

Central Sierra Audubon Society

Sierra Squawker



www.centralsierraaudubon.org

September - 2024

PUBLIC PROGRAM

This presentation will be on Zoom (link below)

Wednesday, September 18, at 7:00pm

Return of a California Icon

Presented by Mike Stake - Ventana Wildlife Society

The road to recovery for California Condors has spanned decades, with complicated twists and turns. We celebrated a milestone when the central California wild population reached 100 birds in 2019, but a subsequent surge in lead poisoning, a major wildfire, and the threat of avian flu, have been setbacks in reaching the goal of a self-sustainable population. Will this California icon once again soar over the central Sierras? Join Ventana Wildlife Society biologist Mike Stake as he updates the progress of California Condor recovery efforts in central California. While the condors provide hope through their resiliency, full recovery might depend on a unique collaboration to help mitigate a familiar threat.



Mike Stake is a wildlife biologist at Ventana Wildlife Society in Monterey. A San Francisco Bay Area native, Mike became interested in birds when his 6th-grade teacher took the class to a local sewage pond to identify ducks, herons, and kingfishers. Mike left California in 1988 to attend the University of Nebraska. After graduation, he worked with The Nature Conservancy in Texas and with Hawks Aloft in New Mexico before getting his Master's Degree at the University of Missouri. Along the way, he assisted biology research projects in the Bahamas, Australia, Peru, and Ecuador, and spent two years teaching English classes in Russia. Mike has been back home in California since 2009 assisting with California Condor recovery on the central coast.

Zoom url: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89307683859>

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://centralsierraudubon.org/field-trips/>



SEPTEMBER 2024 FIELD TRIPS

September 16 (Monday) - Tulloch Dam Rd. and 2 Mile Bar Recreation Area.

These are some areas that draw many birders year round. While winter and spring is a more species-rich time of year, I think we will see some good birds. The White-throated Swifts like to hang out by the cliffs above the Stanislaus River. If we're lucky we might get a Peregrine Falcon. As we drive out the roads we may see the Loggerhead Shrike and Western Bluebird. At 2 Mile Bar there is a good known location for the Rock Wren.

We will meet at the Barrow's parking lot at 8:00 am to carpool and or caravan. It's about 25 miles and around 30 minutes down Hwy 108 from Sonora very close to the Tuolumne/Stanislaus County Line. On Tulloch Rd. we will be birding mostly by car. If there is interest we could explore the Goodwin Dam Recreation Area a bit. At the end of Two Mile Bar Rd. there are some restrooms and a parking area. It is a short hike down to the river. The outing will last about 4 hours. You may wish to bring snacks/lunch and water. Please let me know if you plan to attend..

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

September 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.

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

September 5, 12, 20, 26 (Thursdays) - Big Trees State Park

Join me in one of California's premier state parks - Calaveras Big Trees **every Thursday** at 9:30am, through September 26. I can't guarantee a Pileated Woodpecker or a White-headed Woodpecker every time, but we will see as many of the 163 species as we have the good fortune. Hikes are gentle with very little elevation gain, and last two to four hours.

Bruce McClenahan



The Annual Central Valley Bird Symposium

Judged by many as one of the premier birding events in the West, the CVBS is hosted by the Central Valley Bird Club. We have well-known speakers, multiple field trips, artists' displays, vendors and birders. The number of participants usually reaches near complete capacity so plan to register early if you want to attend. Registration will open September 8th at 2 pm.

View program pdf: https://centralsierraudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2024_Program_CVBS_final_draft_2.pdf

CONSERVATION CORNER

After Chevron Loss, More Peril

As many predicted, the U.S. Supreme Court reversed 40 years of the court's own precedent in ruling on what was known as the Chevron Doctrine.

In 1984, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Chevron USA vs Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc., that when lower courts are deciding two reasonable interpretations of administrative law, the courts should defer to the agency that administers the law. The court reasoned that when statutory language is ambiguous and congress has not weighed in directly, then the courts must defer to the agency's interpretation of the statute (provided it is reasonable) as the agency has done the scientific fact finding, provided for public input, and is answerable to an elected congress and an elected president.

The 1984 Supreme Court ruling removed federal judges from policy making.

That is no longer the case. A devastating reversal.

Now, another election cycle is here, but before you despair, remember elections are ultimately about values. What is it that you hold close to your heart? If birds appear on your list, then this is an election you cannot sit out, there is a lot at stake.

This is where birds stood at the end of 2020:

- The Migratory Bird Treated Act of 1918 had been gutted.
- A ban on the use of lead ammunition and tackle on federal lands had been overturned. (Lead is the leading cause of death in California Condors.)
- Protections were removed from three million acres of critical habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl.
- Habitat protections for the Greater Sage Grouse on nine million acres of western land had been removed, opening the area to the oil and gas industry.
- The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was opened to oil and gas drilling.
- The Endangered Species Act was gutted, removing protections for wildlife from long term threats.
- The Environmental Protection Agency's ability to enforce the Clean Water & Clean Air Act was weakened. Regulations cost to industry now had a priority over public health when evaluating new regulations.
- A plan was put into place to open the entire Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic oceans to drilling.
- Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments were reduced in size.

Vote for the birds to prevent even more severe rollbacks than you see above.

Bruce McClenahan, Conservation Chair

Christmas Bird Counts 2024 – Save the Dates

Sonora.....Saturday, December 14, 2024

Angels Camp.....Saturday, December 21, 2024

Calaveras.....Saturday, December 28, 2024

2024 Osprey Count on New Melones Reservoir

On a beautiful June 12, four CSAS members, Tom Parrington, Jan Jorn-Baird, Toby Morgan and myself, once again participated in the annual Osprey Count organized by Ranger Pat Sanders. In the words of Ranger Pat:

Thank you for assisting with our annual Osprey survey on June 12, 2024. The weather was a bit on the warm side with highs in the upper 90s. I truly appreciate all who participated and endured the heat for this survey as we desperately needed all of you.

A total of 18 Osprey (15 adults/3 immature) and a whopping 41 Bald Eagles were counted during the survey. It was amazing to count so many eagles during an osprey survey. In fact, it was the most eagles counted ever since 1997, as the second largest count for eagles was in 2019 with 29.

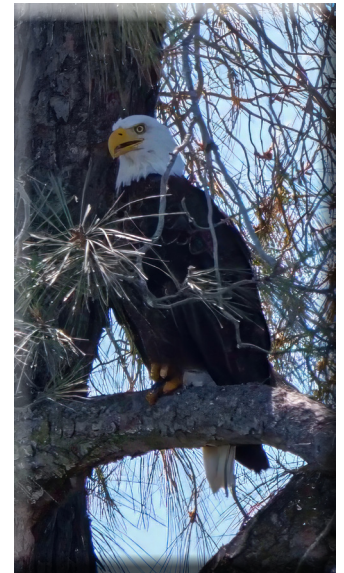
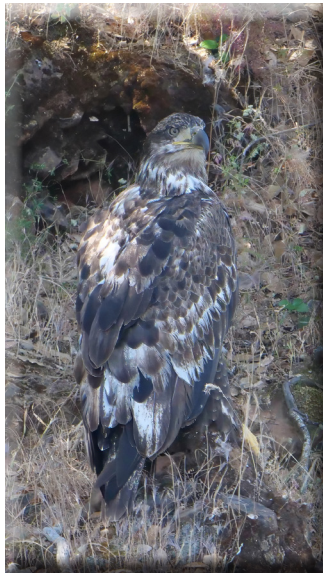
Many other bird species were sighted including: Great Blue Herons and babies, Western Grebes, Common Mergansers and Canada Geese with lots of babies, Red Tailed Hawks, a variety of Swallows, Kestrels, Western Kingbirds and Kingfishers. Studies show species diversity is a good indicator of the health of an aquatic ecosystem.

I want to thank all the volunteers who participated in the Osprey Survey for 2024. A big thank you to everyone who participated and a special thanks to all the boat operators. I hope everyone enjoyed the experience and I look forward to seeing all of you at future events.

Sincerely,

Pat Sanders

Natural Resource Ranger, New Melones Lake



Compare the mottled appearance of the juvenile Baldies with the sleek elegance of the adult. It will take them five years to attain such elegance - and even a chancing glance from a member of the opposite sex!

We always see a few Common Mergansers during this survey, and the Heron rookery was a welcome addition.

As always, there were lots of Western Grebes - but too late in the season for "running on water" (rushing).



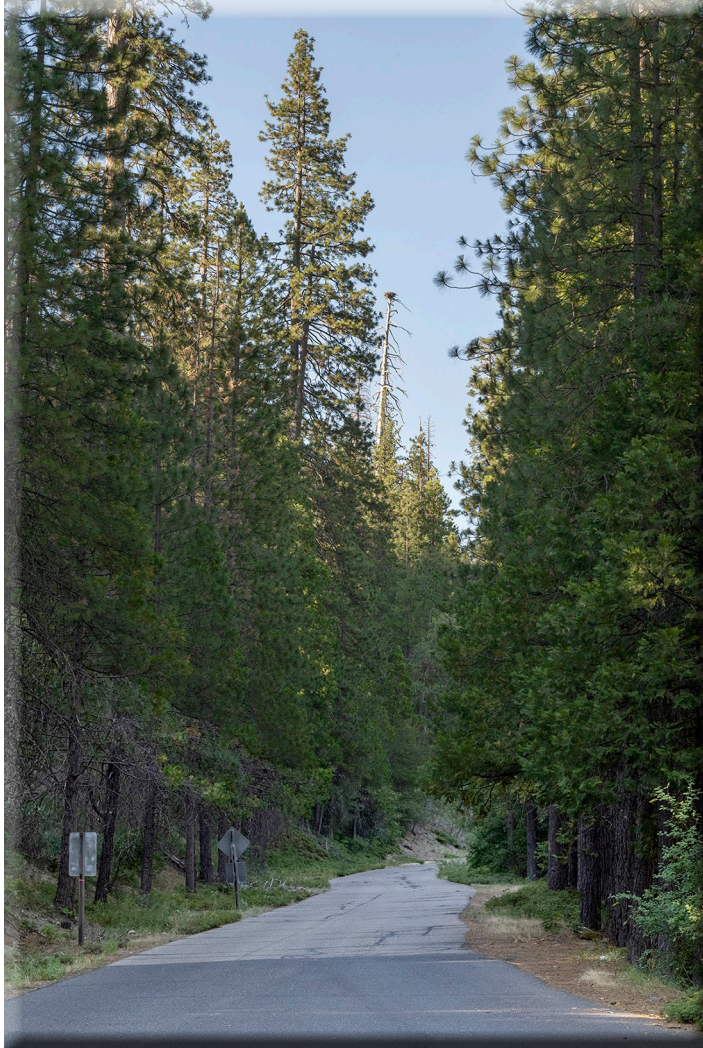
Photos by Barry Boulton

Big Trees State Park Observations

Story and photos by Alan Beymer

Bring Binoculars!

Initially I gave up on the Osprey nest located on the Stanislaus River in Calaveras Big Trees State Park. I checked it with binoculars in early May after the Smith Parkway opened, and the nest was obviously just a pile of sticks. Then Park Docents Joan and Jim Allday said they had seen movement in the nest while driving to Beaver Creek. Just to keep the friendship going, I dutifully made another trip to the parkway bridge and the nest moved. Or rather, a wing rose up briefly. I believe that's called an Aha! moment. I then proceeded to give the Ospreys some attention and they are coming through nicely.



Best view of the Osprey nest from the Smith Parkway - 391 yards from the viewer. Good binoculars are advised. July 3.



The literature says the male brings sticks to the nest and the female arranges them. What surprised me was the air drop of building materials into the nest. June 14.



FLEDGLINGS--The young ospreys at the Stanislaus River in Calaveras Big Trees fledged this morning. While their parents flew in lazy circles overhead, the young took turns propelling themselves upward. After a good hour of these intermittent attempts, the first bird took off for a nearby branch. No. 2 bird soon followed while No. 3 was still thinking it over when I left the river. July 27.

A New President for CSAS

It is with delight and gratitude that we welcome Gail Witzlsteiner as the new President of CSAS who was elected by the membership present at our annual elections and potluck in June. Here is her address as the new President.

Greetings! I am pleased to greet you as the new Board President of our chapter. I somewhat willingly accepted the job knowing that I would have a fun team to work with.

You know many of these people (Ralph, Kit, Barry, Jan, Tom, Jean and Walt) from the great work that they have been doing over the past few years. In addition, I am happy to say that we have some exciting additions to the board.

Bruce McClenahan joined us midway through the year and is going to help us with Membership. Bruce lives in Angels Camp and leads the Christmas Bird Count in western Calaveras County. You can also find him leading the Thursday bird walks at Calaveras Big Trees.

Siobhan Hill is new to Audubon and we are delighted to have her join us as our Treasurer. She lives in MiWuk Village and serves as the bookkeeper for the Waldorf School in Jamestown and as Treasurer for the Twain Harte Soroptimist. I have had the pleasure of working with Siobhan in Soroptimist for many years and am so pleased that she will share her skillset with us.

In addition, Darcy Zimmerman has agreed to chair our Education committee. Many of you may already know Darcy who has served on the Scholarship committee and attends some of our bird walks. Darcy is a retired educator who lives in Vallecito and brings some fresh ideas to our education outreach. She will also lead our Scholarship committee.

We are planning for another great year of birding activities and conservation. Join us for our monthly program meetings at the Tuolumne Co. library on the 3rd Wednesdays of the month at 7 pm. Our September meeting should be interesting when we hear from the biologist from the California Condor Recovery Program. I look forward to connecting with you.

Gail

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 Gail Witzlsteiner (209)586-4025

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

Gail Witzlsteiner, President	(209)586-4025
Tom Parrington, Past-President	(209)928-3835
Ralph Retherford, VP Programs	(209)770-6124
Jean Dakota, Secretary	(209)591-9952
Siobhan Hill, Treasurer	(209) 743-2863
Kit DeGear, Field Trips	(925)822-5215
Jan Jorn-Baird, Publicity	(209)532-1106
Bruce McClenahan, VP Conservation	(209)323-0739

CSAS Committee Chairs

Education & Scholarship - Darcy Zimmerman	(209) 890-6169
Website - Barry Boulton	(209)596-0612
Newsletter Editor - Barry Boulton	(209)596-0612
Membership - Bruce McClenahan	(209)323-0739
YSS delegate - Walt Kruse	(707)548-1829
Bird Box Trail - Gail Witzlsteiner	(209)586-4025
Bird Box Sales - OPEN	