

THE HOOT OWL

May / June 2013
Issue 3, Volume 51

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 10.

WALK ON THE WILDSIDE!

May 18th, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Come take a 'Walk on the Wildside!' at this free outdoor festival with live animals, kids' activities, tours, music, conservation booths, and more!

If you'd enjoy a fun, FREE family-oriented day in the country with lively entertainment and up-close personal views of many wildlife species, mark your calendar and plan to attend Walk on the Wildside. Join Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and local partners in celebrating International Migratory Bird Day and local conservation successes on the **SRCSD Bufferlands Beach Lake Preserve**.

This fun outdoor celebration highlighting local efforts in protecting and restoring native Central Valley habitats and wildlife offers a great opportunity to access normally closed wildlife areas on the **SRCSD Bufferlands** and Stone Lakes NWR. Explore wetlands and a riparian forest on your own or with a guided tour, and discover the rich natural history right in our own backyard. Children can win a prize by participating in fun activities run by the local Girl Scouts and watch live wildlife during special presentations by Wild Things, Inc. Visit exhibits, buy a snack to eat, and listen to toe-tapping music by Horse Sense.

Directions: Exit I-5 at Pocket Road and head east. At Freeport Blvd., turn south. Continue two miles through the town of Freeport and past the golf course. Turn left at the signs and continue until you reach the Beach Lake Picnic Area. For a map to the event, please visit the **SRCSD Bufferlands** webpage.

FIELD TRIPS

SATURDAY, May 4—*Introductory Birding Field Trip*

Join leader Jim Rowoth (956-2648 or rowoth@sbcglobal.net) at the north end of Laurel Ave. in Lodi at 8:00 a.m. for a leisurely stroll on the trails of the Lodi Lake Wilderness Area. Birders of all skill levels are welcome. Extra binoculars and field guides will be available.

SATURDAY, May 11—*Cosumnes River Preserve*

Join leader Jim Rowoth (956-2648 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.

SATURDAY, May 18—*Annual Chapter Picnic*

At the Mokelumne River Day Use Area/Fish Hatchery. We will start off birding at 8:00 a.m., combining our bird walk with the monthly bird census of this delightful park. The pot luck brunch will follow at approx. 10:00 a.m., so bring a dish to share. Meet in the fish hatchery parking lot (below the dam).

SATURDAY, June 1—*Introductory Birding Field Trip*

Leader undetermined at time of printing. Meet at the north end of Laurel Ave. in Lodi at 8:00 a.m. for a leisurely stroll on the trails of the Lodi Lake Wilderness Area. Birders of all skill levels are welcome. Extra binoculars and field guides will be available.

SATURDAY, June 8—*Cosumnes River Preserve*

See entry for Saturday, May 11. Meet leader Jim Rowoth at the visitor center on Franklin Rd. Double check with Jim for start time.

SATURDAY, June 8—*Calaveras Big Trees State Park*

Join leader Kurt Mize (915-6264, k1mize@aol.com) for our annual visit to one of California's oldest and most beautiful state parks. We'll be on the lookout for local specialties and breeding migrants. Bring drinks, a picnic lunch, mosquito repellent, and sunscreen. We'll picnic by the river. Meet at the park in the North Grove parking lot at 8:30 a.m., or at the Country Café in Lockeford at 7:00 a.m. if you wish to carpool.

SATURDAY, June 15—*Woodbridge Wilderness Area*

Leader undetermined at time of printing. Join us for our monthly census of this beautiful little riparian area on the lower Mokelumne River. Meet at the north end of Meadowlark Lane, off of Woodbridge Road, in the town of Woodbridge, at 8:00 a.m.

SUNDAY, June 17—*Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery*

Join leader Liz West for her monthly census of this beautiful riparian area below Comanche dam. Meet Liz at the fish hatchery parking lot at 8:00 a.m.

Most Wanted: Find a Funky Nest!

Contest highlights oddball bird-nest locations

Ithaca, N.Y.—Whether you find a robin's nest on a statue or a hummingbird's nest on wind chimes, your picture of a bird nest in a funky place can win big in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's **Funky Nests in Funky Places** contest. With nesting season underway, this contest challenges everyone to get outside and watch nature in even the most unexpected places.

"Just start looking," says Karen Purcell, who created the contest several years ago as part of the Cornell Lab's Celebrate Urban Birds citizen-science project. "Past experience has shown us you can find bird nests in the most surprising places. We've seen them in helmets, old boots, stoplights, store signs, car tires, clotheslines, mailboxes, potted plants, and even a stuffed moose head!"

The Funky Nests contest begins May 1 and lasts until June 15. Entries may be photos, videos, artwork, poems, or stories. You don't have to be a bird expert or an expert photographer. People of all ages are welcome to participate as individuals or with a class, community center, or afterschool program. Prizes include binoculars, bird feeders, cameras, an iPad, and more.

Entry deadline is June 15.

Find more information about how to find nests, approach nests without disturbing the birds, and enter the contest at www.FunkyNests.org

Celebrate Urban Birds is a free, year-round project that focuses on the arts, creating green spaces for birds, and learning how birds use urban spaces.

A Few Funky Facts About Nests:

- Most common backyard birds lay two to eight eggs. Hatching usually begins about two weeks after the last egg is laid and it takes another two weeks before the young are ready to leave the nest.
- Even if a nest has been built in a somewhat inconvenient place (for you), be patient! In a few weeks the birds will be gone. Meanwhile, you get a front-row seat to a wonder of nature.
- Baby birds have brightly colored beaks that help parents hit the bull's-eye with food!
- For their first three days of life, nestling pigeons depend solely on "pigeon milk," a liquid loaded with protein and fat that is produced by both the mother and father!

MORE SPRING WILDFLOWERS!

SATURDAY, June 1—Calaveras Big Trees State Park

Join leader Steve Stocking for this easy walk through the ancient and majestic trees of the North Grove. This is a favorite destination where Steve will point out the many specialties of the mixed coniferous forest. Meet Steve at 9:30 a.m. in the park, at the picnic area adjacent to the Sentinel Tree, on the creek behind Jack Knight Hall. There is a per vehicle entrance fee, so carpooling is recommended. For more info, contact Steve: 209-754-9029, snlsox@earthlink.net.

What should I do if I find a baby bird?

At some point, nearly everyone who spends time outdoors finds a baby bird—one that is unable to fly well and seems lost or abandoned. Our first impulse is to adopt the helpless creature, but this often does more harm than good—and in most cases, the young bird doesn't need our help at all.

The first thing to do is to figure out if it's a nestling or a fledgling. If it's sparsely feathered and not capable of hopping, walking, flitting, or gripping tightly to your finger, it's a nestling. If so, the nest is almost certainly nearby. If you can find the nest (it may be well hidden), put the bird back as quickly as possible. Don't worry—parent birds do not recognize their young by smell!

If the bird is feathered and capable of hopping or flitting, and its toes can tightly grip your finger or a twig, it's a fledgling. Fledglings are generally adorable, fluffy, with a tiny stub of a tail. It's easy to jump to the conclusion that the bird has been abandoned and needs you. But fledglings need a special diet, and they need to learn about behavior and vocalizations from their parents—things we can't provide.

Fortunately, the vast majority of "abandoned" baby birds are perfectly healthy fledglings. Their parents are nearby and watching out for them. The parents may be attending to four or five young scattered in different directions, but they will most likely return to care for the one you have found shortly after you leave.

When fledglings leave their nest they rarely return, so even if you see the nest it's not a good idea to put the bird back in—it will hop right back out. Usually there is no reason to intervene at all beyond putting the bird on a nearby perch out of harm's way. Fledglings produce sounds that their parents recognize, and one of them will return and care for it after you leave.

If you have found both parents dead, or are otherwise absolutely certain that the bird was orphaned, then your best course of action is to bring it to a wildlife rehabilitator. You can find a rehabilitator in your area by going to: <http://wildliferehabinfo.org>

BREEDING BIRD SURVEY

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Volunteers are needed to conduct roadside Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) routes in California during 2013. For those not familiar with the survey methodology, the BBS is the national survey which is the primary source for breeding bird population trends in North America. This survey, which began in 1966, has over 4100 randomly located roadside routes across the U.S. and Canada (and efforts are underway to expand into Mexico). Each route is 24.5 miles long with 50 stops spaced 0.5 miles apart. At each stop during a 3 minute period, the observer tallies all birds seen and heard within 1/4 mile. A route begins 30 minutes before local sunrise and continues until you finish which is normally around 10 a.m.

The route needs to be run just once each year during the months of May or June; exact dates vary with each route. The effort would involve a pre-survey scouting trip just to familiarize yourself with the route and all of the stops and a little paper/computer work after the route is completed. On average, volunteers spend about 10 hours per route each year. The main requirement for volunteering is the observer needs to be able to identify most of the birds along the route by call/song and all by sight.

California has 228 BBS routes and currently has 94 routes that are vacant. Maps showing the available routes can be found here: <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/results/routemaps/index.html> The static maps can give you an idea of the general direction of the route while the interactive maps will show you the start location and a bird species list for the route (just click on the "vacant" icon).

If you are interested in volunteering for a survey route or two, please contact Lyann Comrack (contact info listed below). Thank you!!

Lyann Comrack
California Department of Fish & Game
Wildlife Branch – Nongame Wildlife Program
1812 9th Street
Sacramento, CA 95811
916-341-6981 (Phone)
lcomrack@dfg.ca.gov

BIRD SIGHTINGS

February 20, 2013 - April 19, 2013
(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)

Submitted by Liz West

The **Green-tailed Towhee**, found by Ralph Baker at Jacob Meyers Park was present through March 13th.

David Yee found an adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at the Isenberg Crane Preserve on Woodbridge Rd. February 22nd. It arrived with about 500 other gulls during the evening Crane fly in. It was not found on the 23rd but reappeared on the evening of the 24th.

On March 31st, Michelle Townsley spotted one of the three **Chestnut-backed Chickadees**, found by David Yee at Oak Grove Regional Park, January 23rd. It was last reported April 1st.

On April 19th, Joe Eaton observed a **Solitary Sandpiper** at a small pond on Collier Rd. east of Linn Rd. north of Clements. This species is considered casual in Spring in the Central Valley, but there has been a notable push through northern California in recent weeks (David Yee, pers.com.).

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