

# THE HOOT OWL



July / August 2009  
Issue 4, Volume 47

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 8.

## BIRD FOOD FOR THOUGHT or CLEANING MY DESK

Peregrine falcons are nesting in San Francisco at Main and Mission. There are four pairs in San Francisco, 5 in the Bay Area and about 250 in California, which is up from one pair in the 1970's. Truly a success story for the Endangered Species Act!  
From the San Francisco Chronicle.  
[Metro@sfchronicle.com](mailto:Metro@sfchronicle.com)

Eating the carcasses of livestock treated with antibiotics is wrecking the immune systems of Spanish vultures according to a recent study done at the University of York, U.K. As a result of the study it was recommended that farmers stop dumping dead cattle in central pits. Another study recently found that an anti-inflammatory drug is linked to widespread vulture deaths in India & Pakistan. (Science. Vol.323 pg.1651)

Avian vacuolar myelinopathy has caused the deaths of over 100 Bald Eagles in the Southeast. Hydrilla, introduced as an aquarium plant in the 1950's, has spread widely and become a costly nuisance in waterways in many areas, including California. It forms a mat upon which a toxic blue green bacteria grows in abundance. The Hydrilla is eaten by Coots which are poisoned by the neurotoxins. The eagles eat the Coots and are also poisoned. Cal-IPC News, Vol.16 No.2 pg 11

Chirps of the common Anna's Hummingbird are caused by the tail feathers, which are flared at the bottom of their dives. "The airflow over the outermost feathers causes them to vibrate and produce sound."

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## Field Trips

### **SATURDAY, July 4—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.

### **SATURDAY, July 18—Lodi Sewage Ponds**

July can be a great month for viewing shorebirds on their southward migration. Lodi Sewage Ponds is one of the best places to do so in San Joaquin County, especially if the ponds are drawn down and provide some good habitat. Meet leader Jim Rowoth (956-2648, [rowoth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rowoth@sbcglobal.net)) at the Park 'n Ride at Highway 12 and Thornton Rd., just east of Interstate 5, at 8:00 a.m.

### **SUNDAY, July 19—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.

### **SUNDAY, July 26—Stillman Magee County Park**

Contact lead counter Jim Rowoth (956-2648, [rowoth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rowoth@sbcglobal.net)) for meeting time and place. Hopefully the small Bank Swallow colony discovered by Jim earlier this year will still be active. Want to know more? See chapter 21 in *Birding In and Around San Joaquin Co.*

### **SATURDAY, August 1—Introductory Birding Field Trip**

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

### **SATURDAY, August 15—Mystery Spot**

Since "good birds" often show up unannounced here in central California, we're going to leave the exact destination open for now. It could be anywhere, depending on what's around. Check with leader Jim Rowoth (956-2648, [rowoth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rowoth@sbcglobal.net)) for more information.

### **SATURDAY, August 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.

### **SUNDAY, August 30—Stillman Magee County Park**

Contact lead counter Jim Rowoth (956-2648, [rowoth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rowoth@sbcglobal.net)) for meeting time and place

## SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY IN 1843

The following description of San Joaquin County in 1843 comes from "The Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains, Oregon and California To Which Is Added a Description of the Physical Geography of California, with Recent Notices of the Gold Region from the Latest and Most Authentic Sources," by Col. John C. Fremont

"Taking leave of Mr. Sutter, who, with several gentlemen, accompanied us a few miles on our way, we traveled about 18 miles, and encamped on the Rio de los Cosumnes, a stream receiving its name from the Indians who live in its valley. Our road was through a level country, admirably suited to cultivation, and covered with groves of oak-trees, principally the evergreen-oak, and a large oak already mentioned, in form like those of the white-oak. The weather, which here, at this season, can easily be changed from the summer heat of the valley to the frosty mornings and bright days nearer the mountains, continued delightful for travelers, but unfavorable to the agriculturists, whose crops of wheat began to wear a yellow tinge from want of rain.

25th.--We traveled for 28 miles over the same delightful country as yesterday, and halted in a beautiful bottom at the ford of the Rio de los Mukelemnes (near present-day Lockeford, Ed.), receiving its name from another Indian tribe living on the river. The bottoms on the stream are broad, rich, and extremely fertile, and the uplands are shaded with oak groves. A showy *Lupinus*, of extraordinary beauty, growing four to five feet in height, and covered with spikes in bloom, adorned the banks of the river, and filled the air with a light and grateful perfume.

On the 26th we halted at the Arroyo de las Calaveras, (Skull creek,) a tributary to the San Joaquin--the previous two streams entering the bay between the San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers. This place is beautiful, with open groves of oak, and a grassy sward beneath, with many plants in bloom, some varieties of which seem to love the shade of the trees, and grow there in close small fields. Near the river, and replacing the grass, are great quantities of *Ammole*, (soap plant,) the leaves of which are used in California for making, among other things, mats for saddle-cloths. A vine with a small white flower, (*Melothria?*) called here "la yerba buena," and which, from its abundance, gives name to an island and town in the bay, was to-day very frequent on our road--sometimes running on the ground or climbing the trees.

27th.--To-day we traveled steadily and rapidly up the valley; for, with our wild animals, any other gait was impossible, and making about five miles an hour. During the earlier part of the day, our ride had been over a very level prairie, or rather a succession of long stretches of prairie, separated by lines and groves of oak timber, growing along dry gullies, which are filled with water in seasons of rain; and, perhaps, also, by the melting snows. Over much of this extent, the vegetation was sparse; the surface showing plainly the action of water, which, in the season of flood, the Joaquin spreads over the valley. About one o'clock we came again among innumerable flowers; and a few miles further, fields of the beautiful blue-flowering lupine, which seems to love the neighborhood of water, indicated that we were approaching a stream. We here found this beautiful shrub in thickets, some of them being 12 feet in height. Occasionally three or four plants were clustered together, forming a grand bouquet, about 90 feet in circumference, and 10 feet high; the whole summit covered with spikes of flowers, the perfume of which is very sweet and grateful. A lover of natural beauty can imagine with what pleasure we rode among these flowering groves, which filled the air with a light and delicate fragrance. We continued our road for about a half a mile, interspersed through an open grove of live-oaks, which, in form, were the most symmetrical and beautiful we had yet seen in this country. The ends of their branches rested on the ground, forming somewhat more than a half sphere of very full and regular figure, with leaves apparently smaller than usual.

The Californian poppy, of a rich orange color, was numerous to-day. Elk and several bands of antelope made their appearance.

Our road was now one continued enjoyment; and it was pleasant riding among this assemblage of green pastures with varied flowers and scattered groves, and out of the warm green spring to look at the rocky and snowy peaks where lately we had suffered so much. Emerging from the timber, we came suddenly upon the Stanislaus river, where we hoped to find a ford, but the stream was flowing by, dark and deep, swollen by the mountain snows; its general breadth was about 50 yards.

We traveled about five miles up the river, and encamped without being able to find a ford. Here we made a large corral, in order to be able to catch a sufficient number of our wild animals to relieve those previously packed.

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**BIRD FOOD FOR THOUGHT or CLEANING MY DESK***(Continued from Page 1)*

These chirps are heard at the bottom of the display dives of the male hummer, which climbs up to 100 feet in the air and then swoops downward in a J-shaped curve. "Live" from the California Academy of Science. Summer 2008.

"In the world of Dark-eyed Juncos, the most hormonally-charged males may be the most irresistible to females—and the least likely to live a long life." Males with higher levels of testosterone are irresistible mates to older more experienced females. Such males apparently have sweeter songs, have larger patches of white feathers in their tails, and flash their tail feathers more often. These males are also often poor fathers as they spend so much time chasing new partners that they provide little food. From an article by David Lukas in National Wildlife, Vol 47(2), Feb/Mar 09.

Well preserved tissues and primary collagen sequences have been found in the femur of an 80-million year old hadrosaur from Montana. These were analyzed in multiple laboratories by mass spectrometry which revealed ancient collagen sequences that support a close relationship between birds and dinosaurs. Science Vol 324. Pg 626. 5-1-09

BOOK REVIEW by Jim Clayton from In Brief: Spring 2009. Earthjustice Flights of Fancy. "A beautifully bound and amply illustrated little book; this is a treasure trove of bird-related legends for folklore aficionados as well as birding enthusiasts, or people who just like a good story. This book would be a fun gift and deserves a place next to the bed or in the bathroom where it could be enjoyed in small doses."

The above provided by Steve Stocking Education Chair.

**SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY IN 1843** *(Continued from Page 2)*

"Under the shade of the oaks, along the river, I noticed *Erodium cicutarium* in bloom, eight or ten inches high. This is the plant which we had seen the squaws gathering on the Rio de los Americanos. By the inhabitants of the valley it is highly esteemed for fattening cattle, which appear to be very fond of it. Here, where the soil begins to be sandy, it supplies to a considerable extent the want of grass.

Desirous, as far as possible, without delay, to include in our examination the San Joaquin river, I returned this morning down the Stanislaus for 17 miles, and again encamped without having found a fording-place. After following it for eight miles further the next morning, and finding ourselves in the vicinity of the San Joaquin, encamped in a handsome oak grove, and, several cattle being killed, we ferried over our baggage in their skins."

**BIRD SIGHTINGS****Mid-April - June 16, 2009***(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)*

Submitted by Liz West

On May 14th Kurt Mize had a new yard bird, when a male Calliope Hummingbird visited a feeder in his backyard. This smallest of North American birds is rarely seen on the valley floor.

On May 31<sup>st</sup> Dan Williams saw a lone Sandhill Crane flying east from the town of Terminous. On June 6<sup>th</sup> Donald Gill found 6 Sandhill Cranes on Thornton Rd. just south of Hwy. 12. These are very late dates for cranes in our area.

June 7<sup>th</sup> On a visit to White Slough, Susan Schneider thought she heard a Least Bittern. On a visit the following Saturday the Least Bittern was not heard.

# San Joaquin Audubon Society

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*New website:* [www.sanjoaquinaudubon.org](http://www.sanjoaquinaudubon.org)

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Morro Bay	805-528-7182
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