

THE HOOT OWL



March / April 2009
Issue 2, Volume 47

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

Meetings

The meeting location is at Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Avenue (across from UOP) in Stockton, and begins at 7:30 p.m. Plenty of parking and refreshments. Everyone is welcome.

TUESDAY, March 10
Ted Beedy
"Guatemala"

Please join us for this beautiful cultural and birding experience from Guatemala. Ted participated in a two-week trip to Guatemala in February 2008 that was led by Keith Hansen and his wife, Patricia. Keith and Patricia have their own tour group, "Sacred Monkey Tours," and they have guided many birding groups to Central America. This was advertised to be both a birding and cultural trip, since Patricia grew up in Yucatan and is an expert on Mayan culture, textiles, and art. During the trip they visited a variety of habitats from lowland tropical rainforest at Tikal, to the highest cloud forests at the top of Volcan San Pedro. The group saw a total of almost 300 bird species. Ted's photos will show many of the birds and cultural experiences the group shared on this amazing trip.

Ted Beedy has almost 30 years of experience as a professional wildlife biologist. Prior to starting his own firm "Beedy Environmental Consulting" in May 2006, he worked for more than 20 years as a Senior Biologist at Jones & Stokes in Sacramento. Ted has studied wildlife throughout California, with an emphasis on special-status birds including Harlequin Ducks, California Gnatcatchers, Willow Flycatchers, and Tricolored Blackbirds. He has a Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of California, Davis. He is currently co-authoring a new book with David Lukas, *A Guide to Birds of the Sierra Nevada*, that will have color illustrations of more than 320 species of Sierra birds prepared by Keith Hansen.

"Meetings" continued on page 3

Field Trips

Bad weather (rain, dense fog, strong winds) cancels trips,

SATURDAY, March 7—Introductory Birding Field Trip

Join leader Liz West 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. Extra binoculars and field guides will be available.

SUNDAY, March 15—San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge

Stanislaus Audubon Society organizes this monthly fieldtrip to the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge located west of Modesto. Most of these trips are driving, but you may walk up to two miles on dirt roads. Meet in the parking lot behind Stanislaus County Library at 15th and H Streets, in Modesto, at 7:00 A.M. to carpool.

SUNDAY, March 22—Stillman Magee County Park

Join leader Jim Rowoth (956-2648 or rowoth@sbcglobal.net) as he conducts his monthly bird census at this little park on the banks of the Mokelumne River near Clements.

SATURDAY, April 11—Cosumnes River Preserve

Join leader John Schick as he conducts his monthly "River Walk" bird census at this lovely riparian preserve in southern Sacramento County. Meet at the Visitor Center on Franklin Rd. (south of Twin Cities Rd.) at 6:30 a.m.

SUNDAY, April 19—Stockton Rural Cemetery

We'll seek out the spring birds at this peaceful urban oasis. Meet leader Jim Rowoth at the entrance at the N end of Cemetery Lane at 8:00 a.m.

WEDNESDAY, April 22—Kiln Canyon Hummingbird Extravaganza

Join leader John Blades for our annual mid-week pilgrimage to this hummingbird mecca. Rufous, Anna's, Costa's, and Calliope Hummingbirds are to be expected. Meet in the parking lot at Toot Sweets (NW corner of March Ln. & Quail Lakes Dr., behind Black Angus) at 7:30 a.m. to carpool, or at the entrance to Carnegie SVRA (18600 Corral Hollow Rd., southwest of Tracy) at 8:30 a.m.

SAT., April 28—Del Puerto Canyon

Join leader Kurt Mize for this trip to scenic Del Puerto Canyon. We will be on the lookout for spring migrants and local specialties. Bring hats, sunscreen, lunch, and drinks as we will be picnicking at Frank Raines Park. Meet in the parking lot at Toot Sweets (corner of March Lane and Quail Lakes Dr. in Stockton) at 7:00 a.m. for carpooling. For more details call Kurt at 915-6264.

What Were Birders Seeing Around Here 100 Years Ago?

Have you recently spotted a Plumed Quail, Willow Woodpecker, Intermediate Sparrow, Lutescent Warbler, or a California Squirrel Hawk? Recently I was checking out some old articles about central California birds and I came across these names. Others included Tell Tale, Ground Tit, Western Grass Bunting, and Black Ptarmigan. Present-day names for some of these were easily determined, but others were much more difficult to pin down.

The oldest west coast birding guide that I have is the "Handbook of Birds of the Western United States," by Florence Merriam Bailey, 1902, with an addendum revised to 1920. The addendum changes the nomenclature to conform to the 1920 A.O.U. checklist. Another interesting section of the addendum is the list of "supplementary references." There are many articles included which have regional bird lists, but few of these are from the Central Valley or the central Sierra. Most are from coastal areas. Many of these were published either in the "Condor" or in "Pacific Coast Avifauna," which were products of the Cooper Ornithological Club, a highly respected organization of the day. Other than the 33 plates by Louis Agassiz Fuentès, the illustrations of the "Handbook" were from museum specimens.

I decided to review a few of the publications that I could find from the late 1800's to the early 1900's to see how both the birds and the nomenclature had changed in the last 100 years. I chose "A Partial List of the Birds of Central California," by L. Belding of Stockton, published in the Smithsonian Proceedings of April 22, 1879; "A List of the Land Birds of the Placerville-Lake Tahoe Stage Road," by C. Barlow from the Nov. 1901 issue of the "Condor;" and "Some Birds of the Fresno District, California," by John C. Tyler, a Cooper Ornithological Club publication from 1913.

The earliest publication reviewed was the one by Belding. He mentions the extensive tule swamps west of Stockton and the birds he observed on trips from Stockton to Murphys, Calaveras Big Trees, and Soda Springs, as well as a visit to the Marysville area. He noted the "Red-bellied Hawk" (Swainson's) which was very common in the Stockton area in summer and nested in oaks. He describes the valley east of Stockton as being very level, sparsely timbered except for narrow strips of oaks and willows along the principal water courses. "Because of the scarcity of water in the breeding season, birds are not numerous." He also used the interesting name of "Tell Tale" for the Greater Yellowlegs, "Sheldrake" for Common Merganser, and "California Squirrel Hawk" for Ferruginous Hawk. He observed that Yellow-headed Blackbirds were abundant in the valley, but not Tricolored Blackbirds. Most of his observations of foothill and mountain birds were the same ones we would see today. But I did note that there were no observations made of Common Ravens in the hills or mountains. The only hypothesis that I can make about this omission is that Ravens are very smart birds, and may have avoided areas of human habitation where they quite possibly could have been shot. There were no protected species back in the 1800's.

Like Belding, Barlow was both an experienced observer and a collector. He collected both eggs and the birds themselves in the form of skins. His observations were annotated by W. W. Price, who had made extensive observations in the area for many years. The birds studied are, like those studied by Belding, ones which summer in the Sierra. Fall, winter, and spring birds were not noted. That said, it is interesting to note that the summer birds are the same ones we would observe at the same elevations at the present time. If global warming has had an impact on bird species which spend their summers in this area, it is not obvious. House Sparrows were observed at Placerville, but no European Starlings, Wild Turkeys, or other non-native species were noted. Again, and surprisingly, no Ravens were observed.

I know little of the other authors, but John C. Tyler, author of "Some Birds of the Fresno District, California," has a Stockton connection. He was a Fresno businessman and an active amateur who wrote extensively about the birds of the Fresno area. He, too, collected bird eggs for museums and probably to sell to collectors. Collecting eggs was a rather common hobby and there was a journal, "The Nidologist," for bird egg collectors. Tyler was the father-in-law of Jack Arnold, who taught for years at Stockton (Delta) College and College (University) of the Pacific. He later developed the biology department at the new Sonoma State College as well as spending time after retirement as an ornithology research associate for the California Academy of Sciences. In the agricultural area around Fresno, Tyler noted many species (the names of which have since been changed), such as Florida Gallinule, Forbush Sparrow, Linnets, Hudsonian Curlew, Hutchins' Goose, and Duck Hawk. But all species are the same as those which would be found in the area today. Can you figure them out? One interesting observation was that there was an "increasing rarity of Magpies." A local migration of Tricolored Blackbirds was described as passing over at frequent intervals from daylight until after sunset. Swainson's Hawks were common, and one farmer noted that they kept the mice and gophers in check, so he allowed them to hunt "undisturbed over his place." Tyler did note Ravens on the west side of the valley near the foothills.

It appears that the birds, if not the birders, have changed less than we might think over the last 100 years.

I would like to dedicate this article to my recently deceased father, Dr. Kenneth M. Stocking, who was the president of the Stockton (San Joaquin) Audubon Society in 1942 and introduced me to the pleasures of watching birds soon after.



MONTHLY BIRD CENSUS

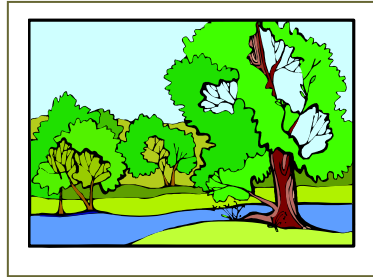
RIVER WALK (formerly Willow Slough)
SAT., March 7, at 6:10 a.m. and SAT.,
April 11, at 6:30 a.m. Meet at the
Visitor's Center.

With John Schick (209)464-8304

TALL FOREST

SAT., March 21, at 6:30 a.m., and SAT.,
April 18, at 6:45 a.m. Meet at the Farm
Center.

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



MOKELUMNE RIVER MONTHLY BIRD CENSUS

LODI LAKE

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

MOKELUMNE RIVER DAY USE AREA

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

STILLMAN MAGEE COUNTY PARK

March 22. April date uncertain at time of printing.
Contact Jim Rowoth, 956-2648, for more information.

Please call as schedules often change.

Meetings *(continued)*

TUESDAY, April 14

Taldi Walker

***"From the Black Oystercatcher to Black Gold:
Challenges and Opportunities in Alaska"***

Alaska is the largest of our states, encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of rugged mountains, grinding glaciers, endless tundra, diverse temperate rainforest, and winding coast lines. From the Spectacled Eider and Yellow-billed Loon found in America's Arctic to the Black Oystercatcher and the Marbled Godwit found on the southern coastline, Alaska's birdlife diversity is astounding. Alaska also has an abundance of other iconic wildlife species including grizzlies, caribou, Bald Eagles, humpback whales, and wolves, many of which are endangered elsewhere. With the current energy crisis, some members of congress have advocated vastly accelerating the extraction of oil, gas, and mineral deposits in this important ecological area. Audubon seeks a balance between resource extraction and protecting internationally critical habitat.

Taldi Walter joined the Audubon Alaska staff after working as the Alaska Outreach Coordinator for National Audubon Society's Public Policy Office in Washington, D.C. Taldi received her Masters degree in Biology. She will present an informative slideshow showcasing some of the important natural areas and brilliant birds found in wild Alaska. The presentation will explore some of Alaska's natural treasures set aside decades ago for the benefit of wildlife and the American public. Taldi will highlight the imminent and compelling challenges and opportunities facing Alaska's wild lands.



BIRD SIGHTINGS

December, 2008 - February 13, 2009
(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)

Submitted by Liz West



On January 3rd, Bob Power, with his GGRO hawk watch team, re-found a dark morph Ferruginous Hawk southeast of the Bellota and Flood Rd. intersection. One was first seen by Cheri Pillsbury on September 21st. The last known sighting of the bird was January 27th. Cheri Pillsbury found a "Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk on January 12th, southeast of Flood Rd. just before it dead ends at Waverly Rd. It is the first she has seen in almost five years at that location. Joanne Katanic and I saw a female Barrow's Goldeneye at the Mokelumne Day Use area below Comanche dam. It was with a group of Common Goldeneyes.

San Joaquin Audubon Society

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Liz West Director at Large
Dave Wagner Director at Large

Kasey Foley Membership, Website
Steve Stocking Education
Sandi Schoeppe Hospitality
Cheri Pillsbury Listserve Moderator
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
Los Angeles 323-874-1318
San Diego 619-688-2473

Joint membership in National Audubon and San Joaquin chapter includes a subscription to both *Audubon* magazine and *The Hoot Owl*. Make checks payable to National Audubon Society and send to:

San Joaquin Audubon
Attn: Membership
P.O. Box 7755
Stockton, CA 95267

(Renewals should be mailed directly to National Audubon per renewal notice.)

Introductory rate:	\$20	Student/Senior:	\$15
Basic Family;	\$35	Lifetime (ind.):	\$1000
Newsletter only: (non-member)	\$10	Lifetime (fam.):	\$1500

Notice: "Newsletter only" yearly dues have increased

Name _____

Address _____

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