Central Sierra Audubon Society

Sierra Squawker

www.centralsierraaudubon.org January - 2025

PUBLIC PROGRAM

This presentation will be on Zoom and viewable in the library, so join us there if you can - refreshments provided.

Wednesday, January 15, at 7:00pm

"Beyond the Fourth Grade: Bees for Grown-ups"

Presented by Linda Reavley

Linda Reavley will show and tell us the story of bee-keeping and her experiences with these delightful and important fellow-travelers.

Linda has been keeping bees since the early 1970's. Her husband Ken Fowkes has also been infected with the same passion. They have enjoyed a long tenure as President and Vice President of Sierra Foothill Beekeepers Association. Linda's joy and enthusiasm about these fascinating organisms continues, and information that continues to be discovered delights her.

Zoom url: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84448631673?pwd=tkdgm34H41mOki6CfYDwW5TCXB1aIS.1

Note: our website will indicate cancellations due to weather or other reason. So, if in doubt, check it out at: https://centralsierraaudubon.org/field-trips/

JANUARY 2025 FIELD TRIPS

January 16 (Thursday)- Merced NWR Afternoon & Evening Fly-in

This annual CSAS visit in January is always memorable, especially when the Sandhill Cranes glide in at sunset against the distant mountain background providing an almost magical visual and audio performance. The geese - Snow, Ross's, Cackling and Greater White-fronted will all be there in good numbers too, With a little good luck we'll see and hear the Sora, and possibly a Yellow Warbler at the far overlook. Of course, the ubiquitous Northern Shoveler and always-squabbling American Coots will be ever-present. If you wish to prepare for likely birds, you can review recent listings at the eBird website: **https://ebird.org/region/USFWS_119**

We will meet at Barrow's at 12:15pm to carpool/caravan, or meet at the first platform at 2pm. We will make a brief stop at Dawson Lake on our way down along J59. Dining at a local Merced restaurant will be an option for those that stay for the sunset fly in. We might want to try a new place, Bella Luna, that we have heard is excellent.

Trip leader - Kit DeGear - Call/text/email if you have any questions. #925-822-5215 or kdegear@gmail.com

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January 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.

The walk will last 2-3 hrs. Children are welcome! Meet in the parking lot at 9:00 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/BaldMountain 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

Newsletter & Website Changes

CSAS Conservation Chair Bruce McClenahan has been creatively updating our newsletter and website to bring them in line with current styles. The website is already up and running at **https://centralsierraaudubon.org/** The newsletter changeover is due for the February issue. You are going to enjoy the results of Bruce's energy and vision for both.

Bruce's contact info is: **(209)323-0739** or **bgmcclenahan@gmail.com**

Big Trees State Park Observations

Story and photos by Alan Beymer

THE BIRDS I DO NOT SEE

My birding friend Merlin says I'm often clueless. We have this uneasy relationship. The cold, snowy December morning appeared to be a minimal bird day at Big Trees State Park. The North Grove Trail was quiet, then three Juncos exploded from under the boardwalk and I decided to open the Merlin Sound app. We both heard a Chickadee at stop No. 3 on the trail; moments later a Red-breasted Nuthatch chimed in. At No.19 Merlin heard a Northern Flicker and we both recognized a Common Raven which posed for about 10 seconds.

Two days later, with snow imminent, I scouted the North Grove Meadow and found evidence of eight birds, but none were visible. I knew some of the calls. Early on Merlin and I both recognized a Red-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Flicker, and Black Phoebe. Then Merlin surprised me with a Red Crossbill. The Red Crossbill is on the official Big Trees bird list, but new to me. Merlin followed this with a Brown Creeper, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Spotted Towhee, all familiar, but today those calls did not register with me. Merlin was piling on.

Back at the car we both recognized a Common Raven and Red-breasted Nuthatch, but clearly I was left behind by the Merlin birding app this day. Audubon and other bird sites suggest caution with Merlin. But Merlin helps my bird education. Northern Flickers are hard to miss visually, but I was not familiar with the call until Merlin kept nudging me. Now I both see and hear Northern Flickers. And I will be looking for that Red Crossbill.

Editor's note.
An aspect that Alan and I have been considering is whether the Northern Flicker will be present in the park in the deepest time of winter with snow laying on the ground. The question arises because the flicker feeds mainly on ground ants which are presumably going to be scarce under those conditions. So, does the flicker adapt and stay in the park by changing its diet and, if so, what changes does it make, what does it now eat? Or, does it migrate downhill to Forest Meadows and the Murphys area?

This Editor's Farewell

I've had the privilege of being your newsletter editor since September of 2013 which has given me much enjoyment, and now it's time to move on to other things - in fact, I already have! My retirement days, although enjoyable, were becoming rather repetitive, so I decided to try the nomadic lifestyle for a while. I'm currently a campground host in Death Valley where I meet people from all over the world with a wide variety of interests and passions.

When I complete my three-month assignment here in mid-January I'll move on to the Salton Sea SRA to do campground hosting plus interpretive work with visitors. As you know, there are major threats to migratory birds and humans due to lack of water and presence of toxins, compounded now by likely lithium mining and its consequences. Audubon California is very active in mitigation work at the sea so I expect to report back to you on their activities and prospects.

After that three-month assignment, I have another one at the Humboldt Bay NWR near Eureka and so I'll be able to enjoy and research the seabirds along the Pacific Coast. Then I have tentative plans going into 2026 which still need to be confirmed.

Death Valley is much more than just the views, although many visitors come for them or because this place is on their bucket list. It's often said that it's the hottest and driest place on Earth, but there's water from so many springs running through the valley - and a golf course with palm trees! Yes, water is everywhere, as are its impacts. The surrounding mountains all sit above massive alluvial fans and all roads run across those fans which tells you that this valley was formed basically by two forces - tectonic and water.

Away from the golf course and water at Furnace Creek, birds are generally in short supply here except for Great-tailed Grackles and too many Ravens. At the golf course, pride of place was taken by this gorgeous male Vermilion Flycatcher in action. You might enjoy a short video I made of him at **https://youtu.be/-3zrJbs0yes** in which you'll see him "sallying" forth to catch insects in typical flycatcher manner. There were also several Say's Phoebe busily catching insects, but interestingly they were much more skittish than him - he basically ignored my presence and concentrated on the insects.

Anyway, adieu for now,
Barry Boulton

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 - OPEN	
Website - Bruce McClenahan	(209)323-0739
Newsletter Editor - Bruce McClenahan	(209)323-0739
Membership - Bruce McClenahan	(209)323-0739
YSS delegate - Walt Kruse	(707)548-1829
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Bird Box Sales - OPEN	