

Central Sierra Audubon Society

Sierra Squawker



www.centralsierraaudubon.org

September - 2021

PUBLIC ZOOM PRESENTATION

Wednesday, September 15, at 7pm

"Step into the Boots of a Biologist"

by Caitlyn Rich

CSERC biologist, Caitlyn Rich, will be giving a presentation on what projects CSERC focuses on and what her job as a biologist entails. She will be sharing stories of her fieldwork, showing photos of various wildlife she captures on camera, and more.

Caitlyn was our scholarship awardee in 2018 after attending Summerville High School in Tuolumne County followed by UC Santa Cruz with a major in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. As you see, she is now a field biologist with CSERC, caring for our local wildlife and environments!



Zoom log-in information:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87640723706>

Note

The presentation will commence at 7pm sharp, so it's good to log in by 6:55pm to allow time for possible internet issues. When you're there, wait until the host lets you in. Please mute your microphones as you enter and throughout the presentation until Q&A time. **And remember, your camera "sees" your whole room!**

Thoughts by Barry Boulton, CSAS President

As we, CSAS, commence our 2021-22 programs we will continue using Zoom technology for our monthly presentations until such time as in-person meetings are allowed and safe. However, one advantage that Zoom has given us is that CSAS members who either cannot physically attend, or are uncomfortable driving to and from Sonora on winter evenings, can join these on-line presentations. So, while in-person meetings are very important and enjoyable, I think it's likely that we will continue with a blend of in-person and on-line meetings, perhaps on alternate months, so as to maximize members' participation opportunities. That, of course, awaits the outcome of the corona-virus saga!

Summertime means many things to different people, and for me this year it's meant digging deeper into ecology and the ecological relationships that sustain our living planet. Indeed, I've become increasingly fascinated with co-evolution, mostly through doing a lot of macro-photography that enables me to observe the morphology of insects, flowers and plants in great details. I can see that all of these things have very precise arrangements or patterns where nothing is arbitrary. One fascinating aspect is the shape of insect's eyes that vary so much between species which makes me wonder – why that particular shape? Of course, there are many possible answers organized around their lifestyles so that they can forage, court and mate and lay their eggs, and protect themselves from predators. Given that eyes have evolved independently many times, and that insects, plants and predators have co-evolved over time – a few in mutually-exclusive relationships – with different dynamics involved, these varying eye designs are to be expected. Anyway, that's just the tip of the iceberg for me; I'm also researching the underground world of fungal connections (mycorrhizae) that allow plants to exchange sugar, starches, carbon, nutrients and water via these fungal strands.

Dragonflies are incredibly fascinating - they start life as eggs, hatch underwater into larvae where they undergo several molts in which each molt develops more of the adult morphology. Finally, ready to transform into an adult, a larva climbs up the stem of a plant and out of the water where it forces itself out of its hard exoskeleton. It then takes about an hour or more for its body and wings to expand and harden so that it can fly to protective vegetation while it matures before moving on to reproductive activities. Well, up at Mosquito Lake on highway 4 this past June, my timing was perfect (lucky!) and I spent a glorious day watching dragonflies emerging! The photos below show the process in action for a Four-spotted Skimmer dragonfly.



Left - the larva or nymph climbs up the vegetation so that it can emerge without danger of falling back into the water. At this point its respiration method has changed from gills underwater to pumping air into its body via 12 vents, 8 in the abdomen and 4 in the thorax (there are no lungs as such in dragonflies).

Center - the nymph is pushing and pulling itself out of the exoskeleton and pumping fluids through its body to maximize body size before the body hardens since size will dictate mating and reproductive success.

Right - the fully-emerged dragonfly hangs around for perhaps up to an hour while pumping fluids into the wing veins to maximize them too, after which they must dry out to enable flight. You can see the wings are still small and frail.

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Sunday, September 19 - Indigeny Reserve

I'm happy to announce the return of our 4th Sunday of the month field trips to Indigeny! Please join me to explore 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.

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 attend. We appreciate your cooperation in following these guidelines.

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

Wednesday, October 6 - Groveland Community Services District

It is with a sad heart that we say thanks to Jeanne Ridgley for her years of providing our chapter with field trips to the GCSD. While I cannot fill her shoes, I will lead some trips to this unique area in the Fall and Spring, the #2 Hotspot for Tuolumne County. Jeanne plans to attend as many trips as she is able. I hope you will join me to explore this rich habitat. The property encompasses an area of more than 200 acres of oak, pine and willow habitat with three storage ponds.

Meet the group in the GCSD parking lot at 8:00 AM. Bring binoculars and a birding guide if you have one. This time of year, a hat, sunscreen and water is also recommended. The walk will last about two-three hours.

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

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SUMMER FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Groveland Community Services District - July 7

An exceptionally large group, 15, showed up for this mid summer trip. We were fortunate to have Sal Salerno, President of the Stanislaus Chapter, as our trip leader and Jeanne Ridgley who performed this role admirably for many years in attendance. I suspect these individuals had something to do with our large attendance! Sal, in his usual fashion, imparted wonderful bird knowledge. This day he discussed the intricate relationships among breeding Acorn Woodpeckers. Highlights of the day included 14 Wood Ducks, (many were ducklings), Bullock's Orioles and a lively family of Ash-throated Flycatchers! 31 species were observed in all.

Kit DeGear, Field Trip Chair



*Group Photo by
Ron McDow*

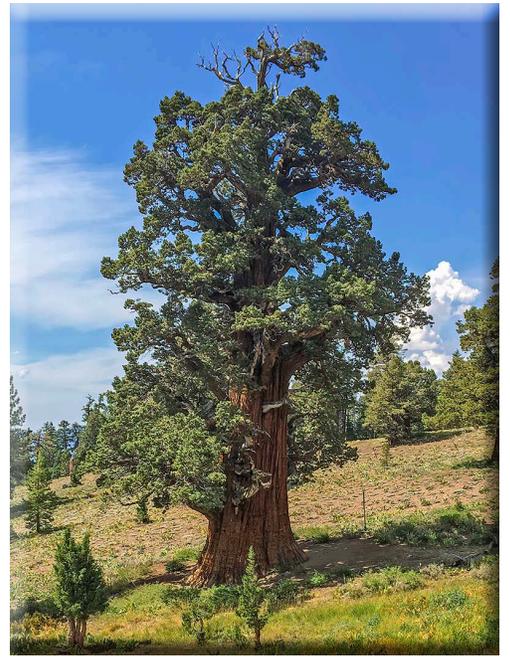
[Bennett Juniper Field Trip - July 25](#)

I had the pleasure of joining the Stanislaus Chapter for a wonderful trip up to see the Bennett Juniper here in our own county. This tree is at least 3,000 years old which makes it the oldest Juniper in North America! We met our trip leader, Ralph Baker, at Eagle Meadow Rd. 20 minutes above Strawberry. There were 12 of us which included some very excellent birders, always an added bonus. We had several stops on our way up to the Bennett Juniper which is at 8,400'! This was almost 2000' above our starting point at Hwy 108. We saw/heard 40 species for the day. Highlights included a brief look at a Pine Grosbeak, Calliope Hummingbird, Lazuli Bunting, Green-tailed Towhee, a pair of Cooper's Hawks and Mountain Quail. I'm thinking this would be an excellent trip for our chapter next summer!



Kit DeGear, Field Trip Chair

Pine Grosbeak pair
by Barry Boulton



The Bennett Juniper by Walt DeGear

[Fahey Meadows Field Trip - August 19](#)

On the way to Fahey Meadow, there is a little bend in the road where there are some water seeps producing a few puddles that tend to attract a few birds. I always like to make a quick stop to see what species are hanging about. Our group of eight birders meant to make a quick stop but it turned into over an hour and a half as it was a hive of activity. We saw 40 species! Even Walter (the non-birder) was impressed and pronounced *"This is like being in an aviary."* Highlights included a Western Tanager, Lawrence's Goldfinch, 6 different Warblers and 6 different Flycatchers. We were able to improve our identification skills between the Purple Finches and the Cassin's Finches who were both present and in close proximity. We finally pulled ourselves away to continue on to our designated Birding venue. While not nearly as birdy, we all got looks at the Green-tailed Towhee and the Calliope Hummingbird which were the target birds for the outing. We finished our excursion at the North Fork Tuolumne River Day Use Area for lunch. A most enjoyable day!

Kit DeGear, Field Trip Chair



*Group Photo by
Ron McDow*

Osprey Count on New Melones - June 15

On a beautiful summer's day, several CSAS birders were privileged to join in the annual Osprey Count on New Melones Lake, organized so well as usual by Pat Sanders. Without a doubt this was the nicest day of all my Osprey and Eagle counts, and when you watch Ospreys plying their trade, it's like being in another world; no cares, no worries, just nature! Truly it was heaven. Here's a thank you comment from Pat Sanders:

I truly want to thank each and every one of you for assisting with the annual Osprey Survey here at New Melones Lake. There were a total of 34 Ospreys, 32 adults and 2 immature observed on the lake during the count. Bald Eagles 11 and hawks totaled 16. There were 38 species observed excluding the 3 pond turtles that were observed in the French Flat and Mormon Creek areas.

Pat Sanders, USBR

Our Field Trip Chair, Kit DeGear, was hoping that Clark's Grebes would turn up on the Tuolumne side of the lake which would be her first sighting in the county. Well, as it happens, at least one obliged the request in addition to the more numerous Western Grebe!



Clark's Grebe by Elissa Wall

*Northern Rough-winged Swallow
by Pat Sanders*



*Osprey taking off as we approached
by Barry Boulton*

NEW SIGHTING

Assumptions can be misleading. At the end of June osprey-like bird calls resonated overhead in Hathaway Pines and we made the assumption that the calls came from an osprey that deviated from the Stanislaus River, or a Steller's jay mimicking a hawk. We were not the only ones fooled. Neighborhood songbirds were in a tizzy as the calls reverberated with some regularity. Identification remained a mystery until a young bird appeared on our street Tuesday morning. This was not a ground-hugging junco or towhee, small birds that often flit near and across the pavement. This bird was about a foot tall and puzzled. It was a young hawk, and probably just fresh from the nest.

It did not remain a pedestrian for long, but flew by degrees to a roof, an oak, then a tall cedar where it worked its way upward, waiting for parents who eventually arrived to lend guidance. The trip from pavement to the elevated cedar perch was not a solo journey by any means. Along the way the fledgling was constantly harassed by Steller's jays and robins.

Since the plumage of the fledgling was not definitive for identification, we listened to several recordings of hawk calls and our best guess is that it is a red-shouldered variety. Further reading indicated that the local song birds were relatively safe because red-shouldered hawks do not prey on smaller birds but eat reptiles and rodents.

Story and photos by Alan Beymer



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
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, 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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