



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

The Birds need YOU!

Doing the CBCs needs "eyes on the ground" - you and me. So far we're short of eyes, so please call the coordinators below to volunteer if you can - thanks a million. Just to entice you, here are a few of my favorites that you may see during a CBC day.



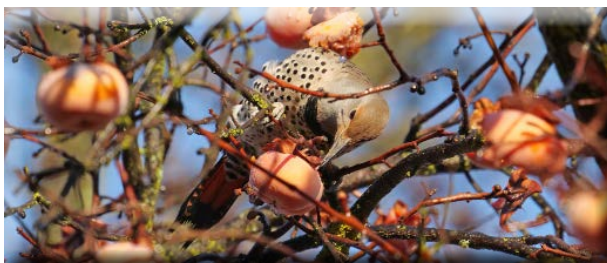
Female Hooded Merganser accompanied by two males



Cedar Waxwing



Ruby-crowned Kinglet



Northern Flicker enjoying persimmon

CBC Dates

Sonora: Saturday, December 18

Contact: Steven Umland at (209)352-6985 or steven71@gmail.com

Calaveras: Sunday, January 2, 2022

Contact: Keith & Sandra Maurer at (209)728-8979 or kandsmaurer@goldrush.com

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Please note that CSAS field trips are described on our website at www.centralsierraaudubon.org - click on "Field Trips" and you'll see all of the information on each trip including location maps. This is also the place where trip cancellation notices will be found if the weather forecast is poor etc.

December

There will be no field trips this month because we focus on the two Christmas Bird Counts as detailed above. Field trips will resume in January as usual.

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NOVEMBER FIELD TRIP REPORTS

November 3 - GCSD

A big thank you to Sal Salerno, President of the Stanislaus Audubon Chapter, for leading this event. 32 species were observed with 5 birders in attendance. Highlight of the day was seeing the 70 Bufflehead on the upper pond! It was mesmerizing as they flew from one end of the pond and then back again. I hope to revisit this site in January or February depending on weather forecasts, so check the "Squawker" each month!

Kit DeGear, Field Trip Chair

*A happy band of birders at GCSD
Photo by Ron McDow*



November 16 - Merced NWR



Most of the group by Doug Krajnovich

before moving to the safety of water for the night.

In all, we observed 41 species, with two Wood Ducks and a Long-billed Curlew being new for most of us. Wilson's Snipe were relatively abundant along the western leg of the refuge. A delightful Thai dinner in Merced completed the day for some of us!

Barry Boulton

Even on a typical Central Valley winter miserably overcast day, the sight and sound of the elegant Sandhill Cranes was still enjoyable and exciting. Evidently enjoying themselves in their familial social environment, they were quite inspiring! They rather unusually arrived early, just before sunset, mostly landing in the fields for a little socializing and perhaps more food,



Wilson's Snipe by Barry Boulton

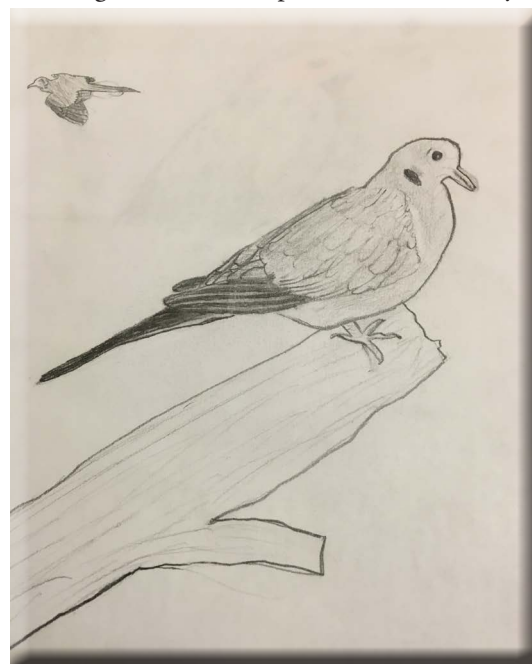
November 28 - Indigeny

Apparently there were many who felt the need to walk off their Thanksgiving dinner on this beautiful day at Indigeny! Fourteen of us showed up in the parking lot Sunday morning. Barry was meeting a group of four to hunt for lichen who joined the birding group for a bit. The rest of us enjoyed a leisurely stroll. There were 5 newcomers to this Audubon Walk. I hope to see them on future trips. Highlights of the day included 2 Red-breasted Sapsuckers and some great views of a pair of silent Wrentits - usually heard but not seen! We tromped out some cut reeds and scooted our way through a narrow opening to get a better look of the recently dredged pool where the creeks enter Phoenix Lake. There we were treated to some beautiful Buffleheads. A fine morning! The 4th Sunday of the month Indigeny Trips will resume in January with no walk in December due to the Christmas Bird Counts in December and early January. Please consider signing up for these as it is a fun way to spend the day and you don't need to be an expert.

Kit DeGear, Field Trip Chair

Educational - "Red Hills Romp"

Once again, on November 5th, I was privileged to help introduce Birding to 28 elementary school students from the Science Academy in Chinese Camp. Sheri Betz was the lead teacher coordinating the morning's events. Tom Parrington and Jan Jorn-Baird were fellow volunteers. It is always a rewarding experience. We often have children who get quite interested in the hunt and the process of detailing a bird's description and/or activity. The children rotated through 3 stations out in the Red Hills area. They were also learning about the soils, flora and fauna. It is a very unique area. 15 species were observed including a pair of Red Crossbills. A very unusual sighting! I look forward to a return visit in the spring.



Mourning Dove

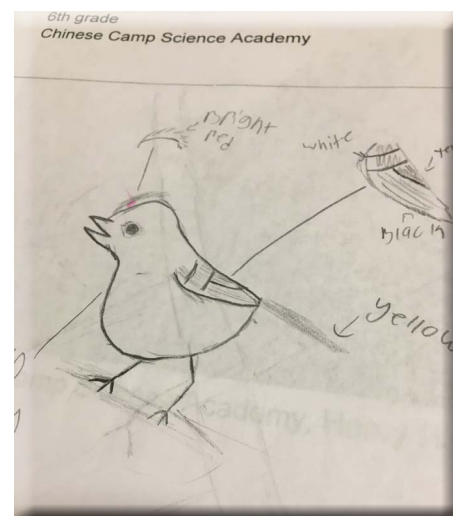
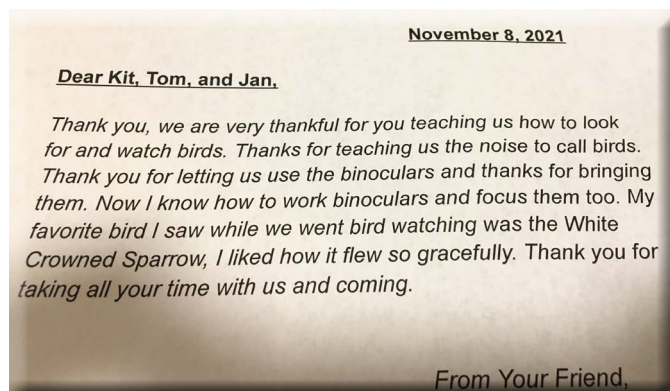
These students are very fortunate to have a teacher like Sheri with such enthusiasm for the natural world. CSAS appreciates the opportunity to participate

Some of the students created excellent sketches along with a note of appreciation as shown here.

Kit DeGear



Lesser Goldfinch



Ruby-crowned Kinglet

November 30 - Lake Camanche/Mokelumne River Walk/ Lodi Sandhill Cranes

Sixteen bird watchers caravanned to the Lake Camanche Recreation Area, South Shore. The morning light and clear skies and were perfect to watch six American White Pelicans on the "Trout Pond". Also, on this pond were numerous Double-crested Cormorants, Pied-billed Grebes and a Great Blue Heron. The group visited another pond and vista point in the recreation area where we saw Buffleheads, Hooded Mergansers, and two Mute Swans.



Lewis's Woodpecker - Barry Boulton

The group then drove on to the Mokelumne River Day Use Area at the Camanche Dam. The bird highlights at the river were numerous; Turkey Vultures, a Lewis's Woodpecker, Common Mergansers, a juvenile Spotted Sandpiper and a male Osprey. Four Salmon came close to the shore and one was a bright red color!!

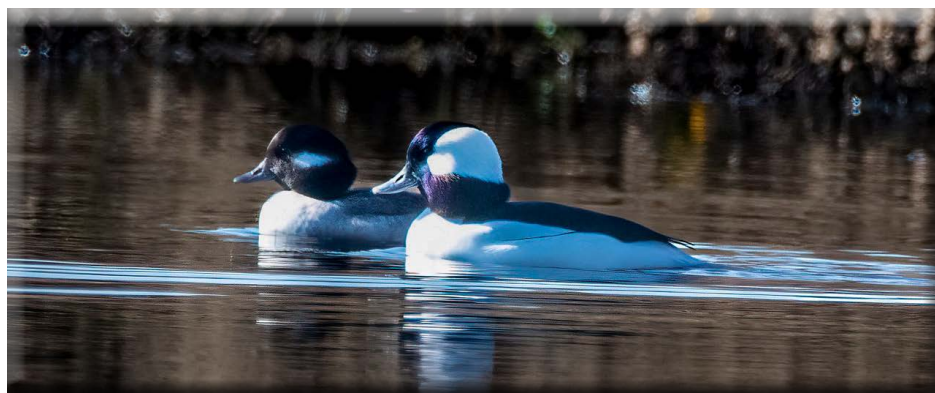


Spotted Sandpiper by George Dondero

The final stop was at Woodbridge Road in Lodi to see the Sandhill Cranes and lots of geese, ducks and Tundra Swans. A Belted Kingfisher, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks and American Kestrels were among those species identified at this location. The Sandhill Cranes numbered in the hundreds or thousands and were seen in both the dry and flooded fields. Some trip members stayed for the Crane "Fly-in" and the event ended at dark.

The final tally for species seen at this event was 46. This was a fun birding event that we will repeat in the future.

Jean Dakota, Trip Organizer & Leader



Bufflehead Pair by George Dondero



*Tundra Swans
by George Dondero*

Profiles of CSAS Officers

If I can encourage our CSAS Officers to shed some of their reticence to seeking the limelight, I will introduce you to the Board members over the next few months - just in time for you to realize that you, too, could serve on the Board!

Ralph Retherford - Programs VP

Monthly public programs along with field trips really drive Central Sierra Audubon as a social and community entity, and so the role that Ralph performs in ensuring that we have presenters available each month is critical to our organization.

So, here's a little more about Ralph's extraordinary history in his own words.

I was born June 7th 1944, the day after our troops invaded Normandy. My father was an electrical engineer, and my mother an accomplished violinist. So naturally music played a major role in my early years. Mom started me on violin lessons at age 8; then switched me to cello at age ten. To my mother's dismay I quickly discovered that I liked whistling and singing more than the hard work of practicing the cello, which I was made to do after school before I could go out and play. Fortunately I stuck with it and in high school I won a scholarship to Interlochen summer music camp (on cello), and got to sit 3rd stand cellos right at the end of Van Cliburn's grand piano as he performed the Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto with full orchestra. What a thrill! My cello also brought me to the Music Academy of the West in Montecito CA, as well as the California Youth Symphony in the bay area. After spending my freshman and sophomore years at UC Santa Barbara I completed college at the U of Illinois where I joined the Mens Glee Club (chorus) just in time to go on a month-long singing tour of Paris, Italy, and Greece. One of the high points was performing our sacred music in La Madeleine Cathedral in Paris, a deeply moving experience.

It was during my senior year in college that birds entered my awareness in a big way. I had fulfilled all my requirements for medical school and signed up for an elective course on ornithology, the study of birds. The course was taught by the one and only grad student in ornithology at UI. He was a terrific teacher and brought the subject alive for me and my eight classmates. We had "labs" which consisted of walking alongside a beautiful woods with our binoculars and identifying birds by sight and song. Part of our final exam was this sort of thing. He would hear a bird and he would say, "OK, that's number one on your exam", and so on.

Anyway, I graduated from UI, did medical school at UCSF, took up guitar and banjo, studied diet and exercise with Nathan Pritikin at his Longevity Center in Santa Monica, took up woodcarving for fun, most recently carving various birds, wrote a book on the mind-body connection (When Chicken Soup is Not Enough), traveled the country conducting seminars on the mind-body connection in Workers Compensation, and spent the last ten years helping patients recover from opioid addiction. Now I am trying out retirement.

Ralph



This is Ralph's Cormorant creation that comprises two separate pieces of driftwood, the base and the bird. The base came first and then, one day, he found the other piece and realized that it could become a cormorant with a little more work. The beak needed to be carved, a glass eye fitted, and the body painted black and - hey presto - here was a cormorant!

Editor

Winter Birding Opportunities

There's always a special pleasure when we see a new bird species "out-of-the-blue" so to speak, especially when the bird is a very spectacular one. That was the case for Ryan Richelson as he was birding along Hunt Road on his way back from Salt Springs Valley - carrying his camera of course! These are the superb photos that he captured.



Ryan was fortunate to see this Rough-legged Hawk which is "rare in lower-elevation grassland and oak savanna habitats; there is a scattering of November and December records from high mountain meadows..." as quoted by Beedy & Pandolfino in their excellent book *Birds of the Sierra Nevada*.

As it happens, I was birding in Salt Springs Valley about two years ago with our occasional presenter, Rich Cimino, when he spotted the same species with his "eagle eyes" - a first for me! This is our favorite CSAS location to visit to see the Ferruginous Hawk every year so now we'll add this beautiful hawk - we'll be there on February 11, 2022 so see the Squawker announcement!
Barry Boulton

Shorebirds arriving - slowly!

The annual autumn migration is well under way, but the warming global climate seems to be making it delayed and slower than hitherto. One of the usual markers in Calaveras County is the number of Hooded Mergansers that we see moving between White Pines Lake, Lakemont, and Hunter Reservoir near Arnold. In earlier years we have typically seen well over 20; John Sutake made his first observation on October 26 but, so far on December 4, only 9 are present. We shall wait patiently to see how that plays out over this winter.

Central Sierra Audubon Society - CSAS

(A chapter of the National Audubon Society)
P.O. Box 3047, Sonoma, 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 7:00pm. Monthly details shown in this newsletter and on our website at 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/

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 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 - Gail Witzlsteiner	(209)586-4025
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