

THE HOOT OWL



January / February 2009
Issue 1, Volume 47

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.

There will be no general membership meeting in January, 2009.

TUESDAY, February 10

Ted Beedy
"Guatemala"

Please join us for this beautiful cultural and birding experience from Guatemala. Ted participated in a two-week trip to Guatemala in February 2008 that was led by Keith Hansen and his wife, Patricia. Keith and Patricia have their own tour group, "*Sacred Monkey Tours*," and they have guided many birding groups to Central America. This was advertised to be both a birding and cultural trip, since Patricia grew up in Yucatan and is an expert on Mayan culture, textiles, and art. During the trip they visited a variety of habitats from lowland tropical rainforest at Tikal, to the highest cloud forests at the top of Volcan San Pedro. The group saw a total of almost 300 bird species. Ted's photos will show many of the birds and cultural experiences the group shared on this amazing trip.

Ted Beedy has almost 30 years of experience as a professional wildlife biologist. Prior to starting his own firm "Beedy Environmental Consulting" in May 2006, he worked for more than 20 years as a Senior Biologist at Jones & Stokes in Sacramento. Ted has studied wildlife throughout California, with an emphasis on special-status birds including Harlequin Ducks, California Gnatcatchers, Willow Flycatchers, and Tricolored Blackbirds. He has a Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of California, Davis. He is currently co-authoring a new book with David Lukas, *A Guide to Birds of the Sierra Nevada*, that will have color illustrations of more than 320 species of Sierra birds prepared by Keith Hansen.

Field Trips

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

SATURDAY, January 3—Introductory Birding Field Trip

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.

SUNDAY, February 1—Caswell State Park

Join the Stanislaus Audubon Society for this field trip to one of the last remnants of riparian oak forest in the Central Valley. This is a good place to find forest-loving winter birds. Meet at the entrance to the park at 8:00 a.m. There is a \$6 per vehicle entry fee.

SATURDAY, February 7—Introductory Birding Field Trip

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

SUNDAY, February 8—Mystery Spot

Join leader Jim Rowoth for this field trip to an as yet to be determined location of his choosing. Contact Jim (956-2648 or rowoth@sbcglobal.net) after Feb. 5th for a better idea of where he'll be taking you.

SUNDAY, February 15—San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge

This is a regular field trip hosted by the Stanislaus Audubon Society. Meet at the Stanislaus County Library parking lot at 15th and H Streets, in Modesto, at 7:00 A.M. to carpool.

SATURDAY, March 7—Introductory Birding Field Trip

Please join leader Liz West for this always-pleasant morning stroll on the trails of the Lodi Lake "wilderness" area. Meet at 8:00 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.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

The Stockton (12/14/08) and Wallace-Bellota (12/27/08) Christmas bird counts reported totals of 138 and 129 species, respectively. The relatively low counts were attributable to either bad weather, low turnout, or both. Highlights included Red-throated Loon, Eurasian Wigeon, & Yellow Warbler (Stockton) and two Hairy Woodpeckers and a Red-naped Sapsucker (Wallace-Bellota).

These counts are a vital activity by birding organizations across the hemisphere. Please mark your calendars for the 2009-2010 count season and make a commitment to helping out next time. The tentative dates for our counts are December 20 (Stockton) and January 2 (Wallace-Bellota).

San Joaquin County Tree Swallow Roost Update

Some of you may recall the phenomenal Tree Swallow roost near Tracy first reported by San Joaquin Audubon board member Jim Rowoth on October 18th of last year. The following is a response to a note from SJ Audubon member David Coursey to swallow researcher Bruce Cousins on October 30th regarding the phenomenon.

10/30/08–Note from Bruce Cousins to David Coursey (forwarded to CV Birds)

Thanks David... That confirms the radar observations from yesterday morning and suggests that even relatively small flocks (by roost standards) of a few thousand to perhaps 10K swallows may be detectable on radar during dawn dispersal, at least in clear air conditions. This is useful new information for the radar-monitoring project, as is the documentation of this roost as the first/only confirmed Tree Swallow pre-migratory roost west of the Rocky Mts. in North America. I hesitate to guess how many such roosts might have once occurred in the west when swallow populations may have been much larger than today, but this roost clearly defines the Central Valley and the rest of the 'valley flyway' inland of the coastal mountain ranges as a major north-south migration route for Tree Swallows (as recently established for Barn Swallows by the similar roost near Dayton, OR) and presumably other swallows as well, as for many other less elusive bird species. It also documents for the first time their use of cornfields for roost habitat, as for Barn Swallows. Western swallow migration routes and pre-migratory roosting behavior have previously been poorly documented, uncertain, and largely a matter of speculation, so this is a useful contribution.

Your suggestion that they are avoiding the coming weather change may well be at least partly correct – birds don't appear to be able to predict weather over the longer term (more than a few days) any better than we can, but they may well be sensitive to short term changes in barometric pressure that precede major changes in weather patterns. The Barn Swallow roost in Oregon also rapidly declined and disappeared just before the first major fall storms swept through the area. The fact that prevailing winds have been mainly north to south recently, providing a tail wind, is likely also a factor in timing of their departure (as for the Oregon roost).

Genetic adaptation to decreasing day length is of course the main factor determining migration timing, but the relatively late departure of this roost may be a consequence of continued good weather, warm temperatures, and a sustained good supply of flying insects for food. There is no sign on radar of other roost sites appearing further south to the Mexico border, which supports the accepted theory derived from eastern North American and European populations that after leaving a pre-migratory roost they continue on to the wintering grounds, rather than shifting to or forming another large roost further south.

JOIN THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

February 13-16

Count for Fun, Count for the Future

New York, NY, January 13, 2009 – Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 13–16, 2009.

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation.

"Anyone who can identify even a few species can contribute to the body of knowledge that is used to inform conservation efforts to protect birds and biodiversity," said Audubon Education Vice-President, Judy Braus.

Volunteers take part by counting birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. The data help researchers understand bird population trends across the continent, information that is critical for effective conservation. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists, a new record.

"The GBBC has become a vital link in the arsenal of continent wide bird-monitoring projects," said Cornell Lab of Ornithology director John Fitzpatrick. "With more than a decade of data now in hand, the GBBC has documented striking changes in late-winter bird distributions."

Participants submit thousands of digital images for the GBBC photo contest each year. Last year's winners are now posted on the web site. Participants are also invited to upload their bird videos to YouTube tagged "GBBC." Some of them will be featured on the GBBC web site. All participants will be entered in a drawing to win dozens of birding items, including stuffed birds, clocks, books, and feeders.

Businesses, schools, nature clubs, Scout troops, and other community organizations interested in the GBBC can contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at (800) 843-2473 (outside the U.S., call (607) 254-2473), or Audubon at citizenscience@audubon.org or (215) 355-9588. Ext 16.



MONTHLY BIRD CENSUS

RIVER WALK (formerly Willow Slough)

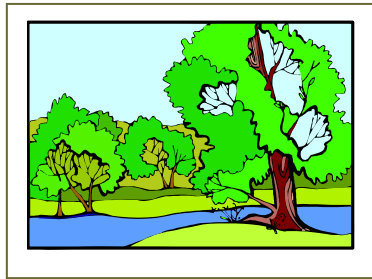
No January census scheduled. SAT., February 8, at 6:50 a.m. Meet at the Visitor's Center.

With John Schick (209)464-8304

TALL FOREST

SAT., January 17, at 6:45 a.m., and SAT., February 15, at 6:15 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 Rowth, 956-2648, for more information.

Please call as schedules often change.



BIRD SIGHTINGS

October 18, 2008 - December 13, 2008
(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)

Submitted by Liz West



Mary Shiedt and Joanne Katanic found a **Common Loon** in the south fork of the Mokelumne river, for two different boatloads of people on the October 9th Lodi Crane Festival delta cruise. It was not seen on the October 10th delta cruise.

Investigating a report of a large gathering of swallows seen on Doppler radar by Bruce Cousins (a researcher in British Columbia), Jim Rowth located a roost of at least 500,000 **Tree Swallows** October 15th. They roosted nightly until October 29th in a cornfield east of Tracy. It was well documented by several local and regional papers, a couple of local television stations and many people. This is the first documentation of swallows roosting in a cornfield and the first documentation of a Tree Swallow pre-migratory roost west of the Mississippi.

October 21-December 8: Cheri Pillsbury saw a juvenile dark morph **Ferruginous Hawk** on Flood Rd. in eastern San Joaquin county. Ed Pandolfino, Frances Oliver and Phil Robertson last saw it.

On October 22nd David Yee found a juvenile **American Golden Plover** in with 150 Black-bellied Plovers at the Lodi sewage ponds.

Two **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were seen on October 27th. Jim Rowth found one at Stillman Magee County Park. David Yee, Renee and Jack Hammond had one on private property along San Joaquin county side of Dry Creek in Galt. The one in Galt had been present on the Sacramento County side of Dry Creek since October 15th.

Ed Pandolfino found four or five **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** just inside the fence around Lawrence Livermore Experimental Test Site on Corral Hollow Rd. on November 11.

During a November 21st Central Valley Birding Symposium field trip, Steve Abbott, Jim Danzenbaker and many other people saw the prairie race of a **Merlin**. This is in the same general area as one found last winter by Sally Walters and Don Schmoltd.

November 22-29: A Central Valley Bird Symposium field trip led by John Sterling found a late **Western Kingbird** on the barbed wire fence along the entrance road to the Lodi sewage ponds. It was there a week later when David Yee observed it and thought that it might be going through a molt, which indicates it might attempt to winter here.

San Joaquin Audubon Society

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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
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 _____

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The Hoot Owl is published six times a year by the San Joaquin Audubon Society.

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P.O. Box 7755
Stockton, CA 95267

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U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Stockton, CA
Permit #450