

THE HOOT OWL



July / August 2014
Issue 4, Volume 52

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 9.

Rare and Unusual Occurrences at Stockton, Cal. (from *The Condor*, Mar., 1901)

This year seems an unusual one in the way of bird migration in San Joaquin County, having added to the list thus far several new visitants and also causing an influx of a single species heretofore unknown in this locality, though common in the eastern foothills. I refer to the Blue-Fronted Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri frontalis*). (Steller's Jay)

This species has become so numerous in San Joaquin County, and especially within the city of Stockton, that it has for the time being, taken the place of the noisy California Jay (*Aphelocoma californica*). (Western Scrub Jay) My record of its first appearance is dated November 11, 1900, at which time I saw two of this species in the vicinity of Stockton. Two days later I saw several of the birds within the limits of the city and from that time on they became quite numerous, showing very little fear in their new haunts and being seemingly at home in the white oaks (Valley Oaks) with which the city abounds. Mr. Belding (Lyman Belding) informs me that he has found them in the heart of the Sacramento Valley, but has no record of their occurrence in this locality previous to this year.

The abundance of the birds is shown by the result of a "blue-jay" shoot which five sportsmen from Stockton took part in on December 2, 1900. They confined themselves to a small area northeast of the city and as a result of their shoot brought home 220 birds, 100 of which were California Jays (Western Scrub Jays) while the remaining 120 were of the Blue-fronted (Steller's) species. The birds are still here in large numbers and show no signs of decreasing.

W. B. Sampson
Stockton, Cal., Feb. 14, 1901

FIELD TRIPS

SATURDAY, July 5—*Introductory Birding*

Join leader Dale Smith 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.

THURSDAY, July 10—*Moonlight Madness - White Slough*

Join leader Jim Rowoth for this evening stroll under the full moon at White Slough Wildlife Area. Meet Jim in the parking lot of the MacDonald's at Flag City, on Thornton Rd. just south of Highway 12, at 6:00 p.m.

SATURDAY, July 12—*Cosumnes River Preserve / River Walk*

Join leader Jim Rowoth (487-3489 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 19—*Woodbridge Wilderness Area*

Join leader Liz West for our monthly census of this hidden jewel of a park on the banks of the Mokelumne River. Meet at the north end of Meadowlark Lane in Woodbridge at 8:00 a.m.

SUNDAY, July 20—*Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery*

Join leaders Liz West and Joanne Katanic for our monthly census of this lovely little riparian area below Comanche Dam. Meet the leaders in the fish hatchery parking lot at 8:00 a.m.

SUNDAY, July 27—*Plasse's Resort-Silver Lake*

Beat the valley heat! Join leaders Liz West and Joanne Katanic for this visit to beautiful Silver Lake, near Carson Pass in Amador County. The resort is on the west end of the lake. Good for post-breeding warblers and other montane specialties. Meet the leaders at the Park N Ride at Highway 99 and Highway 12 in Lodi at 7:00 a.m. Bring lunch.

SATURDAY, August 2—*Introductory Birding Field Trip*

See entry for Saturday, July 5. Join leader Susan Schneider at the north end of Laurel Ave. in Lodi at 8:00 a.m.

SATURDAY, August 9—*Cosumnes River Preserve / River Walk*

See entry for Saturday, July 12. Meet leader Jim Rowoth at the visitor center on Franklin Rd. Double check with Jim for start time.

SATURDAY, August 16—*Woodbridge Wilderness Area*

Join leader Mark Elness for our monthly census of this hidden jewel of a park on the banks of the Mokelumne River. Meet at the north end of Meadowlark Lane in Woodbridge at 8:00 a.m.

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Maybe Birds Can Have It All: Dazzling Colors and Pretty Songs, Too

Major songbird study counters the idea of trade-offs limiting evolution

Cornell Lab of Ornithology
For release Wednesday, June 18, 2014

Ithaca, N.Y.—A study of one of the world's largest and most colorful bird families has dispelled a long-held notion, first proposed by Charles Darwin, that animals are limited in their options to evolve showiness. The study—the largest of its kind yet attempted—was published today in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*.

The natural world is full of showstoppers—birds with brilliant colors, exaggerated crests and tails, intricate dance routines, or virtuosic singing. But it's long been thought that these abilities are the result of trade-offs. For a species to excel in one area, it must give up its edge in another. For example, male Northern Cardinals are a dazzling scarlet but sing a fairly simple whistle, whereas the dull brown House Wren sings one of the most complicated songs in nature.

"Animals have limited resources, and they have to spend those in order to develop showy plumage or precision singing that help them attract mates and defend territories," said Nick Mason, the paper's lead author. "So it seems to make sense that you can't have both. But our study took a more detailed look and suggests that actually, some species can." Mason did the research as a master's student at San Diego State University. He is now a Ph.D. student at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Mason and his colleagues tested the idea of trade-offs by looking at a very large family of songbirds from Central and South America, the tanagers. This group consists of 371 species—nearly 10 percent of all songbirds. It includes some of the most spectacularly colorful birds in the world (such as the Paradise Tanager) as well as more drab birds (like the Black-bellied Seedeater). The group also includes both accomplished and weak songsters alike.

The research team examined museum specimens of 303 tanager species, using a spectrophotometer to measure nine aspects of plumage coloration, such as brilliance and contrast. They took a similar approach to the birds' songs, analyzing more than 2,700 recordings to measure 20 song variables including length, bandwidth, and number of syllables. (By the end of the project, Mason had earned the distinction of being the largest-ever single user of the Cornell Lab's Macaulay Library sound archives.) Finally, the team compared how plumage and song complexity varied at each of the branches along a recently completed evolutionary tree of the tanager family.

"If there were going to be any group of birds at all that would show this trade-off, the tanagers would be a very good candidate, because there's all this variation in song and plumage complexity," Mason said, noting that the group's large size lends confidence to the statistical analysis. "But when we dive into it and do some rigorous statistics, it turns out that there is no overall trend. Tanagers can be drab and plain-sounding, or colorful and musical, or anything in between."

As a byproduct of the analyses, Mason was able to put together top-10 lists of tanagers with the most colorful plumage and the most complex songs. Those lists help illustrate the overall lack of a trade-off between singing and plumage. For example, a single genus of mountain-tanagers had members on both lists. The Lacrimose Mountain-Tanager ranked #8 among the most complex songs, while the Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager had the fourth most complex plumage of all 303 species examined.

The study puts a significant dent in the idea of evolutionary trade-offs between plumage and song. It's still possible that trade-offs take place at the level of genus, Mason said, or that they influence species relatively fleetingly as evolutionary pressures appear and disappear. But as a broad effect on an entire family of birds, a voice-plumage trade-off doesn't seem to exist. One possibility is that the resources needed to develop fancy plumage are different from the ones required for complex songs, freeing tanagers to invest in both forms of showiness simultaneously.

In addition to Mason, the study's authors include Allison Shultz and Kevin Burns, both of San Diego State University. The research was funded in part by the National Science Foundation and the National Geographic Society.

FIELD TRIPS

(continued from page 1)

SUNDAY, August 17— *Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery*

Join leaders Liz West and Joanne Katanic for our monthly census of this lovely little riparian area below Comanche Dam. Meet Liz in the fish hatchery parking lot at 8:00 a.m.

SATURDAY, August 23— *Ripon Oak Grove Park and Sewage Ponds*

Join leader Jim Rowoth for a visit to this undeveloped 55 acre park on the banks of the Stanislaus River in Ripon, and the adjacent Ripon Sewage Ponds. Meet at 7:00 a.m. in the parking lot at Toot Sweets, (northwest corner of March Lane and Quail Lakes Drive in Stockton) to carpool.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

April 15, 2014 - June 13, 2014

(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)

Submitted by Liz West

The **Pacific Golden-Plover** found by Jim Rowoth continued at the Ripon Sewage Ponds April 18th.

The **Cassin's Kingbirds** located by Mark and Lorna Elness at Corral Hollow Rd. continued as of May 14th.

Mark Elness saw an adult male **Calliope Hummingbird** at his feeder in Manteca on April 25th. On the same day Terre Ronneberg had a Costa's and a Calliope hummingbird up Kiln Canyon.

On April 26th. Ed Pandolfino found two **Brewer's Sparrows** along Waverly Rd. one north and one south of Flood Rd. The Brewer's were seen again a day later. While searching for the reported Brewers Sparrows Mark and Lorna saw the **Grasshopper Sparrow** originally reported March 30th. On May 7th, John Harris saw a Grasshopper Sparrow just south of Flood Rd. on Waverly. Several Grasshopper Sparrows were seen as late as May 15th.

Jim Rowoth visited the **Tri-colored Blackbird** colony just south of Koster Rd. gravel pond. He saw several dozen fledglings being fed May 11th. On May 17th he reported a colony of about 150 Tri-colored Blackbirds at the pond on Hwy 12 just east of the Hwy 88 and Hwy 12 split.

May 12th, David Yee found a female **Black and White Warbler** at Oak Grove Regional Park located off of Eight Mile Rd. in Stockton.

On May 31st, a group led by Jim Rowoth found three **Lawrence's Goldfinches** feeding in mulberry trees at the Ripon Oak Grove Park, a location they had been seen previously in March by Terre Ronneberg and April by Mark and Lorna Elness, indicating probable breeding status.

On June 1st, Terre Ronneberg found a **Marbled Godwit** at the Tracy Sewage Ponds. It was still present as of June 2nd.

On June 3rd, David Yee found a **Common Nighthawk** in a flock of Lesser Nighthawks at the end of Bird Rd. He then followed them over to a gravel processing plant on Blewett Rd. There was at least one Common Nighthawk calling regularly among the total of around 12.

On June 5th, Terre Ronneberg saw a pair of **Blue-winged Teal** at the Tracy Sewage Ponds.

On June 7th, Terre Ronneberg found a **Willet** at the Tracy Sewage Ponds.

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