

Central Sierra Audubon Society

# Sierra Squawker



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

February - 2022

PUBLIC ZOOM PRESENTATION

**Wednesday, February 16, at 7pm**

**You are What you Eat: Connecting Foraging and  
Breeding Behavior in Lekking Sage-Grouse  
by Eric Tymstra**

In economics, business locations with greater sales opportunities also charge higher rents, requiring income and capital to join the marketplace. Males in lekking species face similar trade-offs, as display territories with greater reproductive opportunities will also be the costliest to defend against rivals, requiring income and capital linked to dietary energy intake and physiology. We studied this relationship in lekking Greater sage-grouse, which feed exclusively on chemically-defended sagebrush, where males balance the costs of mating and detoxifying sagebrush during the breeding season with interesting consequences as I will describe.



Eric Tymstra is a PhD candidate in ecology at UC Davis. Working with his advisor, Professor Gail Patricelli, Eric has studied Greater sage-grouse in Wyoming, Idaho and California. His research focuses on the intersection of sexual selection, foraging behavior and habitat use. Before starting graduate school, Eric worked in environmental education, wildlife rehabilitation, and veterinary research. Eric studied molecular environmental biology and Spanish at UC Berkeley. In his free time, Eric enjoys bodybuilding, training his dog Joey, LGBTQIA+ activism, and (of course) birdwatching.

**Zoom log-in information:**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89233412864>**

**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. **Remember, your camera "sees" your whole room - and so do we!**

The January 2022 presentation by **Ryan Barbour** entitled "**The Foraging Ecology of Migrant Raptors: what fuels Raptor migration in California**" is on-line at: <https://vimeo.com/668090120>

**Note:** all prior CSAS Zoom presentation URLs are shown on our website home page at [www.centralsierraaudubon.org](http://www.centralsierraaudubon.org)

## FEBRUARY FIELD TRIPS

### Friday, February 11 - Salt Springs Valley, near Copperopolis

This is one of our favorite field trips in Calaveras County with a variety of habitats including ponds, grasslands, oak woodlands and resort lake. We usually see over 50 species on this trip with one of our old favorites being the Lewis's Woodpecker and, as always, we'll be looking out for Ferruginous Hawks. This seems to be a good year for the Rough-legged Hawk which has been sighted by at least three people already this winter at Salt Springs and, as you know, hope springs eternal! So we can hope, but 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. For covid-related prudence reasons 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 at the resort which also has restrooms available (\$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 around 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**

### Sunday, February 27 - Indigeny

Fifteen brave souls faced a very chilly start on Sunday, January 23rd. Lots of frost on the ground and frozen puddles. However, the birds were out and about and we were off for a great morning. 35 species were seen. Highlights of the day included Red-breasted Sapsucker, Common Goldeneye, one Bald Eagle and 2 Great Blue Heron flyovers! Another highlight for me was having some new participants who were quite thrilled to see the Spotted Towhee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and a flock of Bushtits. I look forward to see what our February visit will bring! Hope you can join me.

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)**

## LOOKING AHEAD

Paolo Maffei will take us to the String of Pearls at Oakdale on Friday, March 11 which always pleases with a rich variety of bird species. There will be more information in the March Squawker.

.....

## SIGHTINGS

### Avian Winter in Arnold by John Sutake

This last winter was a hard one for the birds and birders alike. Arnold at 4,000 ft. was covered by at least 3 ft. of snow which completely covered my feeder and bird bath. Fortunately for the non-migratory birds, I have a covered front porch which provides some protection from the elements. Besides the more regular Juncos, I had one each of the Hermit Thrush, Mountain Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch and, rarest of all, a Pacific Wren. They all seemed to be searching for food except the Hermit Thrush who seemed to want to come inside and be friends! I resist attributing human motives to wildlife, but that's how it seemed to me.

On January 3rd I saw one Band-tailed Pigeon checking out the conditions before deciding to join its fellows in the Murphys area; wise move! We do have breeding and nesting pairs here during the summer, and they fledged one youngster last year.

I keep a keen eye on the over-wintering Hooded Mergansers who tend to occupy White Pines Lake, Lakemont and Hunter Dam Reservoir at different times, sometimes all together and sometimes in smaller groups. Today I saw a total of 24 between White Pines and Lakemont which equals the maximum number I've seen in recent years.

**John Sutake, Arnold**

.....

## After the Storm by Alan Beymer

**B**e careful what you wish for. Everyone hoped for a wet winter, but the “storm of the decade” caught us off guard during those final days of 2021. Predictions of 3 feet of snow were shrugged off. After all, this is Hathaway Pines--elevation 3323'. We expected one foot; we got the promised 3' and hunkered down to wait it out. There were no birds during the storm of the decade. Just the quiet of falling snow interrupted occasionally by the threatening sounds of falling trees and branches. Power and heat were fond memories. Wood stoves saved the day.

**B**ird watching was not high on our agenda. Snow shovels were vastly more important. But apparently the birds also hunkered down. We thought they might have migrated to lower elevations to avoid the



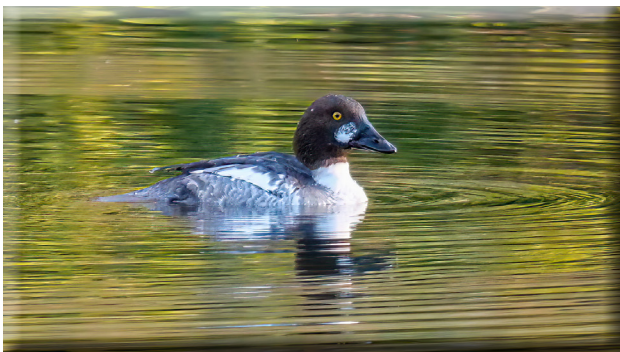
storm but a day or two after the snow stopped, while we were trying to dig out, the yard was busy with birds emerging from under backyard holly bushes. The holly shrubs and our deck apparently provided enough cover for the birds to wait out the storm.



**O**n December 28, our yard was busy with birds. I scattered birdseed on the snow and the bird population doubled within minutes. Juncos, Spotted Towhees, and Lesser Goldfinches hopped through the yard, sometimes perched and sat still as if contemplating the mountains of snow. This behavior lasted for a couple of days and then they were gone. Now bird traffic in the yard is normal—an occasional bird. While I cannot speak for the birds, the next storm of the decade will find us down in the San Joaquin Valley!



Story and photos by Alan Beymer



January 25, 2022

This afternoon I was delighted to see a single 1st year Common Goldeneye male foraging in Utica Lake immediately above Murphys. There were no other birds in the pond with him today. The light was going down fast, but still sufficient for a reasonable photo.

Barry Boulton



## EAGLE COUNT ON NEW MELONES LAKE - JANUARY 19

On a gorgeous sunny day in January we, Bureau of Reclamation staff and volunteers plus fortunate CSAS members, set out on the annual Eagle Count, superbly organized as always by Ranger Pat Sanders. Although it's called the "Eagle Count", we actually count and tally all birds that are observed.



**Bald Eagle in flight**

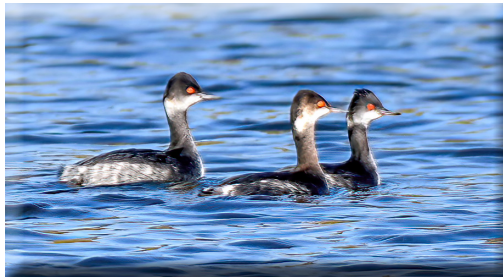
**Photo by Ranger Pat Sanders**

*Thank you so much for participating in our Annual New Melones Eagle Survey. It was a fantastic day on the water and the weather was absolutely the best ever.*

*There were a total of 23 eagles observed, 2 of these being adult Golden. There were 16 adult bald eagles and 5 immature. A new eagle nest was also observed bringing our eagle nests to 6 on New Melones Lake. There were a total of 36 species observed on water and land which is excellent. We also exceeded the eagle count for the past few years, with 2018 exceeding this years count with 25 eagles observed.*

*I want to thank all of you for participating in the survey and I hope you'll be able to attend the osprey survey in June. I will be looking forward to seeing you all again in the future. A big thank you to our boat operators and volunteers. Have a wonderful spring and stay safe and healthy.*

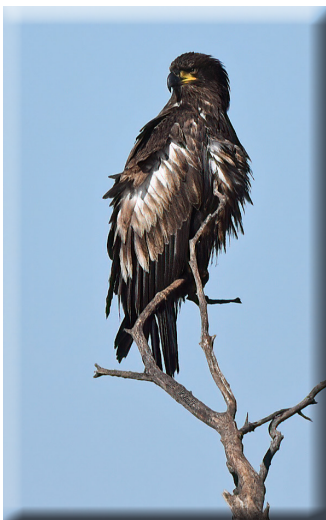
*Pat Sanders  
Natural Resource Park Ranger  
New Melones Lake*



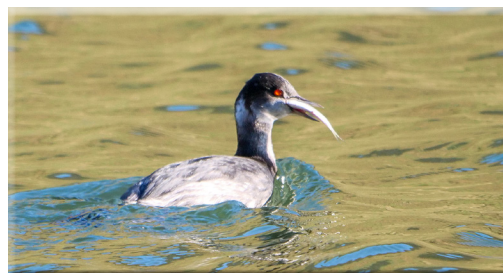
**Trio of Eared Grebes by Elissa Wall**



**Merlin by Elissa Wall**



**Photo by Elissa Wall**



**Eared Grebe with lunch by Barry Boulton**

## FIELD TRIP REPORT - MERCED NWR JAN. 27



With a Sandhill Crane fly-in like this, with many more skeins appearing over a period of thirty minutes or so, I can say "that was a good day - the best!" Throughout the day, Sandhill Cranes were foraging in the fields around the refuge, flying into and past the refuge in small family contingents, scattered around the refuge itself, all the while constantly chattering in their familiar manner to maintain their family identities and placements; an exciting "crane day" indeed.

In fact, rarely have I seen so many birds at this refuge where a Say's Phoebe and many White-crowned Sparrows greeted us. Greater White-fronted Geese congregated mostly near the entrance platform - although no sight or sound of a Sora - followed by legions of Snow and Ross's Geese interspersed with Black-headed Stilts and even one Avocet. Then we moved on a little further to enjoy the female Vermilion Flycatcher that's made this area its winter home. Unusually, we saw no Wilson's Snipes at the beginning, but then they were common all the way to the farther overlook platform, plus Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Cinnamon Teal and the inevitable Northern Shovelers and rowdy American Coots and, along the way, one Blue-winged Teal pair. A very busy Downy Woodpecker worked in the trees at that last corner before the far overlook with a Ruby-crowned Kinglet nearby. Then, the attentive Great Horned Owl along the Bittern Trail followed by the fly-in.....

Story and photos by Barry Boulton. Photos clockwise from the top: (1) the Sandhill fly-in, (2) female Vermilion Flycatcher, (3) Great Horned Owl, (4) Downy Woodpecker, (5) Greater White-fronted Geese near the first overlook platform.





## CALAVERAS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (CBC)

Thanks again for our valued participants in the 2021 bird count! The cold and snowy conditions hampered access to some important spots but we still had valuable results. The totaled species count was 81 including a Common Poorwill spotted on Sheep Ranch Rd. before sunrise and a Bald Eagle. The complete results are shown on the CSAS website.

**Keith & Sandra Maurer, Calaveras CBC Coordinators**

### January 20 on Dave Douglass's deck

Dave says: "I've reeeeeeally been seeing lots of Cedar Wax-wings in the last several days. They tend to show up along with a ton of Robins at the birdbaths. I've been giving them lots of attention for fear that they will migrate out?? All I know is I rarely see one and now..."

**Photo by Dave Douglass**



### Avian activity at Phoenix Lake near Sonora over January 21 - 27, 2022

In the last week I have had several unwanted visitors to my tree with all my feeders, sunflower seeds, mixed blend, thistle and suet. I attract a nice variety of birds, House Finch, Dark-eyed Junco, Oak Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, White-crowned Sparrow, Nuttall's & Downy Woodpeckers, Redwing & Brewer Blackbirds, Mourning Dove and California Scrub Jays. Visitors have been a Cooper's Hawk, 3 times and a Merlin, then a pair of Merlins! They have mostly been unsuccessful but I fear a House Finch and a Dark-eyed Junco may have been sacrificed to the food chain. Normally when a Hawk is near, or has made a recent attack, the birds disappear for a good 10-15 minutes. What I found particularly interesting was in one swoop an Oak Titmouse was left behind. It was absolutely frozen for a good 10 minutes. Not a twitch, head or leg movement. The Cooper's Hawk was not far away. It slowly awoke, from like a deep "petrified" slumber. It did not appear to have any memory of the recent onslaught. Fascinating to observe! Fortunately, the Hawk moved on.

**Kit DeGear - Phoenix Lake, Sonora**

---

### **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 7:00pm. 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 available on the CSAS website at: [www.centralsierraaudubon.org/join-us/](http://www.centralsierraaudubon.org/join-us/)

### **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	(925)822-5215
Gail Witzlsteiner, Director at Large	(209)586-4025
Jan Jorn-Baird, Publicity	(209)532-1106

### **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
Website - Barry Boulton	(209)596-0612
Newsletter Editor - Barry Boulton	(209)596-0612
Education - Kit DeGear	(925)822-5215
YSS delegate - Walt Kruse	(707)548-1829