

# THE HOOT OWL



July / August 2016  
Issue 4, Volume 54

San Joaquin Audubon Society  
Affiliated with the National Audubon Society-California

## PROGRAMS

There will be no general membership meetings during our regular summer hiatus (May through August). The next general membership meeting will be Tuesday, September 13.

## 20th Annual CENTRAL VALLEY BIRDING SYMPOSIUM

November 17–20, 2016  
Stockton Hilton Hotel, Stockton CA

## SAVE THE DATE!!

The Central Valley Bird Club will be hosting the 20th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium November 17–20, 2016 at the Stockton Hilton Hotel in Stockton, CA. Please come and help us kick off this year's CVBS! Come meet the CVBS board & staff members! Reconnect with old friends! Meet new ones!

Our keynote speakers and programs are always entertaining and informative, and a variety of Saturday and Sunday workshops combine learning opportunities with hands-on experience.

Friday, Saturday, and Sunday field trips visit some of the best birding spots in the Central Valley. Add in the always entertaining and educational Bird ID Panel, the wonderful display of art and gifts for yourself or others at the Birder's Market and the camaraderie of hundreds of like-minded folks, and you know you'll have a good time! There's something for everyone interested in birds. Come and join us to bird, learn, and just have fun!

More information on this year's event will soon be available on our website [www.cvbsreg.org](http://www.cvbsreg.org).

## FIELD TRIPS

### SATURDAY, July 9— *Cosumnes River Preserve*

Leader, date, and start time still TBA as of press time. Check website [www.cosumnes.org](http://www.cosumnes.org) for more information. Meet at the visitor center on Franklin Rd.

### SUNDAY, July 10— *Introductory Birding*

Join leader Pat Paternostro at the north end of Laurel Ave. in Lodi (on the east side of Lodi Lake Park, off of Turner Rd.) at 8:00 a.m. Birders of all skill levels are welcome, but the focus will be on birding fundamentals. Extra binoculars and field guides will be available.

### SATURDAY, July 16— *Woodbridge Wilderness Area*

Join leader Dave Wagner for our monthly census of this small riparian park on the banks of the Mokelumne River. Meet at the north end of Meadowlark Lane in Woodbridge at 8:00 a.m.

### SUNDAY, July 17— *Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery*

Join leaders Liz West and Joanne Katanic for our monthly census of this lovely little riparian area below Camanche Dam. Meet the leaders in the fish hatchery parking lot at 8:00 a.m.

### WEDNESDAY, July 27— *White Slough Wildlife Area*

Join leader Jim Rowoth (487-3489 or [rowoth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rowoth@sbcglobal.net)) for this evening visit to this local site. Evening delta breezes should make for a pleasant stroll among the willows. Meet at the Flag City McDonald's at 6:00 p.m. Bring water and a hat.

### SATURDAY, August 6— *Introductory Birding*

Join leader Pat Paternostro at the north end of Laurel Ave. in Lodi (on the east side of Lodi Lake Park, off of Turner Rd.) at 8:00 a.m. Birders of all skill levels are welcome, but the focus will be on birding fundamentals. Extra binoculars and field guides will be available.

### SATURDAY, August 13— *Cosumnes River Preserve*

Join leader Jim Rowoth (487-3489 or [rowoth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rowoth@sbcglobal.net)) for the monthly River Walk bird count through the varied habitats of the CRP. Meet Jim at the visitor center on Franklin Rd. Check website [www.cosumnes.org](http://www.cosumnes.org) for start time and last minute updates.

### SATURDAY, August 20— *Woodbridge Wilderness Area*

Join leader Liz for our monthly census of this small riparian park on the banks of the Mokelumne River. Meet at the north end of Meadowlark Lane in Woodbridge at 8:00 a.m.

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## Fighting for Central Valley birds

*Central Valley wetlands have never received the water they need to support migratory birds.*

Audubon California continues to advocate for water deliveries to support bird habitat in the Central Valley. Although the wetland refuges have never received their full allotment of water, drought has made it even more difficult to get these habitats the water they need to support migratory birds.

John Muir walked through the San Joaquin Valley in 1868 and described it as "the floweriest piece of world I ever walked, one vast level, even flower bed ... a smooth sea, ruffled a little in the middle by the tree fringing of the river and of smaller cross-streams here and there."

At that time, the meandering Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers and their tributaries created extensive river habitats and wetlands that supported large numbers of migratory birds, wild salmon and large mammals. Then we divided the forests, drained the wetlands and dammed the rivers to build farms and cities. In the 1930s, California built the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project to pump water into these expanding agricultural and urban areas. Soon more than 90% of the valley's wetland habitat was gone, leaving just a patchwork of refuges. Waterfowl populations dropped from historic levels as high as 40 million to as low as 5 million today.

Recognizing this environmental deterioration, Congress in 1992 set minimum water allocations so the refuges could meet basic wildlife needs. A lawsuit and 2006 settlement agreement compelled state and federal government to restore the San Joaquin River.

The refuges, however, have not once received their congressionally mandated amount of water, even in wet years.

Conservation advocates are sympathetic to the challenges that communities and farmers are facing, and understand that there will be cutbacks in water for the environment. All the major laws governing environmental allocations, including the Central Valley Project Improvement Act and the San Joaquin River Restoration Act, already contain stipulations that either reduce water deliveries or halt them altogether during drought.

Central Valley wetlands are of hemispheric importance, providing the most important stopping point on the Pacific Flyway for five million migratory waterfowl, which makes up 60 percent of the Pacific Flyway waterfowl population and 20 percent of the continental population. These wetlands also provide essential habitat for hundreds of other species, including resident waterfowl, such as mallards, other waterbirds, such as tricolored blackbirds, glossy ibis and Sandhill cranes, as well as other wildlife.

Local, state and federal agencies have invested in refuges for decades to protect their value for birds, other animals and nearby communities. Destroying them would only endanger California's already fragile wildlife and degrade the other services refuges provide, such as groundwater recharge, water quality improvements and recreation.

Audubon California continues to advocate both in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., to ensure that birds get the water that has been promised them.

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### FIELD TRIPS

*(Continued from page 1)*

#### **SUNDAY, August 21— *Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery***

Join leaders Liz West and Joanne Katanic for our monthly census of this lovely little riparian area below Camanche Dam. Meet the leaders in the fish hatchery parking lot at 8:00 a.m.

#### **SUNDAY, August 28— *Plasse's Resort***

Join leader Joanne Katanic for a trip to this beautiful area in the Sierra. The resort is on the west end of Silver Lake, and is a good site for post-breeding warblers. Pine Grosbeaks have also been known to steal the show here! Bring a lunch. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Hwy 12 & Hwy 99 Park 'n Ride (Victor Road, Lodi).

# In California's Oak Woodlands, 5 Species Divvy Up Habitat to Improve Nest Success

*The following research summary describes an article in The Auk: Ornithological Advances, the journal of The American Ornithologists' Union.*

Five songbird species in California's oak woodlands each seek out a different habitat to maximize their reproductive success, according to new research in *The Auk: Ornithological Advances*.

The quality of a bird's habitat can be a crucial factor in its reproductive success, and it's an important part of managing land for sensitive species. However, it's hard to measure habitat quality directly, so biologists often turn to occupancy rates instead, reasoning that birds will tend to build their nests in better habitats. For this study, Megan Milligan and Janis Dickinson of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology focused on five species—Ash-throated Flycatcher, House Wren, Oak Titmouse, Violet-green Swallow, and Western Bluebird—tracking their use of nest boxes in different habitat types and how successful they were.

Violet-green Swallows tend to choose boxes in areas with chaparral, and avoid riparian corridors. From 1990 to 2001, researchers checked 360 nest boxes in oak woodlands every week during the breeding season. When they classified the vegetation surrounding each box, they found that each species differed in the kind of habitat it tended to use. House Wrens, for example, preferred sites with less grassland and plenty of riparian vegetation, while Violet-green Swallows tended to favor chaparral and avoid riparian corridors. These differences could reflect preference for different habitats, or they could be a less preferred outcome of competition for the best habitat types. Occupancy was the best predictor of nest success for all five species, suggesting that box occupancy is a good indicator of habitat quality and that each species' use of habitat represents a preference, rather than exclusion from better habitats due to competition.

"One of the species we studied, the Oak Titmouse, is declining throughout the west," says Dickinson. "Our results provide new information on their habitat preferences in the old growth oak forests of central California. If our data are representative of California's oak woodlands, they can inform management over a huge area of California by telling us what kinds of landscapes are best for supporting Oak Titmice and which are most likely to lead to increased reproductive success for Oak Titmice using nest boxes." Oak Titmouse prefer old growth oak forests, and their populations are declining throughout the west.

"The use of nest boxes to manage bird populations is becoming increasingly more important to compensate for the loss of standing dead timber," according to Dan Ardia of Franklin and Marshall College, an expert on the role of environmental variation in bird behavior and physiology. "This research by Milligan and Dickinson is an important step for providing effective management recommendations for species breeding in oak woodlands, especially in light of their finding that occupancy of nest boxes is the best indicator of habitat quality."

## BIRD SIGHTINGS

*April 5th, 2016 - June 1st, 2016*

*(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)*

Submitted by Liz West

Jim Rowoth, John Blades, Kurt Mize, and Terry Ronneberg on a scouting trip to Kiln Canyon on April 6<sup>th</sup> saw a **Calliope Hummingbird**. The San Joaquin Audubon field trip saw one April 13<sup>th</sup> at Kiln Canyon. On a visit April 20<sup>th</sup> to Kiln Canyon, Jim Rowoth found a **Costa's Hummingbird**.

On April 23<sup>rd</sup> Breck Breckenridge photographed a **Ruddy Turnstone** at Lodi Sewage ponds. He discovered it when he started looking at his photos.

David Yee saw a **Greater Scaup** at the Tracy Sewage ponds May 1<sup>st</sup>.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, David Yee had a couple of rare spring sightings, a **Red Crossbill** flew over Atherton Park and a **Solitary Sandpiper** flew around the lake at Oak Grove Regional Park.

Steve Gatz, on a trip to Westgate Landing park with Pat and Dave Croft, spotted the return of the mostly **Baltimore Oriole** May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

At Heritage Oaks Winery along the Mokelumne River, David Yee heard and saw a possible **Cordilleran Flycatcher**, May 26<sup>th</sup>. It behaved aggressively towards a recording of a Cordilleran Flycatcher.

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## Calif. Birding E-mail Discussion Groups

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Calbirds>  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sjbirds/>  
[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/central\\_valley\\_birds/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/central_valley_birds/)  
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## Membership

### *National Membership*

By joining the National Audubon Society you are also a member of the San Joaquin Chapter. This includes subscriptions to the award-winning *Audubon Magazine* and to the chapter newsletter, *The Hoot Owl*. Both publications are bimonthly. For *national membership*, send check payable to the **National Audubon Society** to the address below.

National Audubon Membership Rate: \$20

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### *Local-Only Membership*

This includes a subscription to the bimonthly chapter newsletter, *The Hoot Owl*. For *local membership*, send check payable to **San Joaquin Audubon Society** to the address below.

Chapter Newsletter—mailed paper copy \$15

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