soaproot (1B.2); Chinese Camp Brodiaea (1B.1). If anyone is willing to stay until sunset, we will hold a vigil around a Soaproot plant, waiting for flowers to open right before our eyes. Meet at 4:00pm at the small parking lot at the intersection of Red Hills Rd. and North Serpentine Rd. If you are coming from Chinese Camp direction, the parking lot is close to the large Red Hills ACEC entrance sign. If you are coming from the west, follow Red Hills Rd. ~2 miles past the main parking lot that has picnic tables and outhouse.

For more info contact Doug K at djkran@comcast.net

June 23 - Calaveras Big Trees SP

This trip will be geared toward the botanical novice who wants to learn about the plants without having to know Latin to understand what they're looking at. Calaveras Big Trees is a favorite destination with a lot of plant diversity. We'll focus on the main trail through the North Grove but we will also visit Beaver Creek and environs for anyone else who might be interested.

Meet at the parking lot by the Visitors Center at the North Grove. Trip leader is Bob Dean, Conservation Chair for Sierra Foothills CNPS.

Editor's Note

Both John Sutake and myself plan to join Bob for this field trip which will provide an excellent opportunity to combine bird and plant knowledge.

SIGHTINGS & OBSERVATIONS

May 3

Saw a pair of black-necked stilts on Pinecrest Beach this morning. Been coming here for over 35 years. First sighting of this species.

Ellen Reintjes, Pinecrest

Arnold Update

At White Pines Lake on May 21, two male Common Mer-gansers were still present, an unusually late date for them. At the same time, a pair (presumably bonded) were observed on the Stanislaus River at the far end of Camp Nine Road. Mi-grants at White Pines include Bullocks Oriole, Yellow Warbler and a Spotted Sandpiper in breeding plumage. An Osprey is present almost daily, although its nesting site is still unknown. Nearby, a pair of White-headed Woodpeckers is raising nestlings that will soon fledge.

Meanwhile, at Calaveras Big Trees SP, local birders were dis-tressed and saddened to discover that valuable migratory bird nesting habitat was destroyed at Beaver Creek picnic area. A large, wonderful thicket of Western Azalea had been reduced to bare earth. This deciduous shrub habitat is preferred by the MacGillivray's Warbler which has only just arrived in the Park from Mexico or even Colombia.

John Sutake

Killdeer Nest

May 27, a neighbor asked if I would like to see a Killdeer nest on her prop-erty. Looking at the color of the eggs you can see why they choose a gravelly area; not much of a nest, just a very slight depression. Upon our approach a parent became quite distressed, vocalizing and flailing around about 15 feet away. I believe this was a display of the "broken wing" pretense in the hopes to dis-tract us. We quickly took the photo not wishing to upset the bird any longer.



Photo - Lori East

Kit DeGear

May 18

Greg Robbins photo-graphed this beautiful Ash-throated Flycatcher at Willow Springs.



May 24



Rory Erbeck captured this exquisite shot of a Phaino-pepla in Vallecito.

Cornell says this about them: "Phainopeplas breed in two distinct habitats at differ-ent times of the year, an unusual pattern among North American passerines. Between February and April the species breeds in the Sonoran Desert in Arizona

and in the portion of the Sonoran Desert extending into Cali-fornia, called the Colorado Desert. As summer heat intensifies and berry supplies dwindle, Phainopeplas vacate the desert. In May, they arrive in the oak and sycamore canyons of Arizona and California, where they breed through July".



Rory also captured this migratory Western Tanager newly-arrived from Mexico or Central America.

Bald Eagles breeding along the Stanislaus River

Since the end of March I've been observing a pair of Bald Ea-gles nesting on the south side of the Stanislaus River down towards the bridge on Camp Nine Road. The first egg was hatched on or about April 1, followed by two more. The aver-age number of eggs is two, so the fact that there are three young, all looking healthy and now quite large, implies a good food year - and good parents! They are beginning to flap their wings to strengthen those flight muscles. The nest is on the opposite side of the canyon about 1,000 ft. away, so a scope is needed to view them.

Barry Boulton

Scholars Corner

I'm pleased to announce that future Squawkers will include contributions from two students who wish to write about and submit photos/videos of birds and occasionally other wildlife. From the CSAS viewpoint it will open a door for us into the world of the current student generation, a generation that will be critical to the planet for the next few decades. For the students, it will offer the opportunity to develop their writing skills for publication, and will add another asset to their resumes. Our student contributors are Maggie Sanchez and Davis Dean, first-year students at Columbia College.

Article by Maggie Sanchez

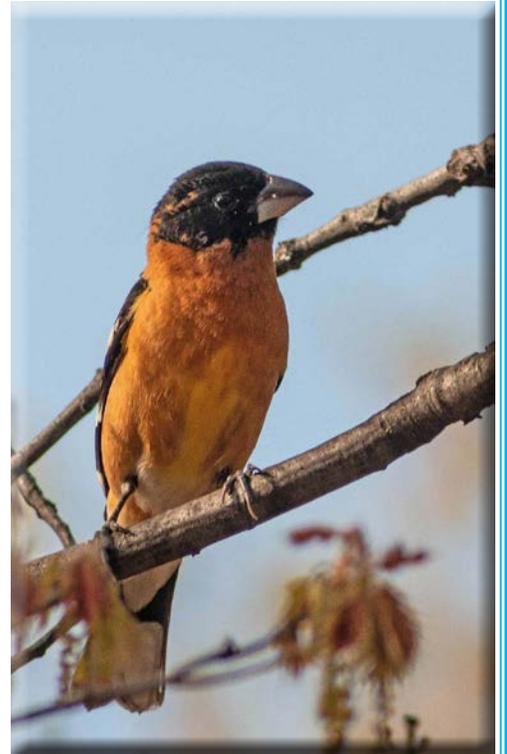


Species: White-breasted Nuthatch

This male was surprisingly curious of me while searching the steep trunk of this Oak tree for insects. After watching him for a while, his ability to scale the branches completely up-side down and headfirst increased my curiosity in these little birds. I've come to find out that Nuthatches have extremely strong feet which helps them with their unique ways of foot travel.

Species: Black-headed Grosbeak

This male Grosbeak flies from branch to branch calling out for his female counterpart. Their elaborate songs are entrancing to hear and when the female finds him, they revert to a much more modest chirp between the two of them.



Species: House Finch



This couple is inseparable. Swooping in for a snack together, they take turns eating while the other stands guard. Ever since these two arrived, I haven't seen them apart from each other. I wonder if this is a characteristic of finches or if its unique to this duo. After a quick search, I found that finches are in fact monogamous (sticking to one mate rather than multiple mates within a mating season).

Species: Steller's Jay

These normally rambunctious birds tend to be more of a nuisance but their eating techniques are quite advanced. With a long, sharp beak this Steller's pins his food to the branch of the tree while he plunges his beak to break it open. I have also seen this eating tactic used by Titmice and of



course the infamous Woodpeckers and Sapsuckers.

All photos copyright Maggie Sanchez

Article by Davis Dean

This male Anna's hummingbird was surveying his territory while periodically taking flight to chase off another male that was nearby. His high pitched call can be heard amongst the chirping of nearby sparrows. Anna's Hummingbirds have an iridescent crimson red throat and they are the only North American species with a red crown. These bright colors act as a display to nearby females that the male would make an ideal mate. These displays can take place anytime from December until as late as June, de-



pending on the weather.

A fun fact about hummingbirds is that many species in North America have been known to hybridize, making for very unique iridescent colorings.

See my hummingbird video at:

<https://youtu.be/Zmci2mQOfQs>

Biographies of our student contributors

Maggie

Bird watcher, photographer, wildlife biology major, otherwise known as Maggie Sanchez. On the ominous date January 1, 2000, I started my discovery of the natural world. Being toted around in a backpack by my nature-loving parents, I was made aware of the terms: rock, tree, flower, bird. With a natural-born love for animals, I knew that I would not let anything stand in my way of using this love towards a career. Like most millennials, my first camera was the ubiquitous iPhone. Fortunately, I later discovered my mom's 1981 Pentax k1000 SLR film camera, which opened up my world of photography. Being able to actually see through a lens provides a whole new perspective into the ecosystems of our beautiful planet. Soon after acquiring the Pentax, I landed a deal for a Nikon d3300 DSLR. I photographed anything I encountered. During a long winter power outage, I noticed the arrival of Juncos, Titmice, Towhees, and Warblers playing in the snow and feasting on seed we put out. From this point on, my fascination with birds has grown more and more. I have fortunately been able to connect it with my major and ultimately plan on making it a part of my career as a Biologist.

Davis

Hi, my name is Davis Dean. I'm a biology major at Columbia College in Sonora and I have a passion for wildlife and photography. What piques my interest the most about animals is their behavior. Observing and studying animal behavior is a very fulfilling endeavor with much more to be discovered.

Central Sierra Audubon Society - CSAS

(Chapter of the National Audubon Society)

P.O. Box 3047, Sonora, CA 95370

General Meetings:

Tuolumne County

Third Wednesday at 6:30pm (except July, August, and December), in the Tuolumne Public Library on Greenley Road, Sonora.

Calaveras County

Various locations and days as advertized in the Squawker.

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.centralsierraudubon.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
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