

Sierra Squawker



CSAS Annual Meeting & Potluck Saturday, June 19 at 5pm

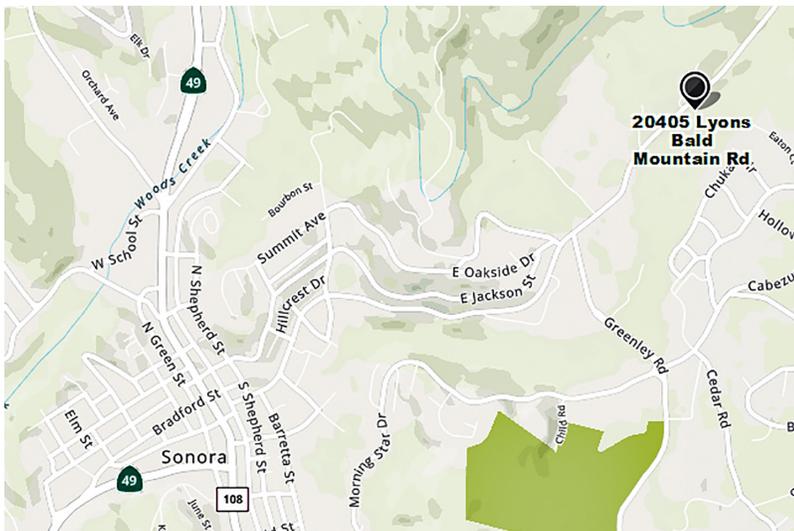
IN-PERSON

LOCATION: In the garden of Ralph Retherford's home at:
20405 Lyons Bald Mountain Road, Sonora CA 95370 (see map below)

This will be our first social event in almost 18 months and we look forward to the pleasure of spending time with you again. Fully vaccinated members may attend without face masks or social distancing, while unvaccinated attendees should follow the current Covid guidelines post June 15th..

Officer elections for 2021-2 will formally take place by voice vote at this annual meeting, candidates as below:

- **Barry Boulton - President**
- **Linda Millspaugh - Treasurer**
- **Ralph Retherford - VP Programs**
- **Jean Dakota - Secretary**
- **Gail Witzlsteiner - Director-at-Large**



Please bring a dish to share, along with your own plate and cutlery and drink.

Barry Boulton, President
(209)596-0612 or rbarryboulton@gmail.com

Note

If the coronavirus situation changes before the annual meeting such that in-person events of this scale are not allowed, we will go on-line via Zoom and I'll send out an email with the relevant information.

Vocal Dialects in Birds

What exactly are they, who has them, and why does it matter?

Tom Hahn, UC Davis



"Vocal Dialects in Birds" on YouTube

The May 19 presentation by Tom Hahn in which he discusses this fascinating topic is now available on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/eFTQBU5cOwk>

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

May 4 - West Side Rail Trail

On Tuesday, May 4th, ten bird lovers walked the West Side Rail Trail in Tuolumne. 18 bird species were seen and heard on this 3 hour walk along the old railroad grade. Bird sightings included five Ash-throated Flycatchers, one Northern Flicker, and one Lazuli Bunting. We did get a glimpse of a pair of Wrentits which are mostly heard but rarely seen.

There were spectacular views of the canyons and the Tuolumne River below. The wildflowers, including the Harlequin Lupine and the Mariposa Lily (in white), were in bloom and visited by numerous butterflies. Kit DeGear, Jan Jorn-Baird, Tom Parrington, Pattie Henderson and others were our resident bird identification specialists. Tom added to the experience with his flower identification book and knowledge of wild flowers. Special thanks to Kit DeGear for tracking the species using eBird.

This was a fun walk that we will repeat in the future.

Jean Dakota.



Lazuli Bunting - Barry Boulton

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May 20 - Indigeny

Ron & Barbara McDow and Cyril Ashe met me for a rather chilly morning, given our recent warm weather, to check out Indigeny's May offerings. Once again the Torch Lilies along the parking lot lured in a striking male Bullock's Oriole for a beautiful close up view. Other highlights included Lawrence's Goldfinch, Black-headed Grosbeak, Western Wood-Pewee and a Belted Kingfisher. 40 species were seen.

Kit DeGear

Photo by Greg Robbins

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JUNE FIELD TRIP

Thursday, June 10

This is an interesting habitat outside of Long Barn that I have enjoyed exploring for several years. I did lead a trip here in June 2019 that received favorable responses. While we may not see a high number of species, I believe we will see some more unusual ones. Highlights from past visits have included Calliope Hummingbird, Green-tailed Towhee, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Chipping Sparrow and some Warblers and Flycatchers, too. Please bring snacks/lunch, water and sunscreen.

We will meet at the Mi-Wok Ranger Station (along Hwy 108 less than 10 minutes above Twain Harte) at 8:00 am. We hope to have car pooling available for fully vaccinated attendees at the discretion of those driving. It will be about a 40 minute drive from the ranger station. We will make a brief pit stop at the North Fork Day Use Area on our way out. There are no facilities at the Meadow. We will return to this site for our lunch where there are picnic tables overlooking the river. We got to see an American Dipper here last time! The trip will involve walking on mostly level terrain of about a mile. We should be back to the ranger station 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

[CALIFORNIA BLUEBIRD RECOVERY PROJECT](#)

As you know, the Western Bluebird, a cavity-nesting bird, has made a remarkable comeback in California after losing ground through loss of habitat through clear-cutting, snag removal and fire suppression - indeed, all cavity-nesting birds have similarly suffered. But, the Bluebird was the poster child that gained attention for this class of birds. CSAS has two Bluebird trails with a total of 40 boxes which are observed, monitored and cleaned by Officers Gail Witzlsteiner along highway 49 and by Ralph Retherford and Jean Dakota along highway 108.

Just a few days ago, Georgette Howington, Assistant Director and Mike Azevedo, Board Member, gave a 30-minute Zoom presentation to Stanislaus Audubon on their program of supporting chapters and groups to install and manage Bluebird boxes. You can see it in two 15-minute segments at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcMD_oNMF4o Part 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CKwtx-o0Jk> Part 2

You can view the Project's website at: <https://www.cbrp.org/about-us/>

Their Facebook page is at: <https://www.facebook.com/bluebirdrecovery> (well worth viewing)

CSAS has decided to contribute \$500 to the California Recovery Project

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[GARDENING FOR BIRDS AND NATURE](#)

The Cornell Bird Academy is offering an on-line course entitled [Growing Wild: Gardening for Birds and Nature](#).

If you sign up by May 31, the price is \$48.99 and after that \$59.99

This is how Cornell describes the course: *"This self-paced course includes instructional videos, photo galleries, and plant lists to help you transform your outdoor spaces. With guidance on how to provide for birds throughout the year and attract specific species, this course holds your hand through all the decisions you'll be making as you get started. Designed for anyone interested in gardening for birds with an outdoor space large or small, this course serves as your friendly guide".*

You can view it and register at: <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=km#inbox/FMfcgzGkXSWwXpdXkHBbjkFIVb>

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[Mastodon Fossils, other ancient mammals millions of years old discovered near Valley Springs](#)

It's a sweet story - in our own backyard there lies a petrified forest complete with mastodons and many other fossils. You can read about it on the Union Democrat's website at:

https://www.uniondemocrat.com/news/article_fdb9005c-ba99-11eb-abfe-8f59cd63c8a2.html#utm_source=uniondemocrat.com&utm_campaign=%2Fnewsletters%2Flists%2Fheadlines%2F%3F-dc%3D1621695612&utm_medium=email&utm_content=read%20more

I suppose it's not impossible to think of a forest in one of our watersheds (Mokelumne) that was washed down by massive floods, covered with sediments and ultimately fossilized. We're lucky that an unusually observant ranger naturalist noticed and comprehended a segment of fossilized wood - one wonders how many people have passed by without seeing?

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[MEASURE V IN TUOLUMNE COUNTY \(part\)](#)

Mail in ballot has been sent to most residents of Tuolumne County except the Twain Harte area, the MiWuk area, and Strawberry asking for voter approval of an annual parcel tax of \$150 for improved parcels and \$75 for unimproved parcels. Please inform yourselves before the vote which has to be mailed or returned by June 8th. An article by Alex MacLean in the May 5, 2021 Union Democrat describes the terms of and the needs of the fire districts which have formed a joint power authority in order to seek joint funding to address our fire protection needs. View the article at: https://www.uniondemocrat.com/news/article_d2d3f770-ade7-11eb-bf87-178d807ca935.html

Tom Parrington

BOOK REVIEW

Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest

by Suzanne Simard

Gaia, *“a principle proposing that living organisms interact with each other and with their inorganic Earth environment to form a synergistic and self-regulating, complex system that helps to maintain and perpetuate the conditions for life on our planet”* has been and still is controversial. That skepticism in the face of the fact that plants converted the earth's atmosphere into an oxygen base sufficient to allow animal life as we now experience it!

Clearly life does not evolve and continue in a static environment but, rather, every living thing has a part to play in a dynamic environment - coevolution. But, it's disputed because it means that we humans must become a healing part of the planet's life-systems rather than sucking the life out of them for profit – evidently a tough pill to swallow! Yet the new 30x30 State and Federal programs are an acknowledgement that we need to care and to take action.

Now, Suzanne Simard, Professor in the University of British Columbia Faculty of Forestry has demonstrated through rigorous research that healthy biodiversity is underpinned by the under-soil connections provided by fungi – known as mycorrhizae - in which trees and plants both communicate and exchange nutrients and minerals through this delicate system. She started her working career part-time with a logging company where her work involved planning and watching seedlings planted after clearcuts. The company policy was – surprise – clearcuts with no other vegetation allowed, the theory being that they could gather 100% of the sunlight and the nutrients and thus grow faster and bigger without competition.

But, she noticed that young trees in cleared areas tended to be less healthy than those with vegetation and other trees nearby, and when she pulled them out of the ground found that the sick ones had no fungal connections, whereas the healthy ones were difficult to pull out precisely because of those fungal strands attached to and part of their root systems. She began to think that the standard logging practice of “free to grow” in Canada might be a complete misunderstanding of the dynamics of healthy forests, and that clearcutting was simply wrong. She set out to research that proposition.

She took a job with the Forest Service and was able to cleverly do research to demonstrate the importance of fungi to forest health – not that the Forest Service with its ear too close to industry appreciated her work as you can imagine! Not until she was offered a professorship at the University of British Columbia could she really give free reign to research that demonstrates unequivocally the value of diversity and mycorrhizae to a healthy forest. The subtleties and nuances in the relationships and communications between same and different species make a very complex story, which is exactly what we might expect since plants first appeared over 700 million years ago; that allows of a lot of coevolution, adaptation and cooperation to evolve.

This book, by the way, isn't a technical book at all; rather, it's not only a story that speaks to her observations, hypotheses, experiments, results and conclusions, but it's also her personal story. What it was like for a woman with new and provocative ideas in a man's world, employed by an agency in league with the logging industry; juggling a family and a career, dealing with cancer and a double mastectomy, and inspiring research students. Quite a story....I couldn't put it down! Buy the book and be enthralled!

You can find her project webpage at: <https://mothertreeproject.org/team/project-leads/suzanne-simard/>

It seems to me that as the public discussion on protecting "biodiversity" continues, we need to add "interconnectedness" as an integral component because protecting individual species without understanding and nurturing the connections is an impossible task. Interconnectedness implies co-evolution, and I've become fascinated this year by plants and pollinators as interdependent parts of this critical web that underpins so much that we love (flowers) and need (food), and so I've been enjoying macro-photography and macro-videography. I've been delighted to record intoxicated honeybees covered with pollen in the cup of a beautiful flower (my flower ID skills are still lacking), and a female Anna's Hummingbird feeding in the long trumpet of yet another flower which exactly matches her beak. When I quietly observe these connections and realize their importance and profundity, I'm amazed and thrilled! (see photos on page 5)

Barry Boulton

THE FAMILY TREE

by Alan Beymer

April was a quiet bird month in Hathaway Pines. May was different. We put up our bird feeders in May. If you feed them, they will come.

The feeders were curtailed in April due to an avian salmonella threat. When the birds returned, I had some catch-up photography to do. I read that wildlife photos are considered more valid if human artifacts are absent, so I placed a fallen cedar limb between the suet and the seed. Most birds land on the branch before eating. I'm not sure if they are being circumspect, or studying the menu, but perch and pose they do.

I positioned a Nikon D700 camera with a 300mm lens about 25 feet away. My initial thought was to use a remote trigger (Vello Freewave) so I could activate the shutter while inside the house. This gave me a bird blind and allowed me to drink coffee or wash dishes while doing nature photography. About four or five days into the project, I wondered if the images could be digitally combined. They could.

Not all visiting birds made the final photo. Our altitude is 3400' with oak, cedar and ponderosa pines being the main trees. The usual suspects appeared: Steller's jays, grosbeaks, robins and juncos. The robins and juncos are ground feeders and rarely appeared on the branch, but numerous jays and grosbeaks were joined by nuthatches, and band-tailed pigeons. A late addition was the acorn woodpecker. I wanted the acorn's bright red in the composition, and woodpeckers tend to approach in a low swoop, which meant they would be within my camera frame for an action shot.



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Evolutionary Interconnections



Pollen-laden bee waking and slowly emerging, while the one at the back appears still deeply asleep. Plenty of pollination possibilities!



Female Anna's Hummingbird drinking nectar

Edye Dingman 2021 Scholarship Awardees

This year we have two Edye Dingman Scholarship winners. Each winner has received a \$2,500 award. Both Maggie Sanchez and Anthony White-Ramos are in this year's graduating class from Columbia College. From there, their paths diverge.



Maggie will be attending Sacramento State in the fall and pursuing a biology major. Squawker readers already know Maggie from her wildlife photography showcased in the Squawker. She credits Barry Boulton for giving her a chance to learn to be a careful observer as she found birds to “operate on their own time.” Maggie is interested in the various natural relationships and how their smallest interaction makes up the big picture of the natural world. She relishes the lab work presented in her biology, zoology, plant ecology, cellular and molecular biology classes. According to Maggie’s professor she is “engaged, aware, curious and committed.”

Anthony White- Ramos will be attending Humboldt State this coming fall. He will be majoring in Geospatial Science/ Earth Science. His career goal is to be involved in recovery and restoration from natural disasters. He already has a firm knowledge of Unmanned Aerial vehicles (UAV)/ Drones and according to his professor “Tony has an affiliate attitude” and is always interested in helping others. He is a team leader for the Twain Harte CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) sUAS/ Drone sub-group and is already employing this knowledge. This summer he will be working for Air Attack as systems operator and infrared interpreter. He wants to use his skills for the “greatest good.”



Our chapter is fortunate to be able to help these outstanding students achieve their educational goals, and we sincerely thank all of you who contributed and made these awards possible - **thank you!**

Chris Laddish, Scholarships Chair

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.centralsierraudubon.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.centralsierraudubon.org/join-us/

Your CSAS Officers

Barry Boulton, President & Newsletter Editor	(209)596-0612
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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, Director at Large	(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 - Jean Dakota	(209)591-9952
Scholarship - Chris Laddish	(209)728-3871
Website - Barry Boulton	(209)596-0612
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