

# THE HOOT OWL



March / April 2010  
Issue 2, Volume 48

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

## Meetings

The meeting location is at Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Avenue (across from UOP) in Stockton, and begins at 7:30 p.m. Plenty of parking and refreshments. Everyone is welcome.

**TUESDAY, March 9**  
**Graciela Hinshaw**

*“Pine Hill Preserve, Western El Dorado County”*

Graciela is the Pine Hill Preserve Manager for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Pine Hill Preserve was established in April 2001 to ensure that habitat for eight rare plant species growing on gabbro soils in western El Dorado County (EDC) would be protected from factors threatening their survival and recovery. Five of the eight rare plant species protected at the Preserve are listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act and/or the California Endangered Species Act. Four of the eight rare plants are also endemic to gabbro soils in western EDC.

Graciela will talk about the unique plants and soils of the preserve and the steps that are being taken to ensure their protection.

**TUESDAY, April 13**

**Chris Conard**

*“Birding (Nearly) Every Day, and a First Visit to Australia”*

Chris is a Natural Resource Specialist at the Bufferlands of the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District. His focus there is on habitat restoration and wildlife monitoring. He serves as the Sacramento County editor for North American Birds and is a Central Valley Bird Club Board Member.

In October Chris and his wife, Kimya Lambert, joined friends from Sacramento Audubon on a tour of Sydney and eastern Queensland. Australia exceeded Chris and Kimya’s high expectations, with wonderful birds and wildlife, many of which were very approachable. They can’t wait to go back! Chris’s presentation will include photos and short videos of the brilliant, beautiful, and unusual wildlife of Australia.

## Field Trips

### **SATURDAY, March 6—Introductory Birding Field Trip**

Join leader Liz West 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, March 13—Mokelumne River Day Use Area**

Join leader Liz West for this trip to one of our favorite birding destinations. Specialties of the area include Wild Turkey, Rock Wren, Osprey, and Common Merganser, among others. Liz will also be doing our monthly bird count at this location. Meet at the main fish hatchery parking lot at 8:00 a.m. For more information, call Liz at 351-1232.

### **SATURDAY, March 20—CNPS Hogan Reservoir Wildflower Outing**

Join leader Steve Stocking at the Dam Overlook at Hogan Reservoir at 9:00 a.m. We will check out the area along the Calaveras below the dam, then off to Jenny Lind, Milton, and the Salt Springs Valley. That area can be good for raptors at this time of year as well as for fields of wildflowers. On to Copperopolis and finish by early afternoon. Bring water and a snack. Contact Steve at [snlsox@earthlink.net](mailto:snlsox@earthlink.net) for more info.

### **SATURDAY, April 3—Introductory Birding Field Trip**

Join leader Jim Rowth 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. Contact Jim at 956-2648 or [rowth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rowth@sbcglobal.net) for more info.

### **WEDNESDAY, April 14—Kiln Canyon Hummingbird Trip**

Join leader Kurt Mize for our annual mid-week pilgrimage to this hummingbird mecca. Rufous, Anna’s, Costa’s, and Calliope Hummingbirds are to be expected. If the Blue Sage is blooming, things should be humming! Meet in the parking lot at Toot Sweets (NW corner of March Ln. & Quail Lakes Dr., behind Black Angus) at 7:30 a.m. to carpool, or at the entrance to Carnegie SVRA (18600 Corral Hollow Rd., southwest of Tracy) at 8:30 a.m.

### **SATURDAY, April 24—Del Puerto Canyon**

Join leader Kurt Mize for this trip to scenic Del Puerto Canyon. We will be on the lookout for spring migrants and local specialties. Bring hats, sunscreen, lunch, and drinks as we will be picnicking at Frank Raines Park. Meet in the parking lot at Toot Sweets (corner of March Lane and Quail Lakes Dr. in Stockton) at 7:00 a.m. for carpooling. For more details call Kurt at 915-6264.

## THE FORTY-SECOND ANNUAL WALLACE-BELLOTA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

This year the Wallace-Bellota bird count was conducted on Saturday January 2 in western foothills of Calaveras county and eastern San Joaquin County. Thirteen groups of warmly dressed birders covered the same circular area which has been counted since 1969. Each of the teams includes both those experienced in bird identification and novices. The same areas are visited each year so that comparisons of presence and abundance of bird species can be made from year to year. Some years there has been a lot of rain or fog but this year the weather was mild and dry. This probably helped lead to record numbers of some species being observed. Record numbers of White Crowned Sparrows, Northern Flickers, Long Billed Curlew, Cinnamon Teal and Cedar Waxwings were seen. A total of 133 species were observed but that was not a record for this area. Some we missed which were seen last year were Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Western Screech Owl, White Throated Swift and even Ring-necked Pheasant. These are not rare birds and are not usually seen in large numbers. Several unusual, but not rare birds, including the Hairy Woodpecker, Peregrine Falcon, American Dipper and Greater Scaup were spotted.

It was great to see that the number of Yellow-billed Magpies was up considerably from last year as were the Western Scrub Jays. This may indicate that the peak of the West Nile Virus epidemic has passed. When the results from all this years bird counts are in this suspicion may be borne out. This is a good example of information which can be gained from the Christmas Counts. The count area has changed over the last 40 years with much more land being developed as rural residential and less in such natural habitat as chaparral. It is no wonder that we have not seen California Thrashers or Roadrunners in the area for years. But the habitat is improved for some species because of the addition of some moderate sized ponds, the additional food sources provided for some species at bird feeders and by fruit producing trees and shrubs. The numbers of gulls, ducks and waterbirds are probably much greater than what there were before Commanche Lake and the Harney Lane Landfill where constructed in the count area. We always give a "heads up" to the Sheriff's Office to let them know that the small teams of bird watchers with binoculars are harmless. Afterwards many of the counters get together to compare notes and the results are turned in by the middle of February to the national office for compilation and publication.

Steve Stocking, Wallace-Bellota Christmas Count Compiler

### "The Avian Working Class"

"Shearwaters are ocean going birds that hunt small pelagic fish and squid. They forage the continental shelf off eastern Spain flying several hundred kilometers a day in search of their peripatetic prey. On weekdays, that is, from Monday to Friday; the food supply is more reliable and comes from the waste discarded from fishing boats. Although bad weather can be disruptive, the fishermen's routines and foraging patterns are constrained into temporal and spatial regularity by legislation and by their neighbors' fishing rights. Thus, by coupling satellite data on the birds' movements in a random walk model, Bartumeus et al, show how shearwaters respond to trawler discard and exploit an otherwise inaccessible food source. Thus, during weekdays, shearwaters feed in the trawler fishing grounds and consequently can make more return trips to feed their young, because they can trust the fishing boats to supply the next meal. In contrast, during weekends and public holidays, unaided by boats, the birds have to undertake lengthy exploratory trips of seek food." *curr. Biol.* 20.

10.1016/j.cub.2009.11.073(2010) (I wonder if any of our left coast shearwaters have any similar behavior?)

### "A Bird-Dinosaur Link Firmed Up, & In Brilliant Technicolor"

A new avian-like alvarezsauroid (dinosaur) predates the first bird, Archaeopteryx, powerful evidence that birds arose from dinosaurs. Fossilized pigment organelles reveal the true colors of this Sinosauroptryx. Why feathers evolved in dinosaurs is a puzzle. One idea is that feathers provided insulation. Another is that they evolved as camouflage or to attract a mate. But evidence such as the distinctive colors or patterns had eluded researchers until now. Recently researchers found pigment bearing organelles in two dinosaurs and a bird from 125 million years ago. These primitive dinosaur feathers were grey to black and chestnut to reddish-brown. The discovery also reveals the true colors of dinosaurs. These primitive feathers ran in alternating orange and white rings down the tail like a barbershop pole. The paleontologist, from the University of Bristol, believes that the feathers arose first for color display and only later became useful in flight and insulation. Other experts believe they were for insulation.

Science, Jan 20, 2010, Vol. 327 pg 508.

## Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival April 23-26, 2010

The first Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival will be held in western Marin and Sonoma Counties April 23–26. It will feature more than 50 walks, presentations, and classes on birding, butterflies, wildflowers, and other nature subjects.

On line registration takes place at [www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org](http://www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org). The festival includes several free events. Walks and presentations will be led by such well known and knowledgeable naturalists and birders as Rich Stallcup, Jules Evens, Lisa Hug, David Wimpfheimer, Steve Howell, Sarah Allen, Keith Hansen, Allen Fish, Ron LeValley, and David Herlocker.

The Festival includes an on-line auction with such exciting items as birding trips to Peru, Ecuador, and South Africa; bed and breakfasts stays in West Marin; high quality binoculars, and many other birding and related items.

A very affordable boat trip to Cordell Bank to see pelagic birds and marine mammals will take place April 26 (weather permitting).

The Point Reyes area has one of the highest bird species counts in North America, and the Festival is timed to take advantage of spring migration (when birds are in their brightest plumage), as well as local breeding and nesting. Part of the Festival will be a four part series of walks emphasizing learning bird songs. A special CD "Birding by Ear at Point Reyes" is available as part of the Festival, and can be purchased from the website.

Walks will take place in coastal wetlands, forests, marshes, grasslands, along ridgetops, chaparral, and coastal dunes. Each of these habitats has its own special set of birds. Late April is a great time to enjoy coastal wildflowers, and several experts will lead walks to see these flowers, and their related butterflies.

Friday evening will feature a program by PRBO Conservation Science on life at the Farallon Islands, and the Saturday evening banquet includes an illustrated talk about the Natural History of Point Reyes and its birds by Jules Evens, author of *The Natural History of the Point Reyes Peninsula* and *California Birdlife*.

The Festival benefits the habitat conservation work of the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin. Those interested in attending the Festival should register soon, since many of the walks and presentations will fill up quickly.

For more information, please contact Fred Smith, Executive Director EAC of West Marin, [eac@svn.net](mailto:eac@svn.net), 415-663-9310

## BIRD SIGHTINGS

*Mid-December, 2009 - February 14, 2010*  
(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)

Submitted by Liz West

The **American Dipper** which has been seen on and off at the Mokelumne River Day Use area all season was last reported January 16<sup>th</sup>. **Lewis's Woodpeckers** also continue to be seen in the same area as of February 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Mute Swan** and **Violet-green Swallow** were found for the first time on the Stockton Christmas bird count December 20<sup>th</sup>.

On Christmas, Steve Stocking saw 100 **American White Pelicans** in the pond near the intersection of highways 12 and 88.

On January 16<sup>th</sup> Lynette Buckman, Chris Conard, Joanne Katanic, Kimya Lambert, Dan Tankersley and I found a female **Barrow's Goldeneye** with a raft of seven **Common Goldeneyes** fishing in the Mokelumne river near Comanche dam. The **Barrow's Goldeneye** might be same one seen last year. Chris Conard, Kimya Lambert and Dan Tankersley also saw a **Rufous-crowned Sparrow** near the dam and a **White-throated Sparrow** on the paved road into the hatchery parking lot. The **Rufous-crowned Sparrow** may be the first seen in San Joaquin County away from the Corral Hollow Rd. area.

Dan Brown estimated that there were around 300 **Mountain Bluebirds** on Waverley Rd. between Flood and Copperopolis roads on January 30<sup>th</sup>. The huge flock was relocated a week later.

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*New website:* [www.sanjoaquinaudubon.org](http://www.sanjoaquinaudubon.org)

## Calif. Bird Alerts

No. California	415-681-7422
Monterey	831-626-6605
Morro Bay	805-528-7182
So. California	818-952-5502
Santa Barbara	805-964-8240
Los Angeles	323-874-1318
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