

Sierra Squawker



www.centralsierraaudubon.org

October - 2020

CHANGES ARE COMING THIS MONTH!

It is said that "change is as good as a rest" and it seems like we've been resting too long in the grim shadow of this pandemic, so it's time for CSAS to begin evolving our activities, particularly as this thing seems likely to go on quite some time.

- We will commence monthly on-line Zoom presentations in place of our previous meetings at the Sonora County Library, starting this month, October - see below.
- Field trips will also commence this month where the trips are essentially car-based so that we can use sanitized hand-held radios to communicate with each other. See details inside.

ZOOM PRESENTATION by SANTIAGO ESCRUCERIA

Santiago will offer a combined presentation of *Birding and Birds of Colombia* and the *State of Mono Lake and its birds*. Both programs will offer geographical, ecological and political insights on both areas.

Santiago M. Escruceria is a Colombian-born American citizen residing in California for the past 41 years. He graduated with a BA in Cultural Anthropology and a minor in Environmental Studies from Sonoma State University. He has taught environmental education in Spanish and English, for the past 30 years, 21 of which he has spent with the Mono Lake Committee. At Mono Lake he manages the Committee's Outdoor Education Center program for Los Angeles youth.

Santiago is an avid birder and bird photographer, leading birding adventures in Colombia during the winter and walks for school groups in the Mono Basin during the rest of the year. guadualitobirdingtours.com. He is currently President of the Eastern Sierra Audubon Chapter.



Golden-collared Manakin, Colombia
by Santiago Escruceria

Bullock's Oriole
by Santiago Escruceria



Zoom log-in information:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/76510222290?pwd=RitjeWI1bEcySUhSMnBvb29hYTY0Zz09>

FIELD TRIPS IN OUR NEW COVID WORLD

Given that the essence of birding is to be out in the world with the birds and wildlife in general, that this pandemic has no ending in sight, and that we already missed out on the 2020 breeding season, the question is what should CSAS do about the upcoming over-winter migratory season? Should we hold off, or cautiously move ahead? We decided to move ahead in a prudent manner by scheduling one auto-based trip per month for the time being. While it may seem that car trips mean a diminished experience, remember that the winter migratory birds usually congregate in large numbers in wetlands so we can stay in one place for longer periods of time to observe the behaviors as so many species are interacting with each other.

There will be spots along the way during these trips where we may want to get out of our cars, and in those places and circumstances we will observe strict social-distancing protocols. Everyone participating in these group events is requested to take their temperature on the day of the trip, and it must be below 99 degrees to participate. Masks and hand sanitizer should be part of everyone's supplies as well as water, sunscreen, hat and birding equipment. There can be no sharing of scopes etc. As Kit says, we can share our enthusiasm! We have 6 walkie-talkies which will be sanitized before and after each trip so that, if you wish to use one, you can share with the other participants on the way.

We will also feature a local Birding venue each month in Tuolumne and/or Calaveras County that you can explore and enjoy on your own. We are trying to choose areas that will provide the best birding for the season. Additional locales can always be viewed on our website.

Thursday, October 8 - Merced NWR

Please join us for a fun day observing all the waterfowl migrating in to this unique spot. We expect to see some early arrivals of the Sandhill Cranes as well as many ducks and shorebirds. Northern Harriers, White-tailed Kites and Great Horned Owls are often seen. **We will meet at 2:00 pm at the parking lot observation platform.** Remember to check your temperature prior to arrival and have masks, hand sanitizers, water and personal birding equipment. We will be unable to share scopes etc. It will be nice to share our observations over walkie talkies and socially distanced encounters outside our cars. This is always a great outing!

Kit DeGear (925) 822-5215 or kdegear@gmail.com

Editor's note: I've visited the refuge 3 times in the last week and here are a few of my sightings. The cranes have arrived; a couple of days ago there were about 200 plus 300 White-faced Ibis on the cattle grazing field, while this crane family with one pale juvenile was in the marsh half-way round the auto route.



There were also about 200 Black-necked Stilts, and I watched this very fresh juvenile paddling about, foraging in the water. I also captured on camera a beautiful Say's Phoebe perching, preening, and foraging for insects. There were lots of Yellowlegs, but not too many ducks and no geese yet - but they'll soon be there! Several Killdeer were in evidence, including this sweet poser below....



October Self-guided Birding Location

We are recommending the Confidence-South Fork Rd. trail out towards Lyon's Reservoir from Upper Twain Harte. This is a nice level easy walk. At this time of year you could see resident Hairy and White-headed Woodpeckers and if you are lucky a Pileated Woodpecker. Red-breasted Nuthatches, Fox Sparrows and a few varieties of Warblers could also be on hand. It is always a lovely stroll. The road is nice and wide and would be a good place to meet a few friends where social distancing is easily achieved. The trailhead is at Confidence/South Fork Rd. just north of Middle Camp Rd.

If you have any questions about this site please feel free to contact me.

Kit DeGear: email kdegear@gmail.com or call/text my cell #925-822-5215

2020 Christmas Bird Counts (CBC)

SONORA CBC - Saturday, December 19

The Sonora CBC will take place this year on Saturday, December 19th. I am, once again, pleading with you all to help us out in counting. We need bodies to pound the pavement in search of our avian friends. Your birding expertise can be anywhere on the spectrum from novice to expert. All you need to participate is the drive to be outside and assist in the largest Citizen Science undertaking in the world. Even if you cannot participate in the field, bird feeders in our yards are, collectively, a huge source of sightings. You can help us out from the comfort and safety of your home.

This Count will be one of over 2600 worldwide. Each Count Circle has a diameter of 15 miles and is broken into sectors. Each sector is headed by someone with birding experience. The group travels throughout the area by car or foot and counts EVERY bird that is seen or heard. The data is used, along with other sources of data, to study trends in bird populations throughout the world. In the past, we would all congregate at a local restaurant and compile the day's data. This year, due to the pandemic, we will NOT be congregating at a restaurant. I will establish a meeting time and place to collect the information.

Contact Steven Umland at 209.352.6985 or at stevenum71@gmail.com if you have questions or would like to join us.

CALAVERAS CBC - Saturday, January 2, 2021

The Calaveras CBC will be run again this season by Keith & Sandra Maurer as they have done in the last few years. This event will also follow social distancing guidelines and there will not be a meeting at the end of day. Count data can be supplied via USPS or email, details in the November Squawker.

Contact Keith & Sandra at kandsmaurer@goldrush.com

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, Conservation	(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
Gail Witzlsteiner, Membership	(209)586-4025
Jan Jorn-Baird, Publicity	(209)532-1106
Kit DeGear, Education	(925)822-5215
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
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