

Sierra Squawker



www.centralsierraaudubon.org

November - 2023

PUBLIC PROGRAM

Nancy will present in-person at the Sonora library, and for those of us who participate from home, the program will also be on Zoom. Use the Zoom link shown below to log-in from home.

Wednesday, November 15, at 7pm

Giant Sequoias: A Natural and Historic Legacy

Presented by Nancy Muleady-Mecham, Ph.D

Join Fulbright Scholar and retired National Park Ranger, Dr. Nancy Muleady-Mecham, for insight into these remarkable and enduring giants. From their biology, paleontological record, dependence on fire, and the impact humans have made, their journey through time is as immense as the trees themselves.

Doc Nancy is an Adjunct Professor of biology at Northern Arizona University and Columbia College, Sonora as well as a Visiting Lecturer for the University of Virginia Semester At Sea Program where she taught biology around the world. Doc Nancy was selected by the United States as a Fulbright Scholar and traveled to the Russian Federation to teach at Gorno-Altai State University in southwest Siberia and to conduct research in remote protected areas.

When not working on her research on Giant Sequoias she loves to backpack. She leads High Sierra backcountry seminars on horseback for Rock Creek Pack Station. She has completed solo hikes of the John Muir and High Sierra Trails through the Sierra Nevada, hiked through the Alps on The Haute Route from Chamonix to Zermatt, and is a Pacific Crest Trail section hiker. She is the author of several books, and lives in the Sierra Nevada with her family.



Sequoiadendron giganteum

Photo © Nancy Muleady-Mecham

Doc Nancy has been appointed by the Secretary of the Interior of the United States to the Central California Resource Advisory Council for the Bureau of Land Management for a second three-year position in 2023.

Tonight's Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83022083219>

NOVEMBER 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/>



November 16 (Thursday) - Merced National Wildlife Refuge

Please join us for our annual Fall trip to see Sandhill Cranes and so many other migratory birds that are now arriving. I visited with Cyril Ash on October 14th where there were only a couple of other cars so the Sandhill Cranes, Ibises and Egrets were fairly close to the auto tour road for great viewing. Of particular note was a flock of egrets, Great, Snowy and Cattle all foraging together. I had not seen a Cattle Egret before so a lucky treat for me! Join me in November a full month later and we'll see what else has flown in!

We'll meet as usual at 2pm at the first viewpoint in the refuge off Sandy Mush Road (7430 W Sandy Mush Rd, Merced, CA 95341) and then we'll make either one or two circuits and watch the sunset fly-in from the far viewpoint. For those who wish, we'll enjoy dinner at our favorite Thai restaurant in downtown Merced.

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

November 26 (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. This will be a great opportunity to work off your Thanksgiving dinner!

Our October 22 walk was on a lively fall morning when many birds were vocalizing, giving us several hits on the Merlin sound ID app. While the start was pretty cool and ended with a bit of rain it did not dampen our experience! 35 species were observed. Highlights included the return of the White-crowned Sparrow, Cedar Waxwings and the distinctive call of a Virginia Rail. The walk was finished off by a Great Blue Heron lumbering out of the creek to cross our path as we were approaching the parking lot. A welcome surprise! See the eBird checklist at: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S152862506>

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

November 30 (Thursday) - River Walk to Fish Hatchery/ Sandhill Cranes (Camanche/Lodi)

CAS will travel to the Camanche Dam and fish hatchery and then to Lodi, CA on November 30. 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 Perkis) at 8:00 am and carpool to the Camanche Dam, an approximate 70 to 80-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. We will also stop at Valley Springs to pick up any additional folks if needed.

For detailed itinerary and timing, link to download at:
<https://centralsierraaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Cranes-River-Walk-in-Nov-30th.pdf>

Trip leader Jean Dakota (209)591-9952 or jdakota002@comcast.net

Arnold Sightings by John Sutake

With the migrating birds, some moving through and others due to stay, fall is becoming quite active in my garden. Every day I see a White-headed Woodpecker, Hermit Thrushes and both Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets and a couple of American Robins with the occasional Northern Flicker. I have two Varied Thrushes presumably going downhill who tend to use the bird bath at the same time as the Robins. Speaking of the Robins, I just had a flock of them, too many to count in the foliage, who were busily finishing off the dogwood fruits in my garden before moving down to lower elevations, perhaps Murphys, for the winter. Another migrant moving through is a Townsend's Warbler. The Mountain Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatch are occasional visitors to the bath as is the more frequent Steller's Jay.

A little removed from my garden down at the bottom end of Arnold, a small number of migrating Wood Ducks arrive at Meadowmont pond every October. This year brought an unusually large number of up to 20 with 10-12 still in situ as of October 30. Perhaps a couple or so will stay at Meadowmont while the others will drift off to relocate themselves in local lakes such as White Pines and Lakemont. Soon I expect to see the Hooded Mergansers return.

Editor's note: I created a short video while observing these Wood Ducks with John that you can view at: <https://vimeo.com/879850354?share=copy>

CSAS October Field Trip Reports

October 5, Confidence - South Fork

Fall colors provided a nice backdrop to our walk. However, I was so shocked when we came across another backdrop. Literally! Somehow I never got the memo about the giant cave-in that happened last winter. Wow! I fear what might transpire with rains this coming season. It was a fairly quiet morning but the four of us particularly enjoyed observing a White-headed Woodpecker. It was also nice to see that the White-crowned Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos and Ruby-crowned Kinglets have returned. Full checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S151499381>

Kit DeGear



October 14, Stanislaus Pelican Nature Trail

Cyril Ashe and I had the pleasure of joining the Stanislaus field trip led by Eric Hopson on Oct. 14. He offered to take us back into a restricted area along White Lake. So cool. There was more water back there than usual because of our heavy winter rains. Highlights included a pair of Belted Kingfishers flying around together rattling away, Wood Ducks several perched in a tree, Western and Clark's Grebes (a first for me in that county) and an American Bittern flying in to disappear in the reeds. 43 species were observed. Full checklist for White Lake: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S152251906>

Kit DeGear

October 19, Tuttletown Recreation Area

We were hoping to find Burrowing Owls that might provide a suitable location for the project outlined in October's Squawker. Most of the observations were around the boat launch area although we also checked out Heron Point for a bit. The Rock Wrens did not disappoint - they kept popping up all along our walk around the parking lot. Other highlights were the return of the White-crowned Sparrow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, a beautiful Western Meadowlark and the lovely descending notes of a Canyon Wren. Unfortunately, no Burrowing Owls were found. 23 species were seen or heard. You can see the full list of species on eBird at: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S152631162>

Kit DeGear

Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs)

As you may remember from last year, CSAS now runs three CBCs and once again we request your participation even if you're not a regular birder simply because more eyes see more birds. Actually, children and older students are perfect because their eyesight is better than most of ours - so bring them along! You'll probably also remember that you don't need to be good at identifying birds because each team has a leader who can do that, but your role in simply seeing birds is important. Here are the dates and contacts for you to sign on.

December 16, Saturday - Sonora CBC

For this CBC, our long serving CBC leader, Steve Umland, is out of the Country. We need some help identifying those who are willing to participate. If you are a past participant please let us know what areas you have covered and if you have area descriptions and maps of the areas that you covered. Please contact Kit DeGear or Tom Parrington with any information that you have, and to sign up for the day.

Kit DeGear: (925)-822-5215 or kdegear@gmail.com **Tom Parrington:** (209)928-3835

December 23, Saturday - Angels Camp CBC

Contact to sign up is **Bruce McClenahan:** (209)323-0739 or bgmcclenahan@gmail.com

December 30, Saturday - Calaveras CBC

Contacts to sign up: **Keith & Sandra Maurer:** kandsmaurer@goldrush.com

Project Feeder Watch

For those of you who can't get out on CBCs but have backyards with feeders and bird baths, this is an excellent opportunity to participate in a closely linked citizen science project. FeederWatch is a November—April survey of birds that visit backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in the United States and Canada. Despite the name, you don't need a feeder, and you don't need a lot of time - you just need to have some habitat for birds and watch out your windows periodically.

Here's What You Get When You Join FeederWatch: tools to track your birds and mammals on our website; the year-end summary, Winter Bird Highlights; Digital access to the Cornell Lab's Living Bird magazine; a double-sided poster of eastern and western common feeder birds (free upon request when you sign up.); a full-color calendar (free upon request when you sign up.) View full details at: <https://feederwatch.org/>

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

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/

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
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