

# Sierra Squawker



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

October - 2023

## PUBLIC PROGRAM

David will present via Zoom from his home and we will also show it in the Sonora library for those of us who like to socialize in-person at our monthly events. Use the Zoom link below to log-in from home.

Wednesday, October 18, at 7pm

## Understanding Bird Bones and Skeletons

Presented by David Lukas

Can you name any bones that humans and birds share? What are the similarities and differences between human and bird skeletons? Looking at our own bodies and answering these questions helps us understand how birds move in the world and will forever change how you think about birds.

Naturalist, author, and photographer David Lukas is well known for his insightful and enthusiastic presentations. He loves to share nature stories with people and has led thousands of nature hikes, workshops, and presentations on a huge variety of nature topics, and written many books and articles.

Check out his weekly nature newsletter at:

[www.lukasguides.com](http://www.lukasguides.com)

*David in Action*



**Tonight's Zoom link:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82565216638>

## OCTOBER 2023 FIELD TRIPS

**Note: our website contains maps for each field trip and will also indicate cancellations due to weather or other reason. So, if in doubt, check it out at: <https://centralsierraaudubon.org/field-trips/>**



### **October 5 (Thursday) - Confidence Trail**

Please join us on the Confidence Trail where we'll be looking for birds on migration as well as those that just "move down the hill" for winter rather than going afar. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the trailhead at Confidence/South Fork Road just north of Middle Camp Road (see map on website).

**Trip leader Kit DeGear (925)-822-5215 or [kdegear@gmail.com](mailto:kdegear@gmail.com)**

### **October 19 (Thursday) - Tüttletown Recreation Area (New Melones)**

On this field trip our primary purpose will be to look for signs of Burrowing Owl activity to support the Burrowing Owl Colony Project (see highlighted article on next page). However, there should be other interesting birds about as well. The Western and Clark's Grebes and Bald Eagles are starting to come in and Rock Wren will likely be there to greet us! Meet in the larger boat launch parking lot by the restrooms at 8:30am (see map on website).

**Trip leader Kit DeGear (925)-822-5215 or [kdegear@gmail.com](mailto:kdegear@gmail.com)**

### **October 22 (Sunday) - Indigeny**

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.

Our September 24 walk was on a beautiful fall morning when the Acorn Woodpeckers and Scrub-Jays were particularly vocal! Enjoying the great crop of acorns I presume. There was a great crop of mosquitoes as well, who enjoyed feasting on me! Highlights included Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Red-shouldered Hawk, Bewick's Wren and a Lincoln's Sparrow. I thought we might get some White or Golden-crowned Sparrows and perhaps a Red-breasted Sapsucker, but not yet - perhaps this month! See the eBird checklist at: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S150671394>

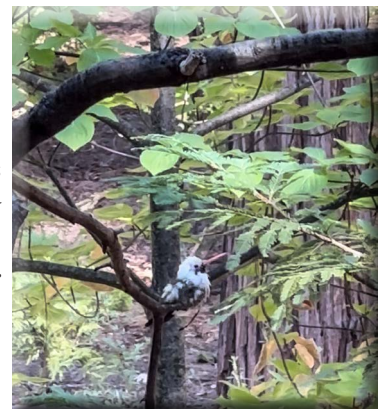
The walk will last 2-3 hrs. Children are welcome! Meet in the parking lot at 8:00 AM. Rain will cancel the trip. Follow the signs from the intersection of Greenley and Lyons/Bald Mountain Roads in Sonora. After a few miles on Lyons/Bald Mountain Road, turn right onto Apple Hill Drive where there is a large sign that says "Apple Valley Ranches." A quick left turn onto Summers Lane leads you to Indigeny. As always, bring your binoculars and/or scopes, wear muted colors and you may wish to include a hat, sunscreen and water.

**Trip leader Kit DeGear (925)-822-5215 or [kdegear@gmail.com](mailto:kdegear@gmail.com)**

### **Leucistic Anna's Hummingbird**

My friend invited me to her home in Twain Harte to check out this cool sighting. This is a screen shot from a video I took on my cellphone of a leucistic Anna's. I watched him come and go for quite some time. He would chase off some hummers but a juvenile male Anna's he would allow to share a branch. Possible offspring? Very interesting.

**Kit DeGear**



## A WALK IN THE PARK – BIG TREES OF COURSE!

Big Trees State Park is a very special place where interesting things happen in addition to the magnificent Giant Sequoias stately presence. You can enjoy a fascinating birding day at BTSP with our Conservation Chair, Bruce McClenahan, who leads birding trips every Thursday at 9:30am for about 90 minutes. His walks and talks are oriented around teaching and showing new birders how to go about identifying the birds and feeling a sense of accomplishment. He introduces you to the Merlin app that allows your cellphone to “listen” to bird calls and to identify them, or to propose alternatives, and then to look at them on the Audubon app. He finds that youngsters, for whom apps are the norm, take to the process like ducks to water, so bring your kids, grandkids and great-grandkids along to join Bruce.

Several of us joined Bruce recently and our target birds were the Pileated Woodpecker, Brown Creeper and White-headed Woodpecker, all typical BTSP birds. Well, as is so often the case with birds, we're an hour into the walk and although hearing plenty of its calls and just a little drumming, no sight of a Pileated – but, suddenly, there he is, almost posing for us!

I just learned that prescribed burning is due to start on October 11 around the North Grove trail and so that area of the park will be closed for some time. However, I've just uploaded a short video to YouTube showing some interesting features in the park during September which you'll find interesting. It's at: <https://youtu.be/GrmHSZhtw9U>



Photo: Greg Robbins.

Barry Boulton

### **We can use your "eyes-on-the-ground for this project**

#### **BURROWING OWL COLONY PROJECT – NEW MELONES**

Can you name a long-legged raptor that hunts on the ground? I'll bet the Burrowing Owl (BUOW), *Athene cunicularia* isn't the first bird that comes to mind. But indeed, this small 8" owl hunts from a perch or by running on the ground during the day as much as it does flying at night.

Burrowing Owls which are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act are listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a Bird of Conservation Concern. They are listed as Endangered in Canada, Threatened in Mexico and a Species of Special Concern in California, where habitat loss from development, agriculture, ground squirrel eradication and coyotes has reduced their numbers by 30%.

BUOW live in wide open, sparsely vegetated grasslands and agricultural fields. As their name implies, they live and raise their 3 – 5 chicks in underground burrows, (their most basic habitat requirement), provided for the most part by ground squirrels. They tend to choose nesting sites with a high density of surrounding burrows to maximize possible escape routes and provide cache sites for storing food.

BUOW have been spotted over the years at New Melones but not on a recurring basis. We have proposed to Pat Sanders (Bureau of Reclamation Interpretive Manager) the possibility of finding an existing BUOW site and augmenting / stabilizing the population with Artificial Burrowing Systems (ABS). The ABS constructed of a food grade 55 gallon drum and corrugated drain pipe can be easily installed and provide permanent nesting and food cache sites for BUOW. If we can find an existing site, the Bureau will file the needed paperwork and support our work any way they can. To get started, we could use more eyes to find existing Burrowing Owl sites. **If you can help with eyes on the ground, please contact Bruce McClenahan ([bgmcclenahan@gmail.com](mailto:bgmcclenahan@gmail.com))** The goal of the BUOW colony project is to establish a permanent colony and possibly foster some new relationships with the Bureau, Columbia College, and new members. We would look forward to your help.

**Bruce McClenahan, CSAS Conservation Chair**

## MIGRATION

While we're asleep during the Fall and Spring migratory periods, there's a lot of activity in the skies. You can find out what's happening on Cornell's Migration Dashboard which "provides summaries of radar-based measurements of nocturnal bird migration for the contiguous United States, including estimates for the total number of birds migrating as well as their directions, speeds, and altitudes. Watch migration patterns in near real time or see a summary for a whole night the next morning. Check back often to find out how migration has changed across a night and season and to learn which species of nocturnally migrating birds are likely migrating through your region". The website url is <https://dashboard.birdcast.info> where you enter the county of your choice. Here's what it shows for the night of September 20/21 over Calaveras County.

# 92,100

Birds crossed Calaveras County last night (est.)

Startings: Wed, Sep 20, 2023, 7:00 PM PDT  
Endings: Thu, Sep 21, 2023, 6:30 AM PDT

[Learn more](#)

### PEAK MIGRATION TRAFFIC

**31,200** Birds in flight (est.) High

Direction: SE Speed: 16 mph Altitude: 2,200 ft

Recorded: Thu, Sep 21, 2023, 1:20 AM PDT

### Here's what happened last night...

#### Birds in flight



Birds usually begin to migrate 30 to 45 minutes after sunset, with the greatest number in flight two to three hours later.

#### Flight direction and speed



Birds tend to migrate southward in autumn, but seasonal timing, weather, and geography alter their flight directions and speeds.

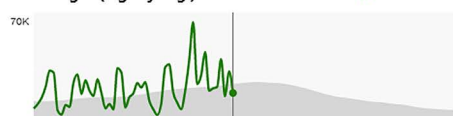
#### Altitude



Migrating birds regularly fly up to 10,000 feet above ground, although seasonal timing and weather conditions dramatically impact their distributions.

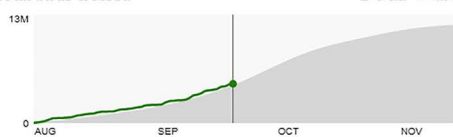
### And so far this season...

#### Birds in flight (nightly avg.)



During fall migration, most birds pass through the contiguous U.S. from early September through October.

#### Total birds crossed



This is the estimated total number of birds that have fully crossed this region. The curve rises quickly during peak migration and levels off at the end of the season.

### Expected nocturnal migrants

POWERED BY EBIRD

Nocturnally migrating species most likely to arrive or depart this region at this time of year, based on frequency of observations



## A LITTLE BIT OF CSAS HISTORY

### In Memory of Al Bergeron by Tom Damiani

I was always a solitary birder while I lived in Connecticut. When I moved to California to attend Columbia College in 1990, I thought I should contact someone from a local Audubon society so that I might find out where the hot spots were in the Sonora area. I called the number for Central Sierra Audubon and ended up speaking with CSAS President Al Bergeron. He told me to meet him at Phoenix Lake the next day. Since I hadn't birded much on the west coast, I got to see many species I was not familiar with. After our birding, Al invited me to a CSAS board meeting. I attended, and before I knew it, I was a member of the board! That's how Al worked, he was always looking to get folks involved, and he didn't stop there. Once I was voted onto the board, I was given the position of Program Coordinator, which involved me finding folks to speak to CSAS members at the monthly general meetings at the Sonora Library. I had never done anything like that before, but Al guided me along, even telling me "You have to lead the applause after the speaker concludes their program." Of course, I also had to introduce them, which I was not particularly comfortable with, but Al insisted.



Now that I was a member of CSAS, I attended all the field trips. I wanted to see as many birds as possible as I wasn't sure how long I'd be in California. Al asked me to lead a field trip at the 40-acre farm in Columbia where I lived. There was some good stuff there such as a large turkey vulture roost, violet-green swallows, yellow-breasted chats, and rattlesnakes! I had never led a bird walk before, but again Al insisted.

During the four years I spent in Sonora/Columbia, Al and I had many conversations, not only about birds, but about life. I came to call Al my friend and after I left California for a position with The Nature Conservancy at Mashomack Preserve on Shelter Island, NY, I kept in touch with Al the best that I could.

It was after a few years of greeting visitors, leading nature walks, presenting programs, working with adults and children, I came to realize just how important Al was in my life. He "brought me out my shell" so to speak and frankly pushed me out of my comfort zone. Sometimes I begrudgingly did what Al wanted me to do. I later realized that Al did what he did because he saw the potential in me. I miss Al to this day, and I wish I could tell him how much of an impact he had on my life.

#### **Editor's note**

Al Bergeron was one of the early CSAS leaders and quite a remarkable man. In 1995 he, working with our good friends Harold & Pat Sanders of the Bureau of Reclamation, built a raft to save three Osprey chicks in their treetop nest as the rising waters in New Melones that spring threatened it. Remarkably, the Osprey parents went along with the rescue game plan! This article from California Outside describes the successful story in words and pictures: <https://centralsierraaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Saving-Ospreys-from-Rising-Waters.pdf>

If you have interesting stories about CSAS old-timers, please email them to me for inclusion in future editions of the Squawker at [rbarryboulton@gmail.com](mailto:rbarryboulton@gmail.com)



*Tom Damiani*

### **Central Sierra Audubon Society - CSAS**

(Chapter of the National Audubon Society)

P.O. Box 3047, Sonora, CA 95370

**Public Presentations:** We now conduct our monthly in-person presentations in the Sonora Library as we did before covid, and simultaneously share them on Zoom so that you have flexibility in attendance. Monthly details shown in the Squawker 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**

Tom Parrington, President, Conservation	(209)928-3835
Barry Boulton, Past-President	(209)596-0612
Ralph Retherford, VP Programs	(209)770-6124
Jean Dakota, Secretary	(209)591-9952
Linda Millsbaugh, 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
Phyllis Ashmead, At-large	(209)768-2672

### **CSAS Committee Chairs**

Bird Box Trail - Gail Witzlsteiner	(209)586-4025
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
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