

# THE HOOT OWL



January / February 2008  
Issue 1, Volume 46

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

## Meetings

The meeting location is at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 2220 W. Alpine (corner of Delaware and Alpine) in Stockton, and begins at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

***There will be no general membership meeting in January, 2008.***

**TUESDAY, February 12**

**Chris Cruz**

***"The Everglades: Then and Now"***

Chris will talk to us about Everglades National Park and the birds of the park and their link to its history.

Chris has worked 26 years for the National Park Service 18 years as a full-timer the rest as a seasonal. He has worked at Everglades, Biscayne, Grand Canyon, Big Bend, Grand Tetons, Yosemite, Haleakala, Lassen Volcanic National Parks, De Soto National Memorial, and Lake Roosevelt NRA. Chris has been teaching for West Valley College since 1998, where he teaches Park Management and Geographic Information Science. Chris has a Master's Degree in Environmental Studies from Prescott College in Arizona. He currently lives in Stockton.

## 2008 Tricolored Blackbird Survey

VOLUNTEERS are needed for the 2008 Tricolored Blackbird Survey coordinated by Audubon California in collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This citizen-based, statewide survey provides critical information for determining the status of Tricolored Blackbird populations in California and is critical in conservation strategies to protect this species. The colony locations and numbers of Tricolored Blackbirds change from year to year, making it impossible to track without the help of volunteers across the state. The survey will take place over one full day that is convenient for you between April 25th and 27th, 2008. Additional days of survey following this will also be welcomed and of great value. If you are interested in participating, please contact Rodd Kelsey (530) 795-0660 or [rkelsey@audubon.org](mailto:rkelsey@audubon.org).

## Field Trips

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

### **SATURDAY, January 5—Introductory Birding Field Trip**

At Lodi Lake Nature Area. Join leader Kasey Foley for a 2-3 hour birding walk on the trails through the "wilderness" area at Lodi Lake. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the north end of Laurel Ave. in Lodi (east of Lodi Lake Park off of Turner Road). Birders of all skill levels are welcome but the focus will be on birding fundamentals.

### **SATURDAY, January 12—Stockton rural Cemetery**

Meet leader Jim Rowoth (956-2648, [rowoth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rowoth@sbcglobal.net)) at the gate at the north end of Cemetery Lane at 8 am as we check for winter residents and visitors.

### **WEDNESDAY, January 16—Tonzi Road (Amador County)**

This field trip is sponsored by the Sacramento Audubon Society. Join leader Gary Fregien on a road trip to the Sierra foothills in Amador County, along Highways 16, 124 & 49. The focus of the trip will be the Tonzi Road area, a back-country road north of Lone. Out-of-towners can meet the group at their first stop, on Tonzi Rd. ~ .6 miles east of Hwy 124. Travel along this route will include some stops and walking short distances. There are an interesting and surprising variety and number of passerines and raptors in this area. Time permitting, this trip may also include stops for waterfowl at ponds near Sutter Creek and Lone. There will be minimal hiking, but dress for winter conditions. Bring along hand held radios, food and water. For more information, contact Gary at 916-708-0636 or e-mail him at: [calaveri@sbcglobal.net](mailto:calaveri@sbcglobal.net)

### **SUNDAY, January 27—Stillman Magee County Park**

Join Jim Rowoth for his monthly bird census of this small riparian county park near Clements. Please call 956-2648 in advance to confirm details of visit.

### **SATURDAY, February 2—Introductory Birding Field Trip**

Meet leader Jim Rowoth at 8 a.m. on Laurel Ave. next to Lodi Lake. This is a good spot to find some local birds. Whether they live here year-round, reside here in summer or winter, or just migrate through in spring or fall, there's something different every month.

### **SAT., February 23—Mystery Spot**

Since "good birds" can show up unannounced here in central California at this time of the year, we're going to leave open the exact destination for now, to be determined in mid-February. It could be anywhere from our own back yard to the coast or the mountains, depending on what's around. Check in with leader Jim Rowoth around Feb 20 for more details.

## GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT IS GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH NATURE

**In February, volunteers throughout the U.S. and Canada are invited to  
“Count for Fun, Count for the Future!”**

*New York, NY & Ithaca, NY, 23 October 2007*—Millions of novice and accomplished bird watchers can make their fascination with nature add up for science and for the future during the 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, led by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. During “Presidents’ Day” weekend, February 15–18, 2008, anyone can count birds from wherever they are and enter their tallies online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). These reports create an exciting real-time picture of where the birds are across the continent and contribute valuable information for science and conservation.

“These volunteers are counting not only for fun but for the future,” said Tom Bancroft, Chief Science Officer for Audubon. “It’s fun to see how many different kinds of birds can be seen and counted right in your backyard or neighborhood park. Each tally helps us learn more about how our North American birds are doing, and what that says about the health and the future of our environment.”

“The GBBC is a great way to engage friends, family, and children in observing nature in their own backyard, where they will discover that the outdoors is full of color, behavior, flight, sounds, and mystery,” said Janis Dickinson, Director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

People of all ages and experience levels are invited to take part wherever they are—at home, in schoolyards, at local parks or wildlife refuges, even counting birds on a balcony. Observers count the highest number of each species they see during at least 15 minutes on one or more of the count days. Then they enter their tallies on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

The web site provides helpful hints for identifying birds. Participants can compare results from their town or region with others, as checklists pour in from throughout the U.S. and Canada. They can also view bird photos taken by participants during the count and send in their own digital images for the online photo gallery and contest.

In 2007, Great Backyard Bird Count participants made history, breaking records for the number of birds reported, and the number of checklists. Participants sent in 81,203 checklists tallying 11,082,387 birds of 613 species.

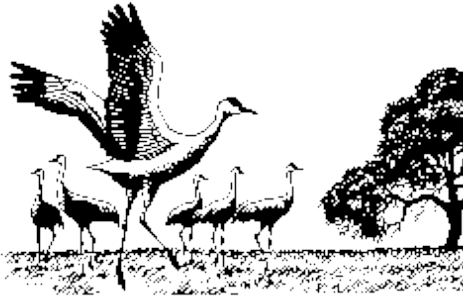
“Literally, there has never been a more detailed snapshot of a continental bird-distribution profile in history,” said John Fitzpatrick, Director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. “Imagine scientists 250 years from now being able to compare these data with their own!”

Already, the count results show how the numbers of some birds species have changed in recent years, such as a decline in Northern Pintails and an increase in Hooded Mergansers, consistent with trends from the Christmas Bird Count and Breeding Bird Survey.

“People who take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count see the results of their efforts in the news and in bird conservation work taking place across the country, said Audubon Education VP, Judy Braus. “Whether the counts occur at home, at schools or nature centers, they’re more than engaging and educational science activities for young people and adults, they’re a way to contribute to the conservation of birds and habitat nationwide.”

Lt. Daniel Britt, who served in Iraq 16 months, is glad to be back home in Zimmerman, MN, where he and his sons plan to join the GBBC. “We get a bunch of birds in our backyard,” Britt said, “but my oldest son, Daniel, and I may cross country ski into the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge to count birds there.”

For more information on how to participate, including identification tips, photos, bird sounds, maps, and information on over 500 bird species, visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).



## COSUMN MONTHLY BIRD CENSUS

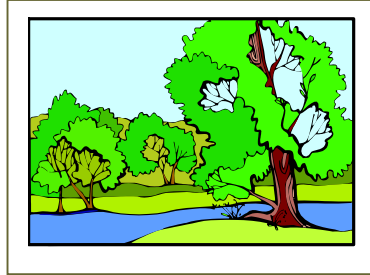
**RIVER WALK (formerly Willow Slough)**  
**SUN., January 13, at 7:00 a.m., and SAT.,**  
**February 9, at 6:30 a.m.** Meet at the  
 Visitor's Center.

With John Schick (209)464-8304

### TALL FOREST

**SAT., January 19, at 7:00 a.m., and SAT.,**  
**February 16, at 6:30 a.m.** Meet at the  
 Farm Center.

With John Trochet (916)684-2816, ext. 5



## MOKELUMNE RIVER MONTHLY BIRD CENSUS

### LODI LAKE

January and February dates uncertain at time of printing.

Contact Kurt Mize, 957-0676, for more information.

### MOKELUMNE RIVER DAY USE AREA

January and February dates uncertain at time of printing

Contact Liz West, 744-0218, for more information.

### STILLMAN MAGEE COUNTY PARK

January and February dates uncertain at time of printing.

Contact Jim Rowoth, 956-2648, for more information.

*Please call as schedules often change*

## WHERE HAVE ALL THE QUAIL GONE?

Quail were once a common bird in most of central California below the level of the coniferous forest. In the coniferous forest you can expect the Mountain Quail, the one with the reversed topknot. The Native Americans hunted quail both with snares and with bow and arrow. But quail numbers were not reduced until "market hunting" began in the nineteenth century.

As late as the 1870's, the ornithologist William Dawson noted that flocks of from one to five thousand were common! "In 1867, we moved to a ranch near Spanish Town, now called Half -Moon Bay, and San Gregorio, on the coast side of San Mateo County. There I saw quail by the thousands everywhere; every canyon gulch and ravine contained quail and the whole country seemed to be alive with them." (Walter Welch 1931) The naturalist Jose L. Martinez mentions a "plague" of quail at the missions, and other observers tell of bands of several thousands which fed on clover on the plains in the spring and nested under briars and cuttings.

In the 1880's and 1890's, millions of quail were shot or trapped for the markets of various cities. During the open quail season of 1895-96 for example, 177,366 quail were sold in the open markets of Los Angeles and San Francisco alone. Valley quail populations were diminished by overshooting, trapping, and poisoning from grain impregnated with thallium, a metallic poison that was scattered far and wide to poison ground squirrels.

In 1901, a bag limit was established for quail and their sale was prohibited. A. Starker Leopold, the great wildlife biologist, wrote that the quail of California would have been exterminated without this law. California quail numbers have rebounded in suitable habitat, although not to their historic high numbers. Too much of their habitat has been cleared. They need shelter in thickets and chaparral and a daily source of water. At night they need a roost of dense shrubbery and trees. In fall and winter they feed and roost in groups of from 20 to 60. This year there has been a large crop of acorns, and in some areas quail could be seen feeding on roads where the acorns had been crushed by cars.

At one time quail were abundant in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, but have nearly been eliminated there by feral cats. I recall that Ed Wager, a past San Joaquin Audubon president, often led bird trips on the Calaveras River in Stockton where quail were usually observed. Not any longer, as most of the vegetation has been removed from the river bottom. In foothill areas where shrubs and dense trees remain quail are doing well, except where preyed upon by cats, in addition to their natural enemies; fox, bobcats, coyotes and Cooper's Hawks. Quail lay a large clutch of eggs in depressions on the ground and the chicks are particularly prone to predation.

But our State Bird is doing much better than the Grizzly Bear, which is now found only on the California State Flag, the Tule Elk, found on the Stockton City seal, and the California Condor which has been reintroduced into southern California and Arizona.

# San Joaquin Audubon Society

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*New website:* [www.sanjoaquinaudubon.org](http://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  
Santa Barbara                    805-964-8240  
Los Angeles                    323-874-1318  
San Diego                    619-688-2473

Joint membership in National Audubon and San Joaquin chapter includes a subscription to both *Audubon* magazine and *The Hoot Owl*. Make checks payable to National Audubon Society and send to:

San Joaquin Audubon  
Attn: Membership  
P.O. Box 7755  
Stockton, CA 95267

*(Renewals should be mailed directly to National Audubon per renewal notice.)*

Introductory rate:	\$20	Student/Senior:	\$15
Basic Family;	\$35	Lifetime (ind.):	\$1000
Newsletter only: (non-member)	\$10	Lifetime (fam.):	\$1500

Notice: "Newsletter only" yearly dues have increased

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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