

THE HOOT OWL

July / August 2013
Issue 4, Volume 51

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 10.

San Joaquin River Restoration

As you read this, a conservation victory is unfolding in California's Great Central Valley. This year, thanks to the settlement of a 20-year lawsuit between conservationists and the federal government, the San Joaquin River will receive more water than it has since the 1940s when Friant Dam was constructed. This water will revive habitat areas that have been dormant for decades and return salmon runs to their glory.

If you grew up in the San Joaquin Valley before the 1940s, you probably remember an impressive river flowing to the Delta from the mountains beyond Fresno. It was a river that was as volatile as it was vital, a river that in wet years overflowed its banks and wreaked havoc and at the same time abundance, and in dry years caused scarcity and conflict.

If you lived near the river, you may remember birds crowding into the trees and shrubs along its banks, or the sound of thousands of salmon splashing upstream on their journey to spawn. You don't see these things along the river anymore.

Audubon California is one of many organizations taking part in the San Joaquin River Partnership, which seeks to maximize the conservation opportunities that the rewatering of the river presents.

For our organization, the river restoration presents many opportunities for bird conservation. Since the river was dammed in the 1940s, the vast majority of wetland and riparian habitat that once existed in the San Joaquin Valley has been lost. Birds have been forced onto increasingly marginal and smaller pieces of land, and only those that have adapted to the agriculture-dominated landscape have survived.

FIELD TRIPS

SATURDAY, July 6—*Introductory Birding Field Trip*

Join leader Dale Smith at the north end of Laurel Ave. in Lodi at 8:00 a.m. for a leisurely stroll on the trails of the Lodi Lake Wilderness Area. Birders of all skill levels are welcome. Extra binoculars and field guides will be available.

SATURDAY, July 13—*Cosumnes River Preserve*

Join leader Jim Rowoth (956-2648 or rowoth@sbcglobal.net) for the monthly River Walk bird count through the varied habitats of the CRP. Meet Jim at the visitor center on Franklin Rd. Check website www.cosumnes.org for last minute updates. Double check with Jim for start time.

SATURDAY, July 20—*Woodbridge Wilderness Area*

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

SUNDAY, July 21—*Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery*

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

SUNDAY, July 28—*Kirkwood Meadows*

Amador and Alpine Counties. Join leaders Liz West and Joanne Katanic for a day of mountain birding. Meet in Lodi at the Park and Ride at the Highway 12 off-ramp from Highway 99. (Victor Rd) at 6:30 AM to carpool. Bring lunch. P.S. This is a great place for mountain wildflowers.

SATURDAY, August 3—*Introductory Birding Field Trip*

Join leader Susan Schneider at the north end of Laurel Ave. in Lodi at 8:00 a.m. for a leisurely stroll on the trails of the Lodi Lake Wilderness Area. Birders of all skill levels are welcome. Extra binoculars and field guides will be available.

SATURDAY, August 10—*Cosumnes River Preserve*

See entry for Saturday, July 13. Meet leader Jim Rowoth at the visitor center on Franklin Rd. Double check with Jim for start time.

SATURDAY, July 20—*Woodbridge Wilderness Area*

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

SUNDAY, August 18—*Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery*

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

Tricolored Blackbirds



Photo by Linda Pittman

The Tricolored Blackbird is North America's most colonial landbird. Found almost exclusively in California, its breeding colonies often teem with more than 50,000 birds, sometimes all settled into a single 10-acre field or wetland to raise their young. While similar to the more widespread Red-winged Blackbird, the Tricolored Blackbird is distinguished by its red shoulder patch with a bright white bar.

In the 19th Century, Tricolored Blackbird flocks were described as so numerous "as to darken the sky." Since then, the population has declined from several million to slightly less than 300,000 today. Over just the last 70 years, the Tricolored Blackbird population has decreased by more than 80%.

The reasons for this decline are many, but the loss of marsh and nearby foraging habitats along the coast and in the Central Valley is the main issue. In more recent years, the species has become dependent on agricultural lands, with most of the largest colonies nesting in grain fields. A real dilemma develops because Tricolored young typically have not yet left the nest before the time farmers harvest their crop, and harvesting destroys Tricolored Blackbird nests and young. In some cases as many as 20,000 nests have been lost in a single field.

Collaborative Conservation

Audubon California is working closely with landowners and its partners in the Tricolored Blackbird Working Group to protect this species across California. The Tricolored Blackbird Working Group is a collaborative alliance of farmers, agricultural associations, governmental agencies, and environmental organizations that have all recognized the importance of a multi-faceted and cooperative approach to promote the long-term persistence of the Tricolored Blackbird. The Working Group strives to reverse the population decline of this species, and increase the population to more than 750,000 over the next 20 years.

The efforts of the Working Group are guided by the Tricolored Blackbird Conservation Plan that lays out a strategy to boost populations through long-term conservation planning and short-term action-oriented intervention. Specifically, the Plan commits stakeholders to implement: (1) habitat conservation projects to benefit the species; (2) a research program to more thoroughly understand the species' life history; (3) a monitoring program to effectively document population trends and distribution; and (4) an outreach and education program to enhance public and private landowner awareness, and to build public support for conservation.

Audubon California recently took on the role of coordinating the working group's efforts. For more information about these efforts or how you can help, please contact our Tricolored Blackbird Conservation Coordinator, Keiller Kyle, at kkyle@audubon.org or (916) 649-7600.

BIRDING 101

Birding 101, the popular introductory birding class led by Jim Rowoth, will be offered once again at Delta College this fall. Classes will be held 9/21, 10/5, 10/19, and 10/26. Participants will learn the basics of birding through classroom discussions and excursions in the field. Learn more and sign up at www.adultedreg.com/delta/

SORA

(Searchable Ornithological Research Archive)

If you haven't discovered it yet, SORA, the Searchable Ornithological Research Archive, is an outstanding resource for learning more about birds, as well as a bit of ornithological history. It provides access to an extensive library of ornithological literature, and detailed material documenting the history of ornithology in North America over the last 120 years. SORA users can both browse and search through journal titles, and individual articles can be downloaded as PDF files. You will find abstracts for current and past issues of 15 different ornithological publications, including Auk, Condor, Journal of Field Ornithology, Pacific Coast Avifauna, Studies in Avian Biology, and Wilson Bulletin, some dating back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. I was fascinated to see that Joseph Grinnell's 1902 Checklist of California Birds listed 6 subspecies of Horned Lark, 4 subspecies of Red-winged Blackbird, 5 subspecies of Dark-eyed Junco, and 4 species and 10 subspecies of Song Sparrow! It's like having a searchable ornithological library at your fingertips. Check them out at <http://sora.unm.edu>.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

April 19, 2013 - June 17, 2013

(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)

Submitted by Liz West

Joe Eaton found a **Solitary Sandpiper**, April 19th, at a small pond on Collier Rd. east of Linn Rd.

Kurt Mize saw a **Calliope Hummingbird** repeatedly displaying to an unseen female, April 20th, at Laughlin Park in Stockton.

On a field trip led by John Blades to Kiln Canyon, April 24th, everyone saw the resident **Canyon Wren** in the area of the old kiln.

On April 26th, David Yee found a **Red Knot** in mostly basic plumage at the Tracy Sewage ponds. It was in with the Black-bellied Plover flock.

While birding Buckley Cove, May 12th, Joanne Katanic and Virginia Bonham saw a **Gray Flycatcher**. There was also a late Ruby-crowned Kinglet flashing it's crown and a Golden-crowned Sparrow.

For several evenings around May 21st, Ann Techlenburg saw a number of **Purple Finches** near the dump Harney lane. They had disappeared by the evening of the 23rd.

On May 28th, David Yee saw a **Swainson's Thrush** that appeared to be of the olive-backed race at Lodi Lake. In David's opinion this might be a possible split in the future. This race hasn't been reported in the Central Valley.

On June 1st and June 14th, Dan Kopp saw a **Cassin's Kingbird** at Carnegie Off road Vehicle Park. It was initially found near the sector office. There were also a couple of **Say's Phoebes** nesting in the barn.

San Joaquin Audubon Society
P.O. Box 7755
Stockton, CA 95267

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