

Central Sierra Audubon Society

# Sierra Squawker



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

February - 2021

PUBLIC ZOOM PRESENTATION

Wednesday, February 17, at 6:30pm

## "Tracking the migration of Golden-crowned Sparrows with miniaturized GPS" by Autumn Iverson

The details of migration are not well-known for many bird species, especially the small ones that are hard to track. Understanding migration, including how populations in winter are connected to certain breeding grounds far away is important for understanding many aspects of a species' biology and ecology.

In this presentation, Autumn will discuss the natural history of Golden-crowned Sparrows, her experience in the field attaching miniaturized GPS tags that allow long-term tracking on small birds, and the amazing migration journeys the tracks revealed.



Autumn Iverson is a conservation ecologist, Ph.D. student in the Ecology program at the University of California, Davis, and a National Geographic Explorer. Her research interests include songbird migration and the impacts of environmental change. A native Californian, she lives in Santa Rosa with her husband, and the two of them have recently learned how to homeschool Kindergarten for their daughter and raise a puppy.



### Zoom log-in information:

[HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/J/83403213380?PWD=U250VZLYWW5VEDVQVVPVWDJURZFVDZ09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83403213380?pwd=U250VZLYWW5VEDVQVVPVWDJURZFVDZ09)

You might like to log on 5 minutes before 6:30 pm just in case you run into problems; it also gives you time to say "hello" to those already logged in so that we can start on time or close to.



### January Yosemite Presentation available on YouTube

As you will remember, last month's presentation by photographer Robb Hirsch featured Yosemite National Park. Well, I recorded the presentation on Zoom and uploaded it to YouTube where you can now view it courtesy of Robb at: <https://youtu.be/LAxitEzCeZg>

## CALAVERAS CBC HIGHLIGHTS

Thanks to everyone that assisted with the 2020 Audubon Calaveras Bird Count! On January 2, 2021 the weather held out for 30 participants, with only a short and light rain period in the afternoon. There were a total of 91 birds species observed. Our nocturnal birders observed 2 Great Horned Owls, 2 Northern Pygmy Owls and 1 Saw-whet Owl. As the sun rose, our waterfowl highlights included 11 Wood Duck, 30 Hooded Merganser, 21 Ring-necked Ducks, 6 Lesser Scaups, 3 Cormorants and 31 Common Goldeneye. Raptors included 2 Golden Eagles, 3 Bald Eagles, 2 Cooper's Hawks, 8 Red-Shouldered Hawks and a lone Turkey Vulture.

Other sightings included 62 Mountain Chickadees, 7 Brown Creepers, 1 Rock Wren, 1 Pacific Wren, and an American Dipper. A large number of Yellow-rumped Warblers (125) were observed along with 4 Townsend's Warblers. A large number of Band-tailed Pigeons were seen (683 total) as well as Canada Geese (312), Mallards (153), Ruby-crowned Kinglets (246) and Western Bluebirds (219). A Pileated Woodpecker was spotted along with 5 Red-breasted Sapsuckers. There were large numbers of Oregon Juncos (803), White-crowned Sparrows (313) and Pine Siskin (103). Finally, it was a nice surprise to learn that 7 Red Crossbills were sighted at the far end of Love Creek Rd.

If you have any further questions about sightings, please contact Keith and Sandra Maurer at [kandsmaurer@goldrush.com](mailto:kandsmaurer@goldrush.com)

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## **UPCOMING BIRDING EVENTS ON-LINE AND THEN IN-PLACE (HOPEFULLY)**

If things work out as we hope, we'll see a transition from all on-line events to hybrid events that combine in-place trips plus on-line presentations, and I'm hoping that on-line will always be with us for those (many) times when we can't attend in person. Here is a list of some of the events in the upcoming transitional season that may interest you.

### **February 6 Galt Winter Bird Festival (on-line)**

A virtual celebration of birds that includes John Muir Laws as the keynote speaker on the topic "How to Build a Bigger Bird Brain". See <http://www.ci.galt.ca.us/about-galt/special-events/11th-annual-winter-bird-festival>

### **February 19 Owens Lake (on-line)**

Learn about the birds that stop at Owens Lake as they travel the globe. Rich Cimino will be sharing his knowledge and trends he's seeing, with the help of beautiful photos taken by local photographer Martin Powell. \$20 suggested donation. Program and registration at <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=km#search/friends/FMfcgxwKkjdkScGKzSzHZFgcBrqCmqzI>

### **February 17 – 21 San Diego Bird Festival (in-place and on-line)**

This is a hybrid event comprising field trips and on-line presentations. All of the on-line presentations will be available to us for a total registration fee of \$30. See <https://www.sandiegoaudubon.org/birding/san-diego-bird-festival.html>

### **March 24 – 26 Wings & Wetlands Festival (on-line)**

Learn about birds and birding in the middle of Kansas at Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge with Kenn Kaufmann and other well-known birding experts for only \$20. Topics of presentations will include the link of Kansas wetlands to bird migrations, the psychology of birding, humorous birding stories, bird identification, Kansas wetlands, Kansas raptors and SmartPhone birding.

Program and registration at <https://www.wingsandwetlands.com/>

### **April 23 – 25 Owens Lake Bird Festival**

The Owens Lake Bird Festival showcases the migration of birds through the Mojave desert, along the historic Owens Lake. This festival merges magic of historic western movie scenes and ancient tribal histories at the Alabama Hills with the stark natural beauty of Death Valley's doorstep. Details of the 2021 Owens Lake Bird Festival are still pending as organizers monitor the situation and follow guidelines set by local and state health officials to ensure the safety of our community.

Updates at <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/event/owens-lake-bird-festival/>

## UPCOMING FEBRUARY FIELD TRIPS

### Saturday, February 27 - Salt Springs Valley

This is one of our favorite field trips in Calaveras County with a variety of habitats including ponds, grasslands, oak woodlands and resort lake. On our similar trip in February 2020 (just before C-19 hit) we saw a mature Bald Eagle by the lake that remained perched for most of the morning. We saw Eurasian Collared Doves and then, in the grasslands, five of one target bird, the Ferruginous Hawk, an unusually high number. Lewis's Woodpeckers appeared as we hoped, although in fewer numbers than usual. Three Say's Phoebes, Pelicans and diverse ducks were among the 56 total species seen. What we'll see on this trip depends, as always, on the birds themselves, so we must hope for avian cooperation with our whims!

As usual, our trip leader will be Paolo Maffei. Due to C-19 prudence we will travel separately and meet at 9am opposite the pond about 1/4 mile along Rock Creek Road off highway 4 near Copperopolis. Bring water and lunch which we will enjoy - social distanced of course - at the resort (\$10 per car). Bring radios for convoying if you have them, otherwise we will bring sanitized radios for your use (we have 5 radios). Finish by 2pm - but if you need to depart earlier, we'll get to the resort around 11:30am. Rain will cancel the trip.

**Paolo Maffei (209)532-8426**

### Suggested Self-guided Field Trip

This month I would like to recommend the Knights Ferry Recreation Area. If you have a National Parks Pass you will get free parking. This is near the Tuolumne/Stanislaus border so you get a nice mix of lower elevation birds. Target birds would include the Common Merganser or Goldeneye down in the river, and keep an eye out for Cedar Waxwings and Canyon/ Rock Wrens by the Covered Bridge. Happy hunting!

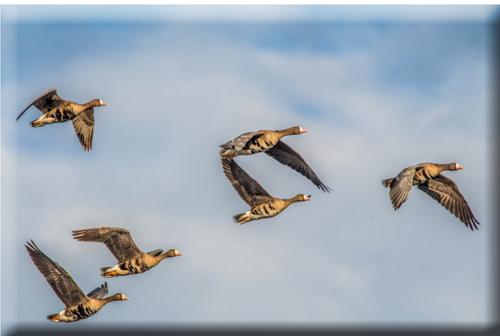
**Kit DeGear (925)822-5215, or [kdegear@gmail.com](mailto:kdegear@gmail.com)**

## JANUARY FIELD TRIP REPORT

### Merced NWR on January 21st

Another glorious day at the refuge. We had 13 in attendance. The walkie talkies helped to share our sightings among the parade of cars on the auto route. Very nice to have a safe activity amidst these Covid times. We saw 51 species! Highlights included the Virginia Rail and Sora out in the OPEN, as well as Long-billed Curlew, White-tailed Kites, an albino Black Phoebe and an almost mature male Vermillion Flycatcher. Stunning! While we didn't see the Burrowing Owl in his customary spot, we did see three Great Horned Owls. The sights and sounds of the refuge at dusk is always rewarding and I highly recommend a visit on your own.

**Kit DeGear**



Greater White-fronted Geese in flight



Virginia Rail out in the open

*Photos at Merced NWR by George Dondero*

## New Melones Eagle Survey on January 11

We held the eagle survey on probably the worst day we've done it in a long time. It started out in the low 30's and we had only 2 boats that each completed 2 sections; then the wind picked up and in the late afternoon the fog rolled-in. We were already frozen stiff due to the temperature never getting above 50. We did not have any birders on one of the boats so not too many different species were counted, but good enough for this year under these conditions. I hope everything will be back to nearly normal by the Osprey count in June of 2021 so I can have your Audubon group join the survey as usual. I counted more trespass cows this year than eagles so definitely looking forward to next year's eagle count! But, we did see a total of ten Bald Eagles (7 adults, 3 juveniles) as well as two Golden Eagles. We also counted over two hundred of the usual Western Grebes along with fifteen Eared Grebes, so all was not lost. Photography was very difficult due to the horrible lightening conditions, wind making the boat ride bumpy and then the fog. My camera and I were not happy campers!

**Ranger Pat Sanders**

## Persimmon Feeding Frenzy in Murphys!

A splendid fruit harvest on a persimmon tree along Murphys main street this January has made it a very popular place for local photographers because of the many bird species feasting there. It's been possible to observe the different styles and personalities of each species as well as how they interact with each other in a competitive situation.



Cedar Waxwings feasting and sparring with each other over plentiful persimmons for momentary pride of place!

*Photos: George Dondero*



I visited to record these activities on several occasions and created a 12-minute video in which you can see their many antics, including those of Bushtits and Ruby-crowned Kinglets in more detail than is normally possible due to their constant movement, as well as Waxwings and several Woodpecker species. The video is at: <https://youtu.be/2tidYPITGN8>

**Barry Boulton**

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### **Central Sierra Audubon Society - CSAS**

(Chapter of the National Audubon Society)  
P.O. Box 3047, Sonora, CA 95370

**Public Meetings:** Under the current C-19 regime, these are now on-line events using Zoom technology on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:30pm. Monthly details shown in this newsletter and on our website at

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

**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 you may join solely 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 for local membership 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 & Newsletter Editor	(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 & Education	(925)822-5215
Gail Witzlsteiner, Membership	(209)586-4025
Jan Jorn-Baird, Publicity	(209)532-1106

### **Your CSAS Committee Chairs**

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