



CENTRAL SIERRA AUDUBON SOCIETY

# SIERRA SQUAWKER

<https://centralsierraaudubon.org/>

September 2026



## Searching for Wildlife with Remote Cameras - Stan Dodson & John Buckley

“Basically, it’s almost like a year-round treasure hunt. We never know what results we’ll get. All we can do is to choose where to set up the cameras and then return to check the results.”

For more than 35 years, the staff with the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center (CSERC) has set up and maintained motion-and-heat-triggered cameras within the forests of the vast local region. During those years the CSERC staff has done year-round photo-detection surveys in the Stanislaus National Forest, and for seven years, the staff also did camera surveys in Yosemite National Park.

Stan and John will explain how and why they set up the Center’s cameras, describe the diversity of areas they’ve surveyed, and share about some of the challenges of dealing with extreme terrain, winter snow, terrible backcountry roads, and summer heat.

But most of interest, they will provide LOTS and LOTS of photos showing examples of the wildlife species that have visited the camera stations over the years. From common wildlife such as squirrels and deer to very rare and elusive furbearers such as the Sierra Nevada red fox.

**September  
Program**

**Wednesday**

**September 16th  
7:00**

**In Person at the  
Tuolumne County  
Library  
and Via Zoom**

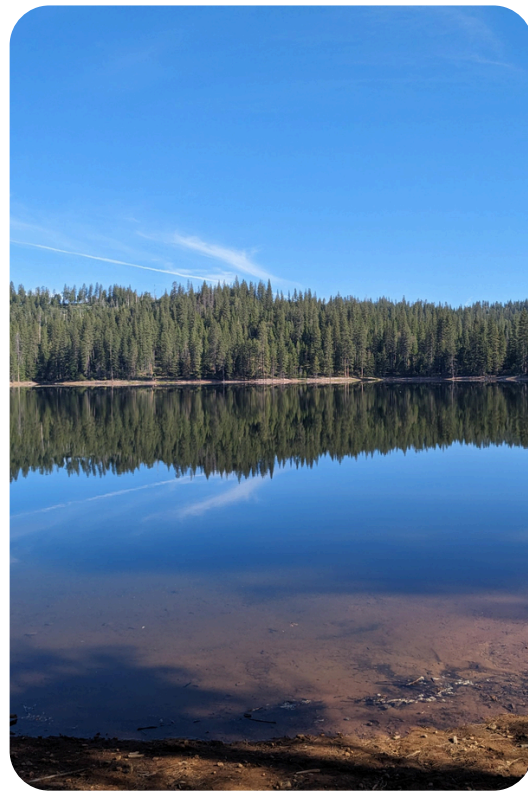
**[Click Here for Zoom  
Link](#)**

## Meet at Lyons Lake parking area near the restroom at 8:30

Our trip to Lyons Lake last year was quite chilly, so we will have a go at it a month earlier in 2026.

Possible sightings may include bald eagles, from juveniles to mature adults, and peregrine falcons. Also in the area we might see northern flickers, mergansers and other ducks, juncos, jays, woodpeckers (white-headed, downey), osprey, and owls, such as the Great Horned. Ebird lists from July include a pileated woodpecker and a kingfisher as well.

The majority of the walk is relatively flat and easy, with a couple of optional short cuts that can entail some brief steeper soft slopes or step-over obstacles (rocks, logs), with a total distance of approximately 3-3.5 miles round trip, taking about 3-4 hours.



Pileated Woodpecker  
Alan Beymer

Sturdy hiking shoes/boots will be helpful, as of course will be binoculars, scopes, walking sticks, and drinking water.

Meet at the parking area near the restroom at Lyons Lake at 8:30. Look for the signed left turn off of Hwy 108 to Lyons Lake, just a mile or two beyond (east of) Sierra Village. Follow the reasonable gravel road through the open gate for about 2 miles down to the lake, and park in sight of the restroom. Trip Leader - Darcy Zimmerman 209-890-6169

Rain (should we be so lucky) will cancel. Please text to join or ask any questions.

# Nature Journaling - September 3<sup>rd</sup> at 8:30

## Meet at Columbia College

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Darcy Zimmerman

September's Nature Journaling get together will be at Columbia College on Thursday, September 3 at 8:30. Allow yourself some time to park and walk to the pond.

I have selected this spot as there are quite a few geese, and we can practice some field drawing of these large birds that don't tend to flit about much.



What is Nature Journaling? It is a rather trendy title for a process that was made popular by former 6<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher and Sierra wildlife and plant identification book author, Jack Laws, who has published under the name John Muir Laws. Originally, his target audience was other educators, and his objective was to provide a way to engage students in curiosity and observation, based on brain research. Guess what? It works just as well with adults! It requires a pencil and a journal (which I can bring for you), and an ability to be open to asking questions more than getting answers.

We will meet on campus by the pond and the cafe (#11 on the map). Please text me if you plan on coming or have questions. Darcy 209-890-6169. Excessive heat will cancel.

## The Annual Wild Wonder Nature Journaling Conference

The largest international event of its kind—gathers people who are passionate about nature, art, science, curiosity, awe, and wonder to share ideas, learn from each other, inspire each other, and have fun together in nature's beauty

Click on the image to learn more.



# REPORTING FROM CALAVERAS BIG TREES STATE PARK

Story and Photos By Alan Beymer

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## Departures

There's a reason it's called the riddle of migration, and when one takes a close look at the birds in the Stanislaus River Canyon the complexity begins to sink in.

The canyon is still active with bird life in early fall, although it's clearly not mating season. The Osprey are leaving for Latin America, and the Common Merganser is contemplating a downslope migration.

Beyond that, it's anybody's guess. The American Robin is an example. Several prominent birding sites, including Audubon and Cornell, ponder the question, Do Robins migrate? The answer is yes and no.



Robins can endure cold and snow. It's food availability that determines their winter home. Robins can change their diet from insects to berries in the fall and winter. Also, Robins quiet down in the winter, giving the impression that they have departed. Then they "show up" in the spring pulling worms out of the ground and we think they have returned.

But what about the other river canyon denizens? The Canyon Wren possibly will travel toward New Melones for the winter. Likewise, the Black Phoebe. And the Junco?

American Dippers are a fall Stanislaus River regular, often seen in late November. But after that no one knows because after December 1 humans are required to "migrate" back to the North Grove and the riddle of migration in the canyon must remain just that.



Go Birding and  
Send in Your  
Stories

## The American Goshawk - The Gray Ghost

Also known as the Phantom of the forest, the American Goshawk could not be more elusive. Like all accipiters that includes Sharp-shinned Hawks and the Cooper's Hawk with their short, broad wings and a long rudder-like tail, the Goshawk is the wilder, fiercer and the largest accipiter of them all.

Goshawks live deep inside large, dense, mature forests with dense (60%) canopies and open understories. They use quick agile flight through the trees when hunting unlike hawks that soar the open skies. They require massive home ranges and therefore there are very few individuals across vast wilderness areas. Their numbers shift based on remote forest prey cycles of animals like grouse, jays, pigeons, hares and other small mammals. Unless they are defending an active nest, they stay quiet and hidden. No wonder I have never seen one.

For Goshawks, like all accipiters, the female is 25% larger than the male. The size difference between the pairs, allows them to feed on a range of different size prey ensuring a steady supply of food for their young. Goshawks might maintain up to 8 different nests to reduce the buildup of disease and parasites, and to allow for quick adaptations to changing forest conditions. The natural terpenes in fresh pine needles added to a nest act as a natural insecticide and fungicide. Each nest can be two feet by four feet and two feet deep.



Timber harvesting is the biggest threat to the species, however their conservation status is listed as a species of Least Concern by the IUCN .

Your best bet to observe an American Goshawk is to spend time in mature forests, being as quiet as possible. However, if you stumble upon a Goshawk nest, you will know it as they fiercely defend their nest, and will attack humans.

# President's Page

Gail Witzlsteiner - CSAS Prsident

**University of California - Davis**  
**Museum of Wildlife and Fish Biology**

## Birders Survey

Researchers at UC Davis are conducting an outreach survey targeting California Birders to evaluate public views on grassland and oak savannah conservation and habitat restoration. This runs alongside field studies by the UC Davis Museum of Wildlife and Fish Biology monitoring avian diversity in regional oak woodlands and grasslands

Local Audubon chapters across the state are being encouraged to ask their members to participate. To take the survey, click on the link below to get started. The survey takes about 15 minutes to complete.

[https://ucdavis.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_1ByZS2gAfxYoNy6?chapter=centralsierra](https://ucdavis.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1ByZS2gAfxYoNy6?chapter=centralsierra)



## Chistmas Bird Count - Sonora Help Needed



After many years of successfully coordinating our Tuolumne County Christmas Bird Count, Steven Umland has stepped down. Writing to us from Poland, he said that he will do what he can to help. We will miss his great work and delicious celebratory cheesecake!

Can you be the one to step up and help us organize this year's event? We are looking for a person with good organizational skills and birding knowledge, someone who will know if participants report that they saw a flamingo, that it was a joke.

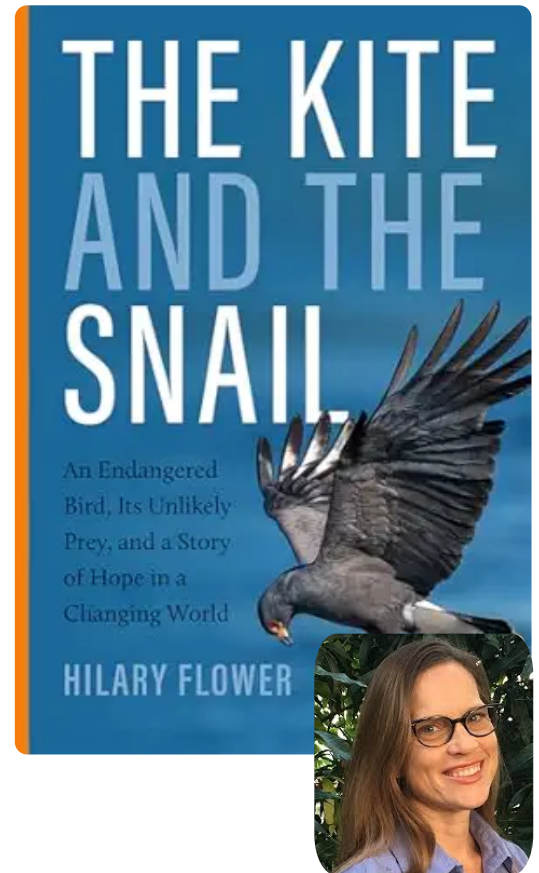
Please get in touch with any of our board members to let us know that you are interested in chairing this year's event for Tuolumne County. Thanks!

**The unexpected comeback of the endangered Everglade snail kite and what it means for other species facing extinction today**

When a bird of prey known as the Everglade snail kite became hard to find in the wetlands of South Florida where it was once abundant, scientist Hilary Flower sought answers, tracking the kite far from its ancestral home to tell a surprising story of survival and hope. *The Kite and the Snail* reveals how one species made a comeback from the brink of extinction through resilience and change—and what this means for the future of conservation.

From remote sawgrass marshes to abandoned mining pits, from flooded cattle pastures to water-treatment impoundments, Flower meets field biologists, tribal elders, environmental advocates, and other key players who help her piece together the kite's past and present.

The Everglade snail kite has traditionally fed on only the native Florida apple snail, which declined in population as wetland habitats decreased during the mid- to late twentieth century.



## CSAS Officers

Gail Witzlsteiner, President  
Tom Parrington, Past-President  
Paolo Maffei, VP Programs  
Jean Dakota, Secretary  
Siobhan Hill, Treasurer  
Field Trip Chair - Darcy Zimmerman  
Jan Jorn-Baird, Publicity  
Conservation Chair - Vacant

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sio@mlode.com  
apmlo@hotmail.com  
janjornbaird@gmail.com

## CSAS Committee Chairs

Education & Scholarship - Bridgett Hobbs  
Newsletter - Bruce McClenahan  
Membership - Vacant  
YSS delegate - Walt Kruse  
Bird Box Trail - Gail Witzlsteiner

## Central Sierra Audubon Society - CSAS

Chapter of the National Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 3047, Sonoma, CA 95370

**Public Presentations:** We conduct our monthly in-person programs in the Tuolumne County Library, 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 email Gail Witzlsteiner

## Membership of Central Sierra Audubon

If you are not already a member, we would be honored to have you join us. At only \$15.00 per year (July 1 - June 30), a CSAS Membership is a steal. **Your annual dues and participation are vital to the sustainability of Central Sierra Audubon.** As a local member of CSAS you will receive the monthly Squawker newsletter and have access to all other CSAS activities. **Please join up if you haven't already done so.** An application form for local membership is available on the CSAS website:

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