

# THE HOOT OWL

July / August 2012  
Issue 4, Volume 50

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 11.

## Restoring streams helps songbirds survive the winter in CA's Central Valley

A new study by [PRBO Conservation Science](#) (PRBO) and the [National Aviary](#) finds that restoring floodplain forests in the Central Valley of California helps songbirds survive through the winter, a finding previously substantiated only for summer nesting birds.

The floodplain of California's Central Valley is rich with streamside forests of willows, cottonwoods, oaks, and sycamores. Each summer, these forests are alive with the sounds of singing songbirds, but what may be surprising to some is that these same forests help migratory songbirds survive the winter. Birds from Alaska and Canada fly about 2,400 miles each year to winter in the forests of the Central Valley.

This is the first study to show that restored forests also provide habitat for wintering songbirds in the Central Valley. The study found that songbirds prefer restored forests equally to existing older forests. But some species, including Lincoln's and White-crowned Sparrows, were found in higher numbers in restored forests.

In addition to creating wildlife habitat, restoring streams and rivers provides multiple benefits for human communities, and provides people with the opportunity to enjoy and appreciate nature.

## FIELD TRIPS

### **SATURDAY, July 7—*Introductory Birding Field Trip***

Join leader Jim Rowoth (956-2648 or [rowoth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rowoth@sbcglobal.net)) 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. Extra binoculars and field guides will be available.

### **SATURDAY, July 14—*Cosumnes River Preserve***

Join leader Jim Rowoth (956-2648 or [rowoth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rowoth@sbcglobal.net)) for the monthly River Walk bird count at this always-productive preserve in southern Sacramento County. Meet Jim at the visitor center on Franklin Rd. at 6:00 a.m.

### **SUNDAY, July 15—*Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery***

Meet leader Liz West in the fish hatchery parking lot (below the dam) at 8:00 a.m. for her monthly census of this delightful riparian oasis below Camanche Dam.

### **SATURDAY, July 21—*Woodbridge Wilderness Area***

Join leader Kurt Mize for our monthly census of this beautiful little riparian area on the lower Mokelumne River. Public access to this park is limited to these once-monthly outings, so don't miss this opportunity! Meet Kurt at the north end of Meadowlark Lane, off of Woodbridge Road, in the town of Woodbridge, at 8:00 a.m.

### **TUESDAY, July 31—*White Slough Wildlife Area Moonlight Walk***

Join leader Jim Rowoth ([rowoth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rowoth@sbcglobal.net)) for an evening stroll under the full moon at this state wildlife area just west of the Lodi Sewage Ponds. Even if the afternoon temperatures are boiling, we can expect the delta breeze to kick in and cool us down. Meet at 6:00 p.m. at the Flag City McDonald's (Hwy 12 and I-5).

### **SATURDAY, August 4—*Introductory Birding Field Trip***

Join leader Kurt Mize (915-6264, [k1mize@aol.com](mailto:k1mize@aol.com)) 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. This will be a leisurely stroll of about a mile on the level trails of the Lodi Lake "Wilderness" Area. All are welcome. Extra binoculars will be available.

### **SATURDAY, August 18—*Woodbridge Wilderness Area***

Join leader Jim Rowoth for our monthly census of this hidden gem of a park on the lower Mokelumne River. Meet Jim at the north end of Meadowlark Lane, off of Woodbridge Road, in the town of Woodbridge, at 8:00 a.m.

### **SUNDAY, August 19—*Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery***

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

# Sacramento Valley Rice Farmers Flock to Save Birds

More than 165 California rice growers have signed up for an innovative program to enhance bird habitat on their land. The Sacramento Valley farmers recently enrolled in a new Natural Resources Conservation Service program, operated in conjunction with conservation groups, that offers almost \$3 million in incentives to the growers to manage their properties in ways that will benefit birds.

The Migratory Bird Conservation Partnership, a partnership of Audubon California, PRBO Conservation Science, and The Nature Conservancy, is helping to facilitate this project in collaboration with NRCS. The farmers come from Glenn, Colusa, Yuba, Sutter, Sacramento and Yolo counties.

“The Waterbird Habitat Enhancement Program through NRCS is a huge program for us, significantly increasing the acres of farmland enrolled to improve the Valley for migratory birds and allowing California rice farmers to make a significant conservation investment,” explains Alan Forkey, Assistant State Conservationist with NRCS. “Working lands are truly the frontier for the future of protecting this state’s wildlife.”

Wetland habitat in the Central Valley has declined rapidly over the past 150 years. Less than 5 percent of the region’s original wetland habitat remains today. As the Sierra Nevada’s permanent snowpack dwindles, water supply is expected to become less reliable for people and wildlife. This and other threats demands new collaborative approaches to farming and conservation.

Over 100 species of shorebirds, ducks and geese depend upon rice fields for part of their life cycle and survival

“Rice acts as surrogate wetland habitat for many shorebirds, ducks and geese, and is an important focus of our private lands conservation work in the region,” explains Monica Iglecia, Audubon California Shorebird Conservation Biologist. “Right now, rice represents nearly 80 percent of flooded habitat used by migratory birds in the Sacramento Valley.”

“Many people don’t associate the Central Valley with shorebirds,” says Catherine Hickey of PRBO Conservation Science and Chair of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Council. “But shorebirds aren’t just at the shore. Hundreds of thousands of migrating shorebirds and millions of waterfowl rely on wetlands and flooded agriculture like rice each year.”

People who farm, love nature, and enjoy hunting and bird watching share something in common – a love of the land and respect for what nature provides people and wildlife. This voluntary partnership between conservationists and farmers is an excellent example of win-win conservation. More information is available at <http://www.camigratorybirds.org/>.

## Plant Native Plants in Your Garden

Steve Stocking, our Education Chair, will be giving a talk entitled "Plant Native Plants in Your Garden" as the Armchair Traveler series at Delta College. The date is September 25<sup>th</sup>, and the time is 2:30 to 3:30 p.m., in the North Forum at Delta College. Some native plants are particularly good for attracting native birds and butterflies, and Steve will talk about the best ones for our area.

He will be giving a similar program on October 6th at Calaveras Big Trees State Park. The emphasis there will be on growing native plants which will survive above 2,000 feet in elevation. The program will begin at 10:00 a.m. at the Jack Knight Hall in the Park. Steve is retired from Delta College and has been growing native plants in this area for over 40 years.

(There is a parking fee at Delta College and a day use fee at Calaveras Big Trees State Park.)

## THE BIG YEAR: A FILM REVIEW

We live in a competitive society, and as many of you know, there are actually folks who compete to see the most species of birds in a set geographic area (e.g., the 50 states) in a single year. This takes amazing dedication (some would say obsession) as these extreme birders must travel great distances during the year in order to observe the largest number of species. They keep track of their own sightings and rivals often turn up in the same place at the same time because that is where "the good birds" are found. They sometimes share information, but sometimes not. In the recent film *The Big Year*, one of the characters was known for being somewhat devious by throwing his competitors off the trail of a special bird.

Some big names show up in the film. Al Roker played himself as weatherman. Brian Dennehy was the slow-to-be-won-over father of the youngest competitor (played by Jack Black), and Steve Martin did a credible job as an older competitor willing to suspend his executive position to follow his dream. Owen Wilson rounded out the trio of comical *Big Year* competitors. Angelica Huston played Annie Auklet (modeled after the real life Debbie Shearwater), who captained their West Coast pelagic trips.

You may wonder how accurate the film could be in regard to species and locales. It did a pretty good job, probably because of the work of the bird consultant, Greg Miller, who spoke about his role at the recent Snow Goose Festival in Chico. Unlike in most films, most of the birds were spot on--correctly identified and in the correct locales. There were a few exceptions, such as the Great Spotted Woodpecker found in Oregon (no North American records outside of Alaska) and the Pink-footed Goose found at a hot spring in the snowbound Colorado Rockies in the middle of winter (all valid US records are from coastal New England), among other factual errors. Most of the location shots were in the right places or in places which looked right. One exception was Lake Tahoe which was clearly not Lake Tahoe.

The film handled the friendships, competition, and cooperation of high-stakes birding well. If you don't take the situations too seriously, you will enjoy this light-hearted film. If nothing else, it may inspire you to head for Texas to look for birds like Audubon's Oriole to add to your own big year list.

Steve Stocking, Education Chair, and Karl Kothe

## BIRD SIGHTINGS

*April 18, 2012 - June 18, 2012*

*(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)*

Submitted by Liz West

On April 18<sup>th</sup> participants of a San Joaquin Audubon field trip led by John Blades saw two **Canyon Wrens** in Kiln Canyon at the historic kiln site. This is the usual site in the county to see them. They were seen again May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Jeanne and Terry Ronneberg found a **Cassin's Kingbird** along Corral Hollow Rd. at Carnegie off road vehicle area on April 25<sup>th</sup>. It was still present April 29<sup>th</sup>.

On an April 26<sup>th</sup> visit to the Lodi Sewage ponds Joanne Katanic, Virginia Bonham and Sue Murphy had a **Franklin's Gull** in breeding plumage.

During a hike at Connolly Ranch, April 29<sup>th</sup>, Jim Rowoth located a **Hairy Woodpecker** and was able to share this rare county resident with others present. It was on a half burned Gray Pine.

On May 6<sup>th</sup>, Joanne Katanic, Virginia and Kathy Bonham found a **Gray Flycatcher** at Buckley Cove in Stockton.

Dale Smith observed a flock of more than 150 **Swainson's Hawks** gathered in the fields near Airport Way and French Camp Rd, from May 14<sup>th</sup> thru the 17<sup>th</sup>.

Terry Ronneberg saw a male **Blue-winged Teal** at the Tracy Sewage Pond on May 10<sup>th</sup>. On May 19<sup>th</sup>, Jim Rowoth found a male **Blue-winged Teal** at the Lodi Sewage Ponds.

After the May 12<sup>th</sup> SJAS picnic, Jim Rowoth and Liz West went out to Flood and Waverly Roads in eastern San Joaquin County looking for Grasshopper Sparrow and anything else unusual. In addition to several of these, they a Brewer's Sparrow along the section of Waverly south of Flood Rd. It was later revealed that Dan Applebee most likely observed the Brewer's a week earlier.

Steve Huckabone saw a **Costa's Hummingbird** at Kiln Canyon, May 19<sup>th</sup>.

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

## Calif. Birding E-mail Discussion Groups

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Calbirds>  
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