

Central Sierra Audubon Society

Sierra Squawker



www.centralsierraudubon.org

November - 2022

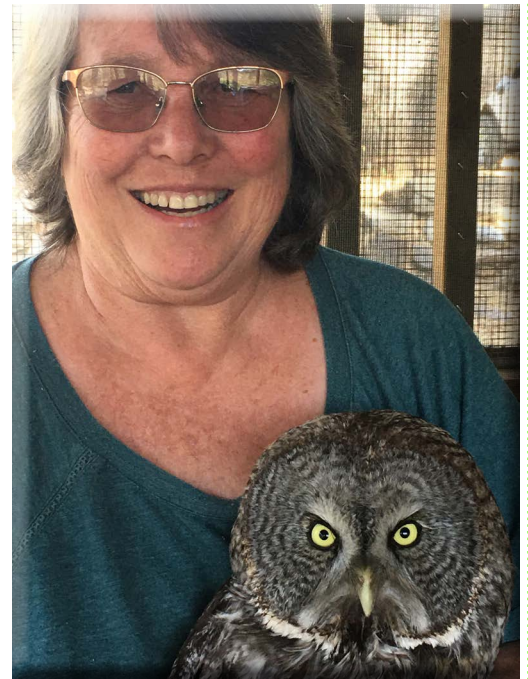
PUBLIC PROGRAM

In-person at Sonora Library and on Zoom

Wednesday, November 16, at 7pm

The Ups & Downs of Wildlife Rehabilitation in Challenging Times by Laura Murphy

Laura Murphy has been a wildlife rehabilitator for 27 years. She is the Operations Director for Mother Lode Wildlife Care, a non-profit, all volunteer, permitted rehabilitation facility which intakes native birds and small mammals from Tuolumne and surrounding counties. The presentation will highlight some recent cases.



This program will be live at the library and on Zoom. The Zoom URL is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87454413029>

Please sign on at 6:55 pm to be ready to start at 7pm

Christmas Bird Counts (CBC)

As summer surrenders to fall - even as the daytime temperatures are still in the 70s and winter is just around the corner - we begin to plan for our Christmas Bird Counts that are so essential to our understanding of bird population trends. As many of you know who have participated in these events, these counts have been taking place across North America since 1900, so this program constitutes the longest timespan of any "citizen science" program on the continent, probably in the world.

But, on top of the value of this data in assisting conservation activities, a day in the outside is both a social and a cultural event that gets to the heart of being an American. First, to spend time with people who know and love birds is a very enjoyable social activity. If you bring children, they can do their thing of asking questions that often we adults can't answer, so they can offer their own ideas and thoughts in a receptive atmosphere; that is, we can dialogue on an equal basis. This is the sort of event where kids have an "aha moment" and sometimes set up their futures because of the fascination they perceive in the moment of seeing a bird doing what birds do. I remember very clearly as a very young boy flapping my arms because I wanted to fly like a bird and even though I failed, when I see, for example, a bonded pair of Ravens performing aerobatics in close formation I literally feel their enjoyment; for those moments, the world stops and I'm as one with that happy couple. We can never know what will turn on children and students to their ultimate passion, but here is an opportunity to bring your children, grandchildren and others to let them explore their souls.

It's also an American cultural activity because Americans truly represent outdoor peoples. Think of people like John Muir and Edward Abbey for whom being lost in the wilderness was to be in paradise. Of course, the scale and majesty of the American landscape made that so natural. But what we must also accentuate is the quality and the fascination of our natural world, and how much we are an integral part; it is not us and them but, rather, we're all in this together. Those are the reasons that we have our National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, National Forests, Endangered Species Act, Wilderness areas, National Monuments and so on - plus the Wilderness Act. When we spend a day looking for birds with our children, the future stewards of our magnificent lands, we can help them see the values that need to be preserved.

Our Christmas Bird Counts can be much bigger than just counting birds. Please plan to participate but, perhaps most of all, think of bringing the future stewards with you; without them, there can be no hope. So, let me go through the three CBCs that CSAS will be running this year.

Sonora CBC - Saturday, December 17, 2022

Save the date! The Sonora Christmas Bird Count is set for Saturday, December 17th. Come and join in the day long event. For those new to the Count, you are participating in the 36th Sonora CBC. Last year, there were 2459 Count circles worldwide with almost 73,000 counters. A complete history of the Count can be found here: <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/history-christmas-bird-count>

The Sonora CBC is a 15-mile diameter circle with a center at the intersection of Lambert Lake and Tuolumne Rds. The 177 mi² is broken up into 20 areas. Each of the areas has a team of bird spotters headed by a person with birding experience. The team scours the area as best they can and counts EVERY bird seen or heard. You do not have to have any birding experience to participate.

If you do not feel like getting outside, then you can help by counting the birds in your yard. You keep a tally of the birds you see during the day and report the numbers to me-Steven Umland. After the day winds down, we all meet at a local eatery to compile the data. We have not been able to do this for the past two years. The actual location will be shared at a later date. So, if you would like to help us out, let me know. You can reach me by phone/text at 209.352.6985 or stevenum71@gmail.com

Hope to hear from you soon!

Steven

Calaveras CBC - Saturday, December 31, 2022

The same sentiments apply for the Calaveras CBC to be held on the last day of 2022! Please consider joining us on that day, and you can contact our team leaders Keith & Sandra Maurer at: kandsmaurer@goldrush.com

Angels Camp CBC - Wednesday, January 4, 2023

You may well ask - Calaveras County already has a CBC, so why a new one? Well, the current Calaveras CBC extends from Murphys and Mountain Ranch up to Big Trees State Park which means habitats in the 2,000' - 5,000' range, mostly a forested region. The new Angels Camp CBC comprises mostly grasslands and water in the lower foothills elevation range, so the species variety will be different. In addition, one included section is Salt Spring Valley which has been designated by the National Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area (IBA), so we really ought to track and understand its avian demographics and trends. It's one of our favorite field trip locations where we usually see Lewis's Woodpeckers and Ferruginous Hawks as well as (less common) the Rough-legged Hawk. Thanks to member Bruce McClenahan who has worked with National Audubon to authorize this CBC, we shall now start to develop an understanding of the area.

You can see in the map here that the circle is split into 7 areas, each of which will have a team identifying and counting the birds. We will provide a list of likely birds in each section and, if you need it, we'll provide a copy of John Muir Laws booklet that shows Sierra Nevada Birds identified by color - much easier to identify a bird with this book than with the usual guides!

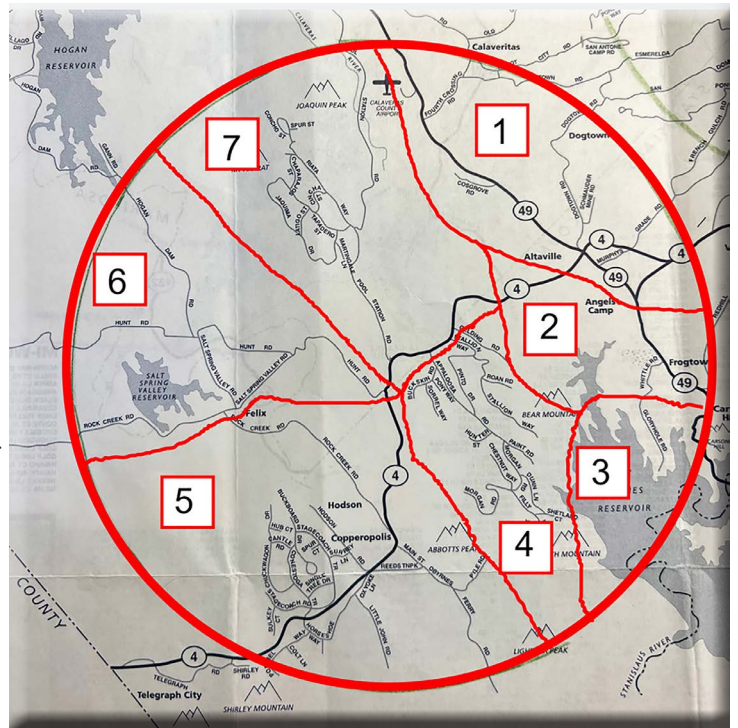
However, you are not in this alone! You will be in a group led by an experienced birder, so your main task is to simply identify the presence of a bird (more eyes see more birds) while our expert will identify each one. Your role is two-fold - shout out if you see a bird, and enjoy a day out birding!

I want to emphasize this - if you're not a regular "birder", if you feel nervous about identifying birds and don't want that responsibility, that's no concern because you hand over that role to the trip leader. As I say, your role is simply to notice that a bird is present - and to enjoy your day of birding; no more, no less.

I can promise you that you'll enjoy this day with us and with the birds, so if you want to participate with us on Wednesday, January 4, 2023, please contact Bruce McClenahan at bgmcclenahan@gmail.com or (209)323-0739.

I will also be an area leader and bird counter on this occasion, so if you wish to contact me about it, please do so at: rbarryboulton@gmail.com or (209)596-0612.

I hope to enjoy the day with you,
Barry Boulton



OCTOBER FIELD TRIP REPORTS

October 23 - Indigency Reserve

A chilly but sunny Fall morning was on hand for the 6 of us to enjoy the beautiful grounds at Indigency. It was nice to see the return of the White and Golden-crowned Sparrows, the Dark-eyed Juncos and the Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Highlights included hearing the Virginia Rail, Brown Creepers and Red-breasted Sapsuckers. Jan Jorn-Baird particularly liked some great views we had of some Northern Flickers. You could really see their spots on their chests, the red cheek patch and the red under-tail feathers. All in all a lovely outing. At this time, I am not planning a walk on the Sunday after Thanksgiving. We don't have a trip in December due to our Christmas Bird Counts. Hope to have a field trip at the end of January in the New Year!

Kit DeGear

October 13 - Merced NWR

Merced NWR never disappoints - from mid-September through mid-March, there's always a rich variety of birds, and so it was on this bright early Fall day. Of course, the Sandhill Cranes are a special focus and they were much in evidence. My guess is that there were around a thousand cranes distributed around the wet areas of the refuge - water is shorter this year than any of the years that I've been visiting the refuge. As you may know, the Sandhill Crane is one of the most family-oriented of all birds and you can see that at the refuge. While always socializing with their peers, each family stays very close together, and constantly communicates amongst itself. A family may comprise an adult pair and one or two 1st year young (never more), but in many cases, the youngsters didn't survive and so you see only adult pairs milling around and foraging with others. Young are easy to identify because they don't have the bright red crown (which happens to be bare skin, not feathers). A very sweet and endearing characteristic of cranes is that they serenade and affirm their pair-bonds by performing dance routines to each other. Here you see a male showing what he's capable of just to ensure that his mate appreciates his dynamism and skills that bring much to the partnership and in raising young. The female isn't going to waste her precious eggs on an inferior male, so he's always having to prove his worth.



We saw no Snow or Ross's Geese, although since our visit, one of our members has seen the first Snow Geese, so they're arriving; in a few weeks there will be thousands of Snow and Ross's Geese that provide amazing displays when they ascend in huge numbers - often because a Northern Harrier is flying overhead looking for an injured or weak goose for lunch. Although we saw no Snow Geese, there's large flock of Greater White-fronted Geese - at least 500 and we did see them.

Among the ducks, the Northern Shoveler and Northern Pintail have the highest numbers in this refuge - we counted at least 500 of the shovelers and rather less pintails. I think the Northern Pintail (male) is the most elegant duck of all, so it's a great thrill to watch them foraging.

The White-faced Ibis with its long decurved beak and subtle iridescent plumage is always a favorite and we saw quite a lot of them both foraging and in the air. I think we were all rather captured by the many Black-necked Stilts and Greater Yellowlegs that seem to be very happy foraging beside each other as shown here. Also, the American Pippit quietly shows up each time I visit the refuge just as it did this time along the far leg of the refuge.

Barry Boulton



Clockwise:

- * *Ibis*
- * *American Pippit*
- * *Yellowlegs and Stilt*



NOVEMBER FIELD TRIPS

Note: our website (<https://centralsierraaudubon.org/>) contains maps for each field trip and will also indicate cancellations due to weather or other reason, so, if in doubt, check it out!

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Wednesday, November 2 - GCSD with Sal Salerno, President of Stanislaus Audubon

Please join us for our next Field Trip to the Groveland Community Services District on Wednesday, November 3 when we will be privileged to have Sal Salerno leading the trip. Sal is a well-known expert birder who will regale us with many stories of the birds that we see. The winter ducks are starting to come in - last year at this time we had 70 Bufflehead and an unusual sighting of a Hairy Woodpecker. Meet the group in the GCSD parking lot at 8:00 AM. Bring binoculars and a birding guide if you have one. The walk will last about two-three hours.

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

Tuesday, November 29 - River Walk to Fish Hatchery/ Sandhill Cranes

CSAS will travel to the Camanche Dam and fish hatchery and then to Lodi on November 29. We will see numerous birds (and fish!) on the Mokelumne River Day Use area and river walk to the dam/fish hatchery, and then on to Lodi to see the Sandhill cranes.

We will meet in Sonora at Barrow's (formerly Perkos) at 8:00 am and carpool to the Camanche Dam, a 70 - 80-minute drive. **Driving instructions will be provided later for the day's activities.** We will stop briefly in Copperopolis to pick up any folks coming from Calaveras. Last year we picked up some additional folks at Valley Springs.

We will then drive to the Mokelumne River day use area. From there we can take a walk along the Mokelumne River up to the Comanche Dam and Fish Hatchery. The water spilling from the dam should 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, including an Osprey last year. The walk at the Mokelumne River/ fish hatchery area will last a total of about two hours and should provide some good photo opportunities. We can eat our lunch there.

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.

When we have finished at the Day Use Area, we will drive west to Lodi to see the Sandhill Cranes (about 26 miles) to Woodbridge Road. The Sandhill Cranes will be on both sides of the road, in fields and flooded fields. The time should be around 2:00 - 2:30 pm and there are a couple of places to park the car to watch the Fly-in starting at 4:30 pm. It will be dark by 5:30pm. No one is required to stay for the fly-in at dusk; everyone is free to leave as they need to. From Lodi, the drive back to Sonora is about 90 minutes.

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.

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