

THE HOOT OWL



July / August 2018
Issue 4, Volume 56

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 11.

Incredible Combination of Factors Leads to Historic Migration Flight

There are good days birding, and then there are those spectacular days when you see hundreds of thousands of migrating warblers. Wait, you haven't had one of those?

Well, on Monday, May 28, 2018, six birders experienced exactly that, and their account, detailed in an absolutely bonkers eBird checklist, has the whole bird world abuzz. According to the report, early that morning the six birders arrived at the Tadoussac dunes, a popular birding destination in Quebec, Canada, hoping to see migrating warblers during their morning flight—a phenomenon that occurs when birds pushed off their typical migration pattern during the night reorient themselves at first light. With strong southwesterly winds the night before, the team was hopeful to see birds heading southward to correct their routes. Nine hours later, they ended up having a historic day.

Here's just a taste of the team's final tally: 144,324 Bay-breasted Warblers, 108,243 Cape May Warblers, 72,162 Tennessee Warblers, 50,513 American Redstarts, 28,865 Blackburnian Warblers, and the list goes on and on. Altogether, the observers estimate they saw 721,620 warblers, along with loads of other birds. And in case you have any doubts about the report's authenticity or count estimates, the group included several staffers from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and the person who made the eBird report was Ian Davies, a project manager at eBird itself. So yeah, these folks knew what they were doing.

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FIELD TRIPS

SATURDAY, July 7— *Introductory Birding Field Trip*

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.

SUNDAY, July 8— *Woodbridge Wilderness Area*

Join leader Susan Schneider 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.

SATURDAY, July 14— *Cosumnes River Preserve*

Join leader Jim Rowoth (487-3489 or 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 for last minute updates. Double check with Jim for start time. **Note: A new CRP policy requires that all participants must RSVP through the EventBrite link on the web-site.**

SUNDAY, July 15— *Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery*

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

SATURDAY, July 28— *Ripon's Oak Grove and Sewage Ponds*

Meet leader Jim Rowoth in the parking lot at Toot Sweets (March Lane & Quail Lakes Dr., in Stockton) at 7:00 a.m. to carpool, or at 7:30 a.m. in the Ripon Oak Grove parking area. Following a stroll through the riparian area, we'll head over to the west side water treatment ponds to see what's around. Expect to finish around noon.

SATURDAY, August 4— *Introductory Birding Field Trip*

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 11— *Cosumnes River Preserve*

Join leader Jim Rowoth (487-3489 or 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 for last minute updates. Double check with Jim for start time. **Note: A new CRP policy requires that all participants must RSVP through the EventBrite link on the web-site.**

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FIELD TRIPS

(Continued from page 1)

SATURDAY, August 18— Woodbridge Wilderness Area

Join leader Liz West 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, August 19— 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.

SATURDAY, August 25— Stockton Waste Water Treatment Plant

Join leader Kurt Mize (915-6264) for this rare opportunity to visit the oxidation ponds of the Stockton Wastewater Treatment Plant. This area has been off-limits to birders for ten years, and, with a major construction project in the works, access in the future will again be restricted. This field trip will be limited to twelve participants in three vehicles, so contact Kurt early if you wish to be included. Meet Kurt in the parking lot of Toot Sweets (southwest corner of March Ln. & Quail Lakes Dr., in Stockton) to carpool. As of printing date, access for this field trip has not been guaranteed, so please contact Kurt to confirm that this field trip is still a go.

Incredible Combination of Factors Leads to Historic Migration Flight

(Continued from page 1)

"Today was the greatest birding day of my life," Davies wrote to start out his eBird report. "On our arrival (545a), it was raining. A few warblers passed here and there, and we got excited about groups of 5-10 birds. Shortly before 6:30a, there was a break in the showers, and things were never the same."

"For the next 9 hours," Davies continued, "we counted a nonstop flight of warblers, at times covering the entire visible sky from horizon to horizon. The volume of flight calls was so vast that it often faded into a constant background buzz. There were times where there were so many birds, so close, that naked eyes were better than binoculars to count and identify. Three species of warbler flew between my legs throughout the day (Tennessee Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, and Myrtle Warbler). For hours at a time, a single binocular scan would give you hundreds or low thousands of warblers below eye level."

Worth repeating: There were so many warblers, passing through so low, they were flying *between* his legs. Unbelievable.

What's even wilder is that the group was able to count and calculate estimates for so many birds. Davies detailed their methodology in the report: "Movement rate estimates were made by looking through binoculars at a flight line, and counting the number of individuals passing a vertical line in that field of view, per second. This was repeated multiple times for each bin view, and repeated throughout the sky so that all flight at that moment was accounted for. The average birds/second was then used for that time period, until another rate estimate showed a different volume of movement."

And that is what makes this whole thing even more amazing: Not only were there birders at the dunes that morning, but they also belonged to an extremely small subset of people in this world that could identify and know how to count such staggering quantities of birds.

In fact, that magnitude likely makes this group's report the largest account of warblers seen in one day by anyone. "To our knowledge, the previous warbler high for a single day in the region was around 200,000, which was the highest tally anywhere in the world," Davies wrote in the conclusion of his eBird report. "Other observers in the area today had multiple hundreds of thousands, so there were likely more than a million warblers moving through the region on 28 May 2018. There's no place like Tadoussac."

Indeed, and after news of this incredible occurrence spreads far and wide, you can bet plenty more birders will be heading to Quebec next year hoping to experience their own bit of Tadoussac migration magic.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

As someone who loves reading, I'm in libraries a lot. They also provide a way to reach the public with information about Audubon's activities. What a thrill this week to find that all the copies of our colorful brochure, "Highlights of the Natural Year in San Joaquin County," had been taken from the display area at Stockton's Troke library. I promptly restocked, adding a few more copies of our basic chapter brochure as well. We also have brochures available at Cesar Chavez Library near downtown Stockton.

San Joaquin County is fortunate to boast 14 public libraries. Right now, we only offer brochures at those two. Would you be interested in getting this outreach project going at one of the other 12? Getting permission is usually straightforward. Then the chapter is happy to supply you with copies of the two brochures, and it's easy to restock occasionally. Just let me know and I can arrange everything; contact me through a note to the chapter address, PO Box 7755, Stockton, CA 95267, or at my email, susanschneider7@gmail.com.

I also want to share one of the summer highlights in our natural history brochure: two nearby colonies of Mexican Free-tailed Bats, at the Cosumnes River Preserve just north of our county, and at Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area between Sacramento and Davis. August is a great time to enjoy the dusk fly-out, featuring thousands of these beneficial animals at both locations (Yolo's colony is larger, though). I believe that July and early September are also good. It's mesmerizing to watch the bats streaming out silently and funneling upward against the sunset, blackening the sky. Raptors have noticed this tempting opportunity as well, and I've marveled at the aerobatics of Swainson's Hawks and Peregrine Falcons trying to pick off their dinners. Peregrines are designed for this sort of challenge . . . Swainson's, not as much, but they're persistent. For more information, check out these webpages: www.cosumnes.org (bat-watching by kayak) and <http://yolobasin.org/battalkandwalks/>. The Yolo Bypass educational program that precedes the bat viewing includes a close-up demonstration of live bats.

Susan Schneider
President, San Joaquin Audubon Society

BIRD SIGHTINGS

April 16, 2018 - June 15, 2018

(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)

Submitted by Liz West

On April 19th, Dan Kopp, Mark Martucci and Jim Rowoth saw a male **Calliope Hummingbird** in Kiln Canyon. On May 6th and May 11th, David Yee observed a male and a female **Calliope Hummingbird**, respectively, at his feeders.

A San Joaquin Audubon Field trip to Woodbridge Wilderness area saw a single **Band-tailed Pigeon** on one of the treetops, April 21st.

On May 2nd, Kurt Mize confirmed breeding of a pair of **Say's Phoebes** in a north Stockton neighborhood. They were nesting under the eaves of a front porch and had two nestlings. James Rexroth also mentioned that he saw a **Say's Phoebe** nesting at Westwood Elementary School.

May 12th, David Yee found two female **Indigo Buntings** one in his yard and one at Heritage Oaks Winery along the Mokelumne River. Also present along the river was a **Hammond's Flycatcher**.

Terry Ronneberg saw a **Brown Pelican** flying over the First Congregational Church parking lot in Tracy on May 14th.

On May 23rd, David Yee spotted a **Green-tailed Towhee** along the river in the Lodi Lake nature area.

Breck Breckenridge found a male **Blue-winged Teal** at White Slough Wildlife area on June 13th.

San Joaquin Audubon Society
P.O. Box 7755
Stockton, CA 95267

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Other California Birding E-mail Listserves

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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.

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Attn: Membership (Local)
P.O. Box 7755
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