

Central Sierra Audubon Society

Sierra Squawker



www.centralsierraaudubon.org

November - 2019

SONORA PUBLIC PROGRAM

Birds & Issues of the Pacific Flyway - Central Valley

Barry Boulton, CSAS President

The Central Valley is California's portion of the Pacific Flyway that's critical for the rich variety of bird species who breed in the insect-rich and protected north of the American continent, and then migrate south to over-winter in the Central Valley or merely stop to refuel here and fly on south to warmer climes. It is the perfect time to observe, enjoy and respect so many ducks, shorebirds, geese and, of course, the beautiful Sandhill Cranes.

It was very nearly not so; a century of "reclaiming" (draining and destroying mislabeled as "reclaiming") wetlands and controlling water for agriculture, ranching and mining has resulted in the loss of 95% of those wetlands in California, and the damming of just about every trickle of water.

Ironically, when we look at the several wildlife refuges with their abundant winter bird life, they appear as conservation successes, but in fact the primary forces that forced their creation were the very forces that caused such avian losses, namely, agriculture and hunting! When you look at the total area comprising Central Valley wildlife refuges (State and Federal), it is pitifully small, and rarely do any of them have robust water supplies, which puts their futures (and those of the dependent birds) in great jeopardy, especially in the context of climate change and still-increasing human populations. We'll talk about this history, view and discuss the birds that are at risk in the valley, and consider what this all means for the future of this flyway.

Wednesday, November 20 at 6:30 pm

At the County Library, Sonora (Greenley Rd)

CALAVERAS PUBLIC PROGRAM

Round-table Bird Discussion

We will repeat a program from last year whereby we sit around a table in our local coffee shop and talk about our own sightings, impressions and so on of the birds in our backyard, locality or vacation trips; in fact, we share anything about birds, or just enjoy the conversation and camaraderie with like minds. John Sutake, who always has a lot of fascinating topics, thoughts and ideas in his head, will lead the discussion and then it goes to wherever it goes!

Time & Location:

TBD - sorry, I'm having trouble in getting a committed Arnold venue & date. I'm now expecting to do this during the first week in December, and will update you by email.

NOVEMBER FIELD TRIPS

November 6 (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. The property encompasses an area of more than 200 acres of oak, pine and willow habitat with three water storage ponds.

On the October 2 bird walk, birders saw 40 species. Lewis's Woodpecker and Northern Harrier were seen for the first time here bringing the number of species seen since 2007 to 152. We saw fifteen White-throated Swifts flying over the large pond.

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

November 14 (Thursday) - Joe Domeq & Old Basso Bridge followed by Merced NWR

[Are you game? Join me for an all day Birding Adventure!](#)

Part 1: Joe Domeq Wilderness Area and Old Basso Bridge

Part 2: Dawson Lake & Merced National Wildlife Refuge

(If an all day adventure sounds like too much you can always just show up for either Part 1 or Part 2.)

We will start our birding at Joe Domeq Wilderness Area which will include Old Basso Bridge environs on Lake Rd. less than 2 miles off J59 while heading south on Hwy 132. Located near and on the Tuolumne River, this is an interesting area to explore with a variety of habitats that is about 45 minutes from Sonora. We will have a little sack lunch before beginning Part 2 of our adventure. We will make a brief stop at Dawson Lake before heading down to the Merced National Wildlife Refuge, at Sandy Mush Rd. about a one hour drive from Joe Domeq. The refuge is home to a great variety of waterfowl as well as raptors. We will stay till dusk to watch the Sandhill Cranes fly in and hopefully see some Virginia Rails or Sora. We will finish our day at the Basil Star Cafe for a yummy Thai dinner.

Part 1 - Meet at the parking lot of Perko's in Sonora at 8:00 AM to carpool (or meet at Joe Domeq around 8:45 AM.)

Part 2 - Meet at the Merced NWR first viewing platform at 2:00 PM to start the auto tour route.

Please wear muted clothing, sturdy shoes (Joe Domeq while level is quite rocky and some may want a walking stick), a hat and sunscreen. Please bring your binoculars, scope if you

have one, a sack lunch and water. Should be a great day! Rain will cancel.

Please RSVP to Kit DeGear - call, text or email

Cell: (925)822-5215 or kdegear@gmail.com

November 24 (Sunday) - Indigeny

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

December 3 (Tuesday) - Lodi/Cosumnes

Beat the weekend crowds to observe both Greater and Lesser Sandhill Cranes resting, eating and dancing in flooded farm fields. We will meet in Sonora (Perkos at 7:30 am) and carpool to Lodi, a 90 minute drive, on Tuesday, December 3. We will stop briefly in Copperopolis to pick up any folks coming from Calaveras. The next stop will be at Hwy 12 in Lodi 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.

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.

Trip leader is Jean Dakota; call her if you want a ride and to let her know you are coming: (209)591-9952.

NEST BOX RESULTS FOR 2019

In last month's Squawker, we gave you an update on our nestbox program that has been managed for some time by Ron & Barbara McDow whose tenure is coming to an end, and we thank them for their commitment to the program. Ron has summarized the results of the 2019 breeding season as follows.

Hwy 108/120 - 27 nestboxes

Fledged: 42 Tree Swallows
24 Western Bluebirds
16 Ash-throated Flycatchers
6 White-breasted Nuthatches
5 boxes had two successful nests
3 boxes not used

Hwy 49/120 - 24 nestboxes

Fledged: 87 Western Bluebirds
28 Tree Swallows
5 Ash-throated Flycatchers
5 House Wrens
9 boxes had two successful nests
5 boxes were not used

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BIRD HOUSE SALE RESULTS - Oct. 19

I'd like to thank all those who helped out at the bird house sale on Oct 19. We sold 22 of the 25 available bird houses, a number of hummingbird items, bird paintings (donated by John and Sandra Turner) and books, totaling record receipts of almost \$800.00 which will add to our scholarship fund.

Thanks particularly to all the bird house builders too because we couldn't have done without you - and now we'll have to re-stock for next October's sale! Thanks.

Tom Harrington

EASY CONSERVATION ACTION!

The Spruce Grouse and goshawks that live in the Tongass National Forest in Alaska make their homes among the big trees within its old-growth forests. The Roadless Rule has helped protect this habitat for nearly two decades. But last week, the U.S. Forest Service announced plans to roll back the Roadless Rule in the Tongass to make way for clearcutting.

Please tell the Forest Service to keep the Roadless Rule intact in the Tongass National Forest! You can do it easily at the Audubon website:

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#label/0+-+Audubon+Cal/FMfcgxwDrtxxNtLXHtFdLtJpSvwFhGSM>

Saturday November 9, 2019 - Join Us!!!

Eleventh Annual Stanislaus River Salmon Festival at the Knights Ferry Recreation Area

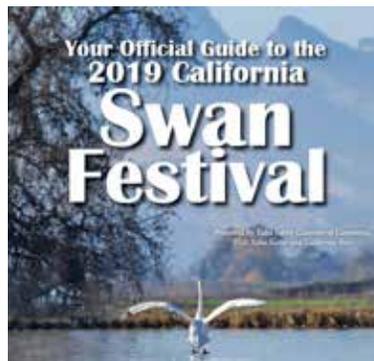
This is a fun-filled event for the whole family. Located next to the Stanislaus River, salmon can be seen in their natural habitat. Central Sierra Audubon will be tabling and engaging families in many activities just as we did in 2018. That was a very busy and successful event with lots of interest in our booth, so we hope for the same this year.

Please consider volunteering with us for a short time at our booth as you enjoy the festival. To volunteer or for more information, call **Gail Witzlsteiner at (209)586-4025**



The CSAS booth in 2018

You're not too late!!!



The California Swan Festival is a non-profit event organized and managed by Yuba-Sutter Chamber of Commerce. The festival is held annually in Yuba City, CA with tours and ancillary events organized throughout the Yuba-Sutter region.

Even though the event is only days away, most of the field trips still have spaces - and the prices are right! It will be this coming weekend, November 8, 9 & 10. Details at:

<https://www.yubasutterchamber.com/swan-festival.html>

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OCTOBER SIGHTINGS

Oct. 7

We saw this little Bewick's Wren yesterday in Soulsbyville.

Jean Dakota



Photo by Greg Robbins

Oct. 19

Today a large group of Yellow-rumped Warblers paid a visit to our front yard. Luckily I was home, and was able to grab a few shots before they departed after staying and entertaining



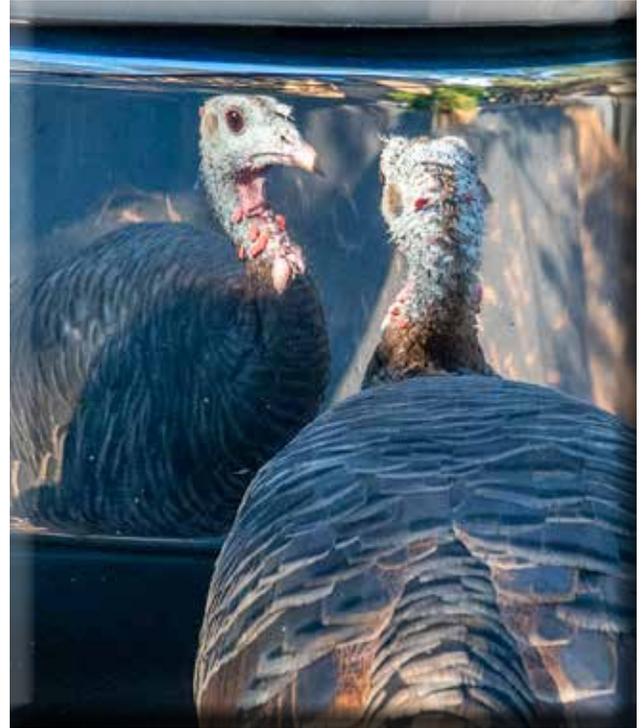
me for about a half hour. They were feeding on insects on the ground, in the air and in the large oak trees. I have seen them here in the spring too, when the young ones are hatching out, but not this time of year.

George Dondero, off Pennsylvania Gulch near the Indian Rock winery, Murphys

Editor's note: the group that George was privileged to watch for a while was a migrating flock using his yard as a refueling station; they were probably on their way to over-winter on the Pacific coast anywhere from California to Costa Rica. This warbler is one of the most widespread and well-known in North America, with a total population of around 150M and increasing.

Oct. 21

There I was, sitting there minding my own business, watching an old, bad western when I heard some carrying on outside. I took a look and saw 8 Turkey hens that were very interested in my pickup bumpers. They were clucking and pecking away at the strange birds in the shiny thing.



Ha! I caught one looking around behind the bumper trying to solve the mystery. They were happy to do this for at least ten minutes. Long enough for me to grab my hog leg and shoot some of them in the act. I always heard that Turkeys were a little on the dim side...

Dave Douglass, Pine Mountain Lake

Editor's note: Dave's joking comment on turkey intelligence reminds me that in evolutionary terms, each species has a form of intelligence that has facilitated the survival and reproduction of that species. However, humans are changing the planet's modes of existence so fast that adapting is difficult for many or most species. The turkey (and other birds) have never needed previously to deal with and adapt to reflections, hence the confusion. But, of course, we humans have the same conceptual problem; for instance, we suffer all manner of stresses and traumas because we are still adapted to a small-group/tribe world where issues were dealt with quickly and relatively stress-free. Consequently, we now suffer the psychological effects that our type of intelligence has still not yet become well adapted to handling.

Dave Douglass watching Brown Pelicans at Point Lobos

We just got back from a great vacation over on the coast and one of the places we visited was Point Lobos. The trail we intended to hike on was closed for maintenance so

we randomly picked another that I had not been on and unbeknownst to me it took us to an overlook of a huge rookery of Brown Pelicans; I hit pay dirt!

Dave Douglass

OCTOBER FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Oct. 5 - Salt Spring Valley

A beautiful day of birding started with ducks, gallinules and a Sharp-shinned Hawk at the Copperopolis pond. The expected Barn Owl at the farmhouse made a fleeting appearance out of a palm tree, and a family of potentially invasive Mute Swans swam on the pond, along with a plethora of Ruddy Ducks. On the way to the marina, some of us, focusing too far away, drove right by the Burrowing Owl on the shoulder of the road! A lone American Pelican and a Great Egret stood by the lake, and we had good views of two Bald Eagles. We might have been too early in the season for the Ferruginous Hawks, but we did see Lewis's Woodpeckers, although they were not in the great abundance of prior years. Our grand total for the day was 49 species.

Paolo Maffei

Oct. 12 – Ironstone Winery

A lovely fall morning at Ironstone was enjoyed by four birders and our companionable liaison from the winery, Conrad Levasseur. Besides the beautiful fall colors, it was a special treat to watch many Cedar Waxwings bathing in the little stream by the lower parking lot. They seemed to be everywhere! Other highlights included a Red-breasted Sapsucker, several particularly blue Western Bluebirds and a couple of newly arrived Ruby-crowned Kinglets. The Ruby-crown was a new bird for one attendee who was absolutely thrilled. A total of 32 species were seen. While we are not scheduling monthly outings here this

year, we are planning another trip in the spring.

**Until then -
Kit DeGear**



Editor's note: the yellow wash and white neck in the lower photo indicates a non-breeding adult. It's just reached adulthood after three years or so, and should find a mate next year.

Oct. 9

Nancy Reichle observed a white Steller's Jay at the Twian Harte market today. This was almost certainly the leucistic Steller's that visited the yard of Don Escallier near the market in 2018 and which I wrote up in the Squawker. It's interesting that it's survived through the winter and into this fall because leucistic and albino birds usually are ostracized by their peers which means that they are more vulnerable to predation and less able to share in knowledge of food resources.

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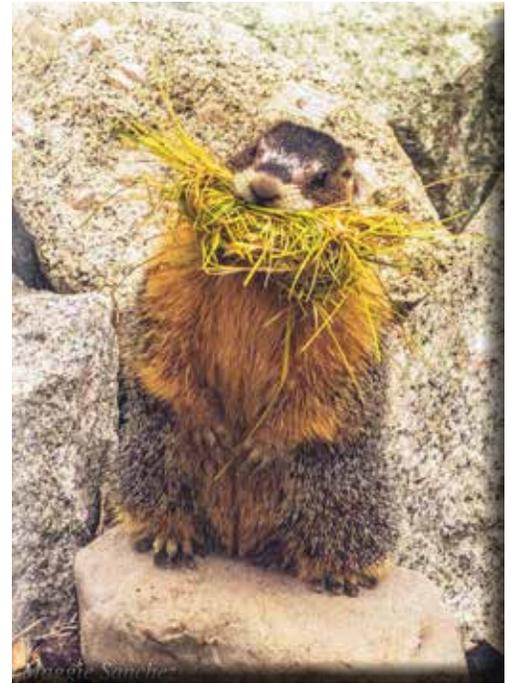
Our intrepid birders at Ironstone.

Photo by Conrad Levasseur

Narrative & Photos by Maggie Sanchez of Columbia College

Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*)

After putting in days of hard work on a beautiful nest for a potential mate, this woodpecker is standing loud and proud above his creation. I first noticed his work on this aging manzanita when he just started to form a cavity in its bark. I first tried to capture him in action through my kitchen window and eventually made it out to a stake out under a cedar tree. At first, I knew he suspected me, but after about 20 minutes he continued pecking away. I don't think I have ever stood so still for so long, but I was determined to get at least one good shot.



Yellow-bellied Marmot (*Marmota flaviventris*)

After scanning the side of the mountain for about thirty minutes, this hungry individual decided to brave the journey back home. I have always had a fascination for Marmots, and it seems like they have the curiosity for humans as well. My run-ins with these oversized rodents have always come by surprise and, of course, last much longer than most of my avian encounters. I guess my curiosity for them mostly stems from their unusual comfort around humans and why that is.

Female Anna's Hummingbird? (*Selasphorus sasin*)

Whenever the hummingbirds visit our backyard Hot Lips, I never have my camera at hand. That is until one day, I decided to sit there until one came around. I knew about the time they started to come feed, so I at least had an idea of when to expect them. From taking this photograph, I learned how truly difficult it is trying to capture a bird of couple inches long with wings that beat 100 times per second. It took me quite a few tries following her with my lens while simultaneously focusing on



where she was for each three second segment of pause. But, I was very excited to capture her while feeding with the addition of a yellow mustache of pollen on her beak.

Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*)

It's not every day you hear a Red-Shouldered Hawk from inside your living room, walk outside, and find it casually perched on an Oak Tree 10 yards away. Soon enough he started screeching for a friend, most likely because of my three rotund chickens frozen in place right below him. Lucky for my girls, his backup did not show.



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS Sonora, Groveland, and Calaveras

Where can you get 76,987 people together over a 23-day period where they are all focused on a common SCIENTIFIC goal? Why, the annual Audubon sponsored Christmas Bird Count, of course! All those volunteers were spread over 2,585 Counts Circles, worldwide. The reward for all this work was finding 59,242,067 individual birds of 2,673 species. Incredible! We are lucky to have three local counts in Sonora, Groveland, and Calaveras.

For the Sonora Count last year, 40 people found 9,549 individual birds of 91 species. The Groveland Count turned up 4,914 birds of 83 species seen by 13 people. 90 species were found by the 40 people on the Calaveras Count.

Every Count is conducted within a 15-mile diameter circle. Count Day is a 24 hour period beginning and ending at midnight. Each circle is headed by one or more compilers who carve up the territory into smaller areas so volunteers can scour the countryside counting every bird they see or hear. It is a fabulous way to spend a day outdoors with a goal in mind. ALL people are invited, regardless of skill level. People new to counting birds will always be paired with someone of experience. At the end of the day, everyone meets to submit their data and spend some time communing with each other and sharing the day's encounters. There is food involved.

If you are unable to come out and walk with us, you can still participate. Many of us have bird feeders in the yard that attract birds. Sitting and watching your feeders throughout the day is also a valuable way to contribute to this undertaking.

Following is a list of the dates of the local CBCs. Get in touch with the compilers as early as possible as they are in full planning mode. Join us for a fun and relaxing outing.

SONORA - Saturday, December 14 - Steven Umland,
stevenum71@gmail.com or 209.352.6985

GROVELAND - Monday, December 16 - Steven Umland,
stevenum71@gmail.com or 209.352.6985

CALAVERAS - Saturday, December 28-Keith Maurer,
kandsmaurer@goldrush.com



Registration begins in early December. We highly recommend getting on our email list as soon as possible. Emails will go out to notify you when registration opens, of various deadlines, and of any changes and additions to the program along the way. You can follow us on Facebook, too!

View us at:

www.snowgoosefestival.org

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

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|----------------------------------|---------------|
| Barry Boulton, President | (209)596-0612 |
| Tom Parrington, Conservation | (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 |
| OPEN , 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 Committee Chairs

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Gail Witzlsteiner, Bird Box Trail | (209)586-4025 |
| Tom Harrington, Book/Bird Box Sales | (209)694-8564 |
| Chris Laddish, Scholarship | (209)728-3871 |
| Barry Boulton, Website | (209)596-0612 |
| Walt Kruse, YSS delegate | (707)548-1829 |
| Chris Laddish, Calaveras County Contact | (209)728-3871 |