

Central Sierra Audubon Society

Sierra Squawker



www.centralsierraaudubon.org

January - 2020

JANUARY PUBLIC PROGRAMS

TUOLUMNE COUNTY

Local Forest Issues

by John Buckley, CSERC Director

Where we're at, how we got here, and what the future may hold

John will present a visually compelling slide program, showing pictures of the forests of the local region - from historic photos to current images. He will describe timely issues affecting Yosemite Park, the Stanislaus Forest, and the private timberlands of our region, as well as some of the current controversies.

The program will include photos of local wildlife species that are often at the heart of forest management debates. This will be a fast-paced highlight summary of a wide range of forest topics.

Time & Location:

**Wednesday, January 15 at 6:30pm
at the County Library on Greenley Road**

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CALAVERAS COUNTY

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 wherever it goes!

Time & Location:

**Tuesday, January 14 at 4pm
at the Bistro Espresso, 1225 Oak Circle Drive, Arnold**

(We've made it 4pm because the Bistro Espresso closes at 4pm and is allowing us to use it for the next hour. Also, this time avoids the later dark driving time)

JANUARY FIELD TRIPS

January 2 (Thursday) - GCSD

Since the first Wednesday of January is on New Years Day, the monthly Bird Walk at the Groveland Community Services property at 18966 Ferretti Road, Groveland, will be led by Jeanne Ridgley on **Thursday**, January 2. The property encompasses an area of more than 200 acres of oak, pine and willow habitat with three water storage ponds.

The walk scheduled on Dec 4 was cancelled due to rain, but several birders did visit on Thurs, Dec 5, when we saw 29 species including Lincoln's Sparrow and Sharp-shinned Hawk.

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

January 26 (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

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DECEMBER FIELD TRIP REPORT

Red Hills Romp - Friday, Dec. 13th

Thirty students, 2 teachers and four of us from Audubon (Pamela Blair, Tom Harrington, Tom Parrington and myself, Kit DeGear) enjoyed a nice outdoor morning experience with "The Dragons" from the Elementary School in Chinese Camp. Perhaps a bit disappointing from a species count perspective, only 5 species were seen, it was still an uplifting day based on the interaction with these exuberant young children. Many students were able to view a Red-tailed Hawk through a scope. We will try for a date earlier in the season next year. Rain was imminent and we think the birds were just hunkered down as well. We look forward to our spring encounter with this group!

Kit DeGear

DECEMBER SIGHTINGS

Dec. 19

I was standing out in the driveway today when a loud, nearby birdcall got my attention. On looking for it I saw that it was a Pileated Woodpecker! Way up high on my list of birds I want to shoot. I raced in, grabbed the camera and started blasting away. I eased in closer and it never seemed to even know I was there. Here's one of my favorite shots....



Dec. 26

I went out to take advantage of the nice light out back while Lago and saw a LOAD of Pine Siskens which I don't really see much. A bunch of them were busily trying to eat up all of my nyjer seeds.

Dave Douglass, Pine Mountain Lake, 2,800 ft.

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Dec. 29

My bird baths and feeder today were quite busy with the usual juncos, chickadees, and nuthatches. I also heard quite a flock of robins up the hill behind my house. There are a lot of manzanita bushes up there, so I assume they were busy with the old berries.

My gift of the day was a female Williamson's Sapsucker that showed up on my bird bath for a few minutes until the deer showed up for its drink of water. We never know what is going appear.

Kathy Enea, Blue Lake Springs, Arnold. 4,000 ft.

Editor's note: the Williamson's Sapsucker mostly breeds up in the subalpine zone where the lodgepole pine dominates. Its winter whereabouts are much less well known, but it is thought that local breeders migrate downslope for less cold conditions and better food prospects. Rocky Mountain breeders pass through California to over-winter in Baja California, so, we don't know from which group this particular bird originated.

Interestingly, this sapsucker excavates **irregular** rows of sap wells unlike the Red-breasted Sapsucker whose sap wells are quite regular, so keep an eye open for irregular rows of wells that indicate a Williamson's presence in your yard.

(See photo of male & female Williamson's on p.5)

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Narrative & Photos by Maggie Sanchez of Columbia College

Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*) with video footage

I cannot be sure if this individual holds the permanent residence mentioned in previous articles, but I have a funny feeling she might be the one. I spotted this Downey after noticing multiple calls from inside the thick branches of an Oak tree as well as the well-known “wood-pecking” sound of her hard at work. She soon after swooped to this branch where I was lucky enough to get a shot of her in the process of a quick feather ruffle.



Dark-eyed Juncos in winter (*Junco hyemalis*)

Juncos have astonished me with their absence of fear towards the elements. Each winter I am always so excited for their return so I can observe their behaviors and especially their familial quarrels when feeding. It's a wonder that birds have mastered mid-air combat and are never afraid to use it even despite a size difference. I have also noticed that Juncos use all of their food resources, whether it be the feeder pictured or the leftovers deposited onto the ground by others. These little birds are successful for obvious reasons and are quite a joy to watch.

Click to see video



Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*)

This winter I was gladly surprised to notice a past winter Spotted Towhee nest was again being used. I would think that the same couple, or maybe just the male, returned to use their already comfortable area within a Rockrose bush. These birds have always seemed relaxed around me, quite curious in fact, not seeming bothered by my presence.



What's a bird to do?

Observations by John Sutake, Arnold. Elev. 4,000ft.

Bathing seems to be a biological necessity for some birds; perhaps it is to clean the feathers or reduce and suppress parasites (which latter purpose may also be accomplished by “ant-ing”). But, what about water itself that comes, as we all know, in three states: gas, liquid and solid. As a liquid it fills our bird baths giving enjoyment to the birds as well as ourselves while, in its absence, birds commonly take dust baths. This apparently suffocates the mites.

How about the frozen state? A David Attenborough program that I once watched showed Snow Buntings taking snow baths in Antarctica; how appropriate! Imagine my surprise this Thanksgiving when, after two feet of fresh powder snow had just fallen so that the bird bath and ground in my yard were deeply covered, I watched three male Townsend's Warblers taking baths in the deep snow - what a beautiful sight!

Somewhere in their breeding areas they had encountered snow and instinctively knew what it was good for. Sometimes the snow coverage “migrates” south faster than the birds.

I was surprised by the lateness of the warblers arrival because, according to Beedy & Pandolfino (Birds of the Sierra Nevada, 2013), most of their migration takes place in August and September and perhaps October. Other sources (Gaines 1988) agree that their winter occurrence in the Sierra Nevada is quite rare. They do winter along the California coast where they are regular but uncommon visitors. However, I suspect that the lack of observations in the winter Sierra has more to do with the lack of observers than of birds.



Townsend's Warbler courtesy Lucia Gonzalez

Today is the Winter Solstice (Dec. 21), the snow in Arnold has melted, and water in my bird bath is once again in its liquid state. The bath was visited this morning by Golden and Ruby-crowned Kinglets and the male Townsend's Warblers – I hope they remain for the whole winter! I'll keep you updated.

Today, December 28 - the day of the Calaveras CBC - I have four Golden-crowned Kinglets in the bird bath. Although I've had four at the bird bath in previous years, they've only just achieved that number this year.

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*Williamson's Sapsuckers (female center, male right)
Photo by 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

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Gail Witzlsteiner, Education	(209)586-4025
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Your CSAS Committee Chairs

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Tom Harrington, Book/Bird Box Sales	(209)694-8564
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