

THE HOOT OWL



November / December 2008
Issue 5, Volume 46

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, September 11

Chris Cruz

"Lassen Volcanic National Park"

Please join San Joaquin Audubon for this presentation about Warner Valley and Drakesbad Meadow in Lassen Volcanic National Park. Chris Cruz will talk about the Natural and Cultural History of the area and the mist netting program and other work with the Point Reyes Bird Research Observatory.

Chris has worked 27 years for the National Park Service, 18 years as a full-timer and the rest as a seasonal worker. He has worked at the Everglades, Biscayne, Grand Canyon, Big Bend, Grand Teton, Yosemite, Haleakala, and Lassen Volcanic National Parks, at the De Soto National Memorial, and at Lake Roosevelt NRA.

Chris has been teaching for West Valley College since 1998. He teaches Park Management and Geographic Information Science. Chris has a Master's in Environmental Studies from Prescott College in Arizona and currently lives in Stockton.

TUESDAY, October 8

David Yee

"Annual Christmas Bird Count Program"

Already it is time to start thinking about the Christmas Bird Counts! Come learn or refresh your knowledge about the birds we are expected to see during our annual Christmas Bird Counts in San Joaquin County. Everyone can benefit from this presentation. Come and join us.

Field Trips

Bad weather (rain, dense fog, strong winds) cancels trips,

SATURDAY, November 1—Beginning Bird Watching

Join leader Dave Wagner 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.

FRI.–SUN., November 7–9—Lodi Sandhill Crane Festival

Mark your calendars this weekend for the Lodi Sandhill Crane Festival. A wide variety of programs, workshops, and field trips are available both days of the festival. There's something for every member of the family. See article on page 2.

WEDNESDAY, November 12—East County Raptors

Join Dave Wagner on this drive to the Flood–Waverly Road area of eastern San Joaquin County in order to observe the raptors that forage in this grassland habitat. Expected are Ferruginous, Rough-legged, and Red-tailed hawks, American Kestrel, and Prairie Falcon. Merlin, Bald Eagle, and Golden Eagle are also possible. Questions, call Dave at (209)943-6997. Meet for carpooling at 8:15 a.m. at Toot Sweets (nw corner of March Ln. & Quail Lakes Dr., in Stockton) or meet us at the intersection of Flood and Escalon–Bellota Roads at 9:00 a.m.

THU.–SUN., November 20–23—Central Valley Birding Symposium

Northern California's premiere birding festival, and one of the highlights of the birding year. Field trips, workshops, vendors, and art show. See article on page 2.

SATURDAY, December 6—Beginning Bird Watching

Join leader Jim Rowoth for our monthly exploration of this riparian gem on the Mokelumne River in Lodi. Same time and place as November field trip (above).

Sunday, December 14—Stockton Christmas Bird Count

Come one, come all to the 2008 Stockton Christmas Bird Count! All levels of ability are welcome. As I read recently, basic qualifications are the ability to point and say, "Look, there's a bird!" if you're a spotter, or the ability to make a mark on a piece of paper if you're the recorder. Last year was our best count of the millennium, with 156 species. Contact Jim Rowoth (956-2648 or rowoth@sbcglobal.net) to sign up or for more information.

SATURDAY, December 27—Wallace–Bellota Christmas Bird Count

Please join us for our annual Wallace–Bellota Christmas Bird Count. It's a beautiful area with rolling hills, grasslands, riparian areas, marsh areas and farmland. Beginners, experienced birders and everyone in between is welcome. Just contact Kasey Foley kaseyfoley@sbcglobal.net or (209) 473-3904 for more information.



Lodi Sandhill Crane Festival

Mark your calendars for the 12th annual Lodi Sandhill Crane Festival, to be held Nov. 7–9, 2008, at Hutchins Street Square, in Lodi. The festival kicks off Nov. 7 with a wine & hors d'oeuvres reception from 6:00–9:00 p.m. that opens the festival and art show. This year's festival features family activities, an art show, workshops, wildlife demos, and nature tours. General admission to the festival this year is FREE, although there is a charge for field trips. There is a full schedule of programs on Saturday and Sunday, and a wide variety of field trips is offered both days. For registration and information, call (209)367-7840, or visit the Lodi Chamber of Commerce website at: www.LodiChamber.com/cranefestival.html

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival

January 16–19, 2009

MORRO BAY, CALIFORNIA - Come to where the birds are and join Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) for our 12th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival. Located on California's scenic Central Coast, Morro Bay is an important stop on the Pacific Flyway and one of the country's pre-eminent birding spots. The area is recognized worldwide for its diversity of both resident and wintering birds, and at last year's festival, over 200 species of birds were identified!

The Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival is sponsored by MCAS and gives you the chance to join local and national birding experts on a variety of field trips and workshops. Field trip group sizes are limited to maximize spotting and identification opportunities. The Festival also offers workshops aimed at sharpening your birding skills, as well as evening programs with outstanding speakers.

For more information about the Festival, check out our website at www.morrobaybirdfestival.org, or call (805) 772-4677. You can request that your name be added to the mailing list for our 2009 brochure, or register online. Both the brochure and online registration will be available in October 2008. The registration deadline is January 5, 2009 but early signups are encouraged as the most popular events fill up quickly.



9th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium

It's time again for birds, fun, and escaping the "real world" for a while. The 12th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium will be held Nov. 20–23 in Stockton, Ca. We're back at the refurbished Stockton Grand Hotel (a Hilton property).

Our evening programs include Hans Peeters "Owls of California and the West" and John Muir Laws "Exploring the Sierra Nevada as a Naturalist and Artist". We have many workshops such as, "Raptor ID" by Joe Morlan, "Bird ID" by Jon Dunn, "Bird and Nature Digiscoping" by Clay Taylor, drawing workshops with John Muir Laws, our always popular and informative ID Panel with the guest experts, and more.

We have programs for beginning birders and for people who want to make their gardens bird-friendly. Field trips frequently turn up chase-able goodies. The Birder's Market is full of artists and vendors with so many wonderful bird and nature related items that you will really put a dent in your Holiday shopping!

For more info, check the website at www.cvbs.org, or contact Frances Oliver at hummer52@sbcglobal.net or (209) 369-2010.

Come and bird your problems away. See you there!

Cheri Pillsbury
Central Valley Birding Symposium

PLANTS COMPETE FOR POLLINATORS THROUGH FLORAL CHEMISTRY

Flowering plants must advertise their commodities in order to attract limited pollinators which have specific preferences. They do this with nectar, pollen, dazzling color displays, and alluring perfumes. Often the time for successful pollination is quite limited and competition is stiff.

The floral chemistry of *Nicotiana attenuata*, a wild tobacco found in desert-like areas of California, has been carefully studied in an attempt to understand what is involved in its pollination strategy. The pollinators involved were Black-chinned Hummingbirds (*Archilochus alexandri*) and Hawk Moths (*Manduca quinquemaculata*). *N. attenuata* is a “fire adapted” desert annual that can spend decades as a dormant seed awaiting a smoke signal which triggers germination. Out-crossing in such species may increase survival in a variable environment.

To accomplish this study, the authors used a combination of “gene silencing, paternity analysis, and field experiments.” They were able to analyze the roles played by nicotine (a nectar repellent) and benzyl acetone (a floral attractant) both produced by the flowers. I enjoyed the authors’ use of the term antherectomy to describe the “emasculating” of flowers. In one part of the experiment they “emasculated 601 flowers” and in another 502 flowers. Can you imagine the eyestrain?

It was found that the presence of nicotine decreased the time hummingbirds and hawk moths spent drinking from individual flowers but increased the number of flowers visited, presumably to satisfy the caloric demands of hovering flight. “Conversely, birds and moths visited fewer flowers for longer periods when nectar lacked nicotine, which suggests that the pollinators’ interests are best served by extended visits to a few nectar-rich flowers.” “Responses to plants lacking benzyl acetone were more ambiguous.” These and other observations led to the conclusion that “.....chemically mediated ‘pull’ and ‘push’ strategies optimize reproductive fitness in *N. attenuata* by attracting pollinators, preventing them from loitering and deterring floral enemies.

This study highlights a “paradox in floral behavior: Flowers must compete vigorously for pollinators without being so attractive that they never leave. A plant must encourage pollinators to visit other flowers of its own species without forsaking it for flowers of a competitor. There have been quite a few studies which have detected “ruses” used by plants to “manipulate pollinator movement to optimize gene flow”.

The study was done at the Max-Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology in Jena Germany
Reported in *Science* Vol 321, pg 1200-1202. August 29, 2008.

Reviewed by Steve Stocking



BIRD SIGHTINGS

August 2008 - October 17, 2008
(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)



By Liz West

Sal Salerno had a female Hermit Warbler and two Townsend’s Warblers at Caswell State Park on September 23rd.

Lynette Buckman reported a Brown Pelican on Lake Lincoln in Stockton September 27th. The last sighting of a Brown Pelican in San Joaquin County was of an immature, seen during the month of July in 2001 and on the Stockton Christmas bird count the same year.

On October 4th, Jim Rowoth saw two Pectoral Sandpipers at the Lodi Sewage Ponds.

Kasey Foley found seven Townsend’s Warblers with a flock of Bushtits, during her lunch break at Stockton Rural Cemetery on October 8th. This is an unusually large number to see together.

On October 17th, Jim Rowoth reported an extremely large number (hundreds of thousands) of migrating swallows (mainly Tree Swallows) in the vicinity of Kasson and Lorenzen Roads, in southern San Joaquin County. This transient spectacle was observed on subsequent evenings by other observers.

San Joaquin Audubon Society

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Steve Stocking Education
Sandi Schoeppe Hospitality
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New website: www.sanjoaquinaudubon.org

Calif. Bird Alerts

Central Valley 916-783-2331
No. California 415-681-7422
Monterey 831-626-6605
Morro Bay 805-528-7182
So. California 818-952-5502
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San Joaquin Audubon
Attn: Membership
P.O. Box 7755
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Newsletter only: (non-member)	\$10	Lifetime (fam.):	\$1500

Notice: "Newsletter only" yearly dues have increased

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