

THE HOOT OWL



July / August 2008
Issue 4, Volume 46

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

Meetings

There will be no general membership meetings during our regular summer hiatus (May through August). The next general membership meeting will be Tuesday, September 11.

Upcoming lead-ammunition ban a tremendous boost to California Condor recovery

Audubon California calls for proper enforcement of critical legislation that goes into effect July 1

Los Angeles - Experts agree that removing lead from the environment is one of the most important steps to help the recovery of the California Condor, so the July 1 implementation of a new law restricting the use of lead ammunition in Condor country will be a tremendous boost to the prospects for this endangered species.

Condors frequently feed on animal carcasses left behind by hunters, and ingest dangerously high levels of lead from ammunition. It is estimated that in the last 10 years, roughly 30 rare Condors have died from lead poisoning in this manner.

"California Condors face a number of challenges, but lead is really the biggest threat to their future," said Graham Chisholm, director of conservation for Audubon California. "By using non-lead ammunition hunters can help conserve this great bird."

Last October, Gov. Schwarzenegger signed AB 821, authored by Assemblyman Pedro Nava, which created the ban on lead ammunition. The California Fish and Game Commission subsequently created a number of regulations necessary to enforce the ban beginning July 1.

Audubon California, which has advocated on behalf of the endangered species since the 1930s, championed the new law throughout 2007, both among hunters and actively at the legislative and policy levels.

Although some have portrayed the upcoming ban as anti-hunter, Chisholm noted that Condor experts believe that carcasses left behind in the wild by hunters are actually a prime source of nourishment for the recovering Condor population.

"Hunters have always been a part of the plan for bringing back the Condors and we want to make sure that continues," said Chisholm. "The great thing about this ban is that Californians don't have to choose between wildlife protection and recreational uses, such as hunting."

Field Trips

SATURDAY, July 5—*Introductory Birding Field Trip*

Join leader Kasey Foley for a leisurely stroll on the trails of the Lodi Lake "wilderness" area. Meet 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 basics.

WEDNESDAY, July 16—*White Slough*

Let's try one of my mid-summer evening strolls again. By timing our visit in the evening, we generally are able to enjoy the refreshing delta breeze while enjoying being out in nature, and we might even come across an owl. Expect a 2-hour walk over level surfaces. Contact leader Jim Rowoth (956-2648, rowoth@sbcglobal.net) for meeting time/place. For more info on this location, review chapter 3 in *Birding In and Around San Joaquin Co.*

SATURDAY, August 2—*Introductory Birding Field Trip*

Meet leader Jim Rowoth at 8 a.m. on Laurel Ave. next to Lodi Lake (see July date for more details).

SUNDAY, August 24—*SCRSD Bufferlands*

The Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District Bufferlands are 2,650 acres surrounding the wastewater treatment plant between Sacramento and Elk Grove. They are not typically open to the public. Habitat types include riparian forest, seasonal wetlands, grasslands, wildlife-friendly agricultural lands, and many habitat restoration sites. This is a good time of year to look for migrating songbirds. Be prepared for 2 miles of easy walking. From I-5 south of Sacramento, exit at the Meadowview/Pocket Rd exit (the first exit north of Laguna Blvd, and the first exit south of Florin Rd). Head east on Meadowview, then turn right (south) on Freeport Blvd. In one mile, just before the town of Freeport, turn left on Stonecrest and follow it over the freeway and south to a locked gate. Contact Leader: Chris Conard, 362-5942, conardc@gmail.com, for more information.

SUNDAY, August 24—*Stockton Rural Cemetery*

Join leader Jim Rowoth (956-2648 or rowoth@sbcglobal.net) for a stroll through Stockton's history while we look for early winter arrivals and the resident birds. We will meet at 8:00 a.m. at the office inside the cemetery, which is at the north end of Cemetery Lane which runs behind St. Joseph's Hospital.

NEWS AND NOTES

BALD EAGLE FLIES OFF ENDANGERED LIST

Ben Franklin thought the Bald Eagle a bird of “bad moral character which did not gets its living honestly”. Ben did not prevail and the Bald Eagle became the national bird of the United States. But by the 1950’s the species was nearly extinct in the Lower 48 with only around 400 pairs estimated to exist. They had been shot and poisoned. When I was president of San Joaquin Audubon, one was delivered to my doorstep anonymously to show me that they were still being shot near Pardee Dam. They also lost habitat to development and had their reproduction impaired by DDT and other pesticides.

In 1968 they were declared “endangered”, and recovery efforts began, strengthened by passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1973. The banning of DDT in 1972 helped the eagles and many other species to recover. Habitat protection and the banning of hunting helped as well. Now there are an estimated 11,000 pairs in the lower 48. The recovery of the Bald Eagle proves that the Endangered Species Act, when vigorously enforced and adequately funded, really can rescue vanishing wildlife.

(modified from Earthjustice, Autumn 2007 issue)

BIRDS LIKE MUSIC TOO

“It is a well known phenomenon that birds use song to communicate. Whether birdsong is considered music is still debatable; however, the many parallels between birdsong, language, and music have been, and are still, extensively studied. There are similarities between humans and songbirds in their ability to discriminate and respond to music. For example, it has been shown that Java Sparrows can discriminate between the music of Bach and that of Schoenberg and between that of Vivaldi and that of Carter. In both cases the first artist is classical and the second is modern. In several experiments the birds chose perches which indicated a preference for classical music over silence or modern music. Birds do strongly react to music.

(summarized from a letter by Austen Gess to Science, Vol 317 pg 1864)

MIRROR NEURONS AND BIRDSONG

Mirror neurons of the brain “fire” when one animal sees another animal make a specific action. Recently, a study in Nature described mirror neurons which fired when a bird sings or hears another bird sing a song similar to its own. It is possible that this finding may “pave the way to insights into how songbirds learn and maintain their complex songs—one of the few instances of learned communication aside from human language.”

Neurons controlling birdsong have been found in the forebrain region called HVC. These neurons were found to fire in a consistent manner when the bird sang a particular song. The studies were done with Swamp Sparrows. These neurons may help songbirds learn their songs, maintain their songs, decode each other’s songs, sing back and forth to defend their territories, and to compare a rival’s song to their own repertoire and then select an appropriate retort.

(modified from an article by Greg Miller in Science Vol 319, pg 269)

Submitted by Steve Stocking, Education Chair



RIVER WALK (formerly Willow Slough)
**SAT., July 12, at 5:45 a.m., and SAT.,
 August 9, at 6:00 a.m.** Meet at the
 Visitor's Center.

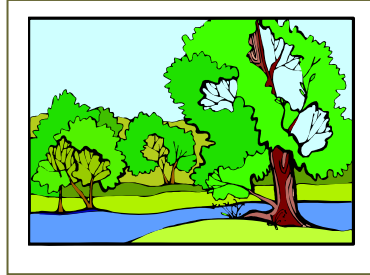
With John Schick (209)464-8304

TALL FOREST

**SAT., July 19, at 5:45 a.m., and SAT.,
 August 16, at 6:00 a.m.** Meet at the
 Farm Center.

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

Please call as schedules often change



**MOKELUMNE
 RIVER
 MONTHLY BIRD
 CENSUS**

LODI LAKE

July and August dates uncertain at time of printing.
 Contact Kurt Mize, 957-0676, for more information.

MOKELUMNE RIVER DAY USE AREA

July and August dates uncertain at time of printing.
 Contact Liz West, 744-0218, for more information.

STILLMAN MAGEE COUNTY PARK

July and August dates uncertain at time of printing.
 Contact Jim Rowoth, 956-2648, for more information.

Please call as schedules often change

BIRD SIGHTINGS

April 2008 - May 2008

(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)

Compiled by Liz West

On May 14th I saw a Sage Thrasher sitting on a fence along Thornton Rd. a mile or so southeast of the White Slough wastewater treatment plant.

Attendees of the San Joaquin Audubon annual picnic observed a Yellow-breasted Chat that was carrying food into a thicket of stinging nettle on May 17th (Jim Rowoth and many other observers).

Cin-Ty Lee encountered a kettle of at least 310 Swainson's Hawks along Interstate 5 just south of highway 132

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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
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Attn: Membership
P.O. Box 7755
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