

Central Sierra Audubon Society

# Sierra Squawker



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

November - 2021

PUBLIC ZOOM PRESENTATION

Wednesday, November 17, at 7pm

"Breeding under the midnight sun:  
the life of arctic-breeding songbirds in a changing world"

by Helen Chmura

Northern Alaska is a special place for many migratory birds: despite its harsh winters, it is the breeding grounds for diverse species during the brief arctic summer. Biologist Helen Chmura will talk about how songbirds prepare for seasonal breeding in Alaska, and what this means for birds' ability to cope with rapid climate change.

Helen did her work on songbirds in Alaska during her PhD at University of California in Davis. She is now a Research Ecologist with the Rocky Mountain Research Station.



*Helen on location*



*Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow*

**Zoom log-in information:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87502405873>

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 keep your microphones muted throughout the presentation until Q&A time. **And remember, your camera "sees" your whole room - and so do we!**

## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

### Wednesday, November 3 - Groveland Community Services District

Sal Salerno, President of Stanislaus Audubon, has volunteered to lead this trip at the Groveland Community Services District property at 18966 Ferretti Rd. As a frequent visitor here, he is quite familiar with the birds and the environment. He has a wealth of bird knowledge which he shares along the walk. Please join us. The property encompasses an area of more than 200 acres of pine and willow habitat with three storage ponds.

On the October 6 bird walk, 12 birders saw 37 species, Sal dubbed us "The Birdy Dozen"! Highlights included Vaux Swift, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Lewis's Woodpecker and 4 Warbler species; Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Orange-crowned and a Black-throated Gray.

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](mailto:kdegear@gmail.com)**

### Tuesday, November 16th - Merced NWR

Every year we take a trip to view the over-wintering birds at Merced NWR and, of course, we always hope to see the Sandhill Cranes flying in through a red sunset with the Diablo range as the backdrop, calling to each other as they circle and land with their characteristic single hop and stop in the shallow waters. That would be the perfect ending; well, sometimes it does, and sometimes not, so I can't make any promises!

The refuge is located at 7430 W. Sandy Mush Road, Merced, CA 95340, and a map will be shown on our website. We will meet at 2pm at the first overlook platform which you'll find by following the entrance road for a quarter of a mile. We will probably do two circuits of the auto-route, ending up at the far side platform for the sunset (hoped-for) arrivals. After the sunset fly-in, those of us who wish will enjoy dinner at our favorite Thai restaurant in Merced along our return route.

**Barry Boulton (209)596-0612 or [rbarryboulton@gmail.com](mailto:rbarryboulton@gmail.com)**

### Sunday, November 28 - 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. Unfortunately, our Oct. 24 trip was canceled due to rain. This month our target birds will be the Red-breasted Sapsucker, Hermit Thrush and perhaps a Brown Creeper! 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](mailto:kdegear@gmail.com)**

### Tuesday, November 30 - Sandhill Cranes at Lodi & River Walk to Fish Hatchery

Did you know that the life span of a Sandhill Crane is 20 years; the height of a Sandhill Crane is between 31 and 53 inches and the crane wingspan is between 65 and 90 inches? We will travel to the Woodbridge Reserve at Lodi to view these magnificent birds resting, eating and dancing in flooded farm fields. Upon arriving at Woodbridge Road, we can view/ photograph the Sandhill Cranes and numerous other birds at several spots along this public road. We generally spend 1 1/2 - 2 hours here.

When we have finished viewing the cranes at the Reserve, we will drive east on Hwy 12 (about 26 miles) to the parking lot for the Mokelumne River day use area. From there we can take a 45 minute walk along the Mokelumne River up to the Comanche Dam and Fish Hatchery. The water spilling from the dam will be crowded with migrating salmon. Walking along the river we may see: Black-crowned Night Herons, Great Blue Herons, egrets, Osprey, one or two different woodpecker species, Mergansers, vultures, hawks, and maybe eagles looking for lunch in the migrating salmon. The raptors hanging in the trees above and along the river are surprisingly close. This will afford some good photo opportunities. Last year I saw a little grey-brown bird

that I was hoping upon hope was an American Dipper, but comparing photos later confirmed that it was a Rock Wren. We will end the walk at the fish hatchery. The hatchery offers a self-guided tour, out of doors, with signage explaining the process of migrating salmon, collecting and hatching the fish eggs (roe), and growing and releasing the fingerling salmon. The walk at the Mokelumne River/ fish hatchery area will last a total of about two hours, possibly longer, but everyone is free to leave as they need to of course. We will be back in Sonora by dinnertime.

We will meet in Sonora at Barrow's (formerly Perko's) at 8:00 am and caravan (NOT CARPOOL) to Lodi, a 90 minute drive. Driving instructions will be provided for the day's activities. We will stop briefly in Copperopolis to pick up any folks coming from Calaveras. The next stop will be at Hwy 12 in Lodi for bathroom breaks and coffee before arriving at Woodbridge Road. Folks arriving from other areas may meet us at the Starbucks at Hwy 12 and Thornton Road (near I-5).

Bring lunch, snacks and water, hand sanitizer, binoculars and a birding guide if you have one. This time of year, a hat and sunscreen are also recommended. Please take your temperature prior to participating. We require a temp of 99 degrees or below for Covid protection protocol.

**Trip leader is Jean Dakota; contact her to let her know you are coming: (209)591-9952; jdakota002@comcast.net**

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### **The Sparrows are Back!**

Following last month's Zoom presentation on migration by Joely DeSimone, a few further thoughts on our migratory friends. For some reason, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows seem to hold special places in our hearts as they return to regale us with their perky presences. One of our members from Jamestown contacted me to say that every year for the last 10 years, White-crowns have returned on exactly the same day around September 20 (unfortunately I can't find my communications with her for precision – I hope she reads this and re-contacts me to provide an update!). She knows this because she has feeders right outside her kitchen window so she's there whenever they arrive. But, this year several days later, they still had not appeared, and the question is – why not? One possible reason in her thinking was that the wildfires throughout the West may be responsible and, although difficult to actually prove, the story entitled **“Wildfire smoke pushes migrating birds hundreds of miles out of their way”** at this url: [https://www.hcn.org/articles/north-wildfire-smoke-pushes-migrating-birds-hundreds-of-miles-out-of-their-way?utm\\_source=wcnl&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.hcn.org/articles/north-wildfire-smoke-pushes-migrating-birds-hundreds-of-miles-out-of-their-way?utm_source=wcnl&utm_medium=email) gives significant credence to that possibility.

Another possibility mentioned by John Sutake is that the first White-crowned Sparrows arriving at her house in Jamestown were likely to be of the same family or group since birds are commonly faithful to their familiar locations. It may be that this whole family or group was wiped out by a wildfire or another disaster. Coincident with that idea, the latest issue of Bay Nature has an article entitled **“Golden-Crowned Sparrows and the Song of Fall”** which says this: *“Fidelity to their winter habitat means golden-crowned sparrows have the same sparrow neighbors every year, too. Neighbors forage with neighbors, forming small flocks, which led scientists to wonder if the birds return annually because they like the location or the neighbors. They found that familiarity matters: the birds can recognize their neighbors, and they have a hierarchy and social structure within the flock. These aren't family units—the neighbors aren't biologically related, and they don't migrate together. They are a geographic community that only forms in winter, almost like people from up and down the East Coast who circle their RVs together in Joshua Tree every winter”*. You can enjoy the whole article at: [https://baynature.org/article/the-song-of-fall/?utm\\_source=Bay+Nature&utm\\_campaign=1df2e796e4-BN+Newsletter+09%2F30%2F2021&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_092a5caaa2-1df2e796e4-199054363&mc\\_cid=1df2e796e4&mc\\_eid=40813f40ca](https://baynature.org/article/the-song-of-fall/?utm_source=Bay+Nature&utm_campaign=1df2e796e4-BN+Newsletter+09%2F30%2F2021&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_092a5caaa2-1df2e796e4-199054363&mc_cid=1df2e796e4&mc_eid=40813f40ca)

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### **Mother Lode Wildlife Care**

Many of you will remember many thrilling stories told by Laura Murphy, Director of MLWC, when she has presented to CSAS about their wildlife rescue & recovery programs. Well, MLWC is looking for a new home in the Jamestown area, and you can read about their needs as well as a host of new stories in their latest newsletter at: <https://us10.campaign-archive.com/?u=563df42b3894700c0fda17ad9&cid=b652bd16fb>

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## [Christmas Bird Counts \(CBCs\)](#)

It's that time of the year when we begin to think about Christmas festivities - and the Christmas Bird Counts that provide critical knowledge about trends among bird populations. We know that birds are under great pressure due to human activities, and these annual counts that have been on-going since 1900 give us data that is vital in work to protect them. So, please put these dates in your calendars and sign up with the team leaders shown below.

### [Sonora CBC - Saturday, December 18, 2021](#)

I would like to invite everyone to help with the Sonora Christmas Bird Count this year. CBCs are held every year, world-wide, from Dec. 14 - Jan 5, and there were over 2600 Counts last year with over 81,000 people participating. The Sonora Count will be held on December 18th when we will attempt to count every bird we see or hear in a 15-mile diameter circle with its center at Lambert Lake and Tuolumne Rds. That gives us a lot of area to comb for our feathered friends!

The Sonora CBC is split into 20 areas with a team assigned to each. Each team consists of an experienced leader and various others. Experience is helpful, of course, but not essential. We need as many people as we can gather to assist in the field. If you have no experience then come and help point out birds so others can identify them - as we say, we need as many "eyes on the ground" as possible!

If you cannot make it out in the field, please consider being a Feeder Watcher because you can stay home and count birds that are attracted to your yard. This information is also very important! If you are interested in this, please contact Steven for further information.

Count Day is a great way to get out and get some fresh air, get a little exercise and participate in one of the largest Citizen Science events of the year. Since we are still dealing with the COVID pandemic, we will forego the usual post-Count potluck. Area leaders will be instructed how to submit the day's data.

**To sign up, please contact Steven Umland at (209)352-6985 or [stevenum71@gmail.com](mailto:stevenum71@gmail.com)**

### [Calaveras CBC - Sunday, January 2, 2022](#)

All of the same ideas apply equally to the Calaveras CBC, so please plan to join us and enjoy excellent company while helping our feathered friends.

**Sign up with Keith & Sandra Maurer at (209)728-8979 or [kandsmaurer@goldrush.com](mailto:kandsmaurer@goldrush.com)**

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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.centralsierraudubon.org](http://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/](http://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 - open	
Website - Barry Boulton	(209)596-0612
YSS delegate - Walt Kruse	(707)548-1829