

# THE HOOT OWL



March / April 2015  
Issue 2, Volume 53

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

## PROGRAMS

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**

**Lowell Young**

***"Tricolored Blackbirds Action Team!"***

Join us to learn about the genesis of the Audubon Chapter Tricolored Blackbird Action Team (ACTBAT). This began 11 years ago, when Lowell took on the responsibility for doing tricolored blackbird surveys in Merced County. Four years ago, his team found the first colony of tricolored blackbirds they had ever seen in the survey area during the survey period. There were at least 60,000 of them and he will never forget the thrill of seeing so many birds at one time. This is the beginning of the story, and Lowell will tell us the rest.

Born and raised in Salt Lake City, Lowell attended universities in Utah and California then settled in Mariposa in 1986 with his family. A lifelong environmentalist and activist, he was responsible for getting the California Nuclear Initiative Measure on the ballot in the 70's and the first no-smoking bills in the world passed in the 80's. Lowell received the National Audubon 2013 Callison award as Citizen Volunteer of the Year and the 2014 Point Blue Conservation Science award for Citizen Scientist of the Year.. He has been active in Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, and the Mariposa County Economic Development Corporation. Lowell is also the president of Yosemite Area Audubon Society.

**TUESDAY, April 14**

**David Yee**

***"My Top Bird ID Challenges in San Joaquin County"***

After birding in San Joaquin County for decades, David still gets stumped by some species groups/pairs. Some are obvious, like Rufous and Allen's hummingbirds. Others aren't so obvious. David will share why these are a challenge for him, how he approaches the challenge, and what field marks he uses in hoping to solve the challenge. He will also talk a bit on how we can constructively share our unusual sightings.

## FIELD TRIPS

**SUNDAY, March 1— *Rush Ranch / Grizzly Island***

Join leaders Liz West and Joanne Katanic for a visit to this interesting area of rolling grasslands and brackish marsh in Solano County. Meet in the McDonald's parking lot at Flag City (Highway 12 and I-5) at 7:30 a.m. to carpool. Bring a lunch as they have a nice picnic area.

**SATURDAY, March 7— *Introductory Birding FT***

Join leader Susan Schneider 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.

**SUNDAY, March 8— *Cosumnes River Preserve / River Walk***

Join leader Jim Rowoth (487-3489 or [rowoth@sbcglobal.net](mailto: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](http://www.cosumnes.org) for last minute updates. Double check with Jim for start time.

**SUNDAY, March 15— *Mokelumne R. 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.

**SATURDAY, March 21— *Woodbridge Wilderness Area***

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

**WEDNESDAY, March 25— *White Slough Wildlife Area***

Join leader Jim Rowoth for this mid-week walk along the ponds and hedgerows of White Slough. Meet Jim in the McDonald's parking lot at Flag City (Highway 12 and I-5) at 7:00 a.m.

**SATURDAY, April 4— *Introductory Birding Field Trip***

Join leader Jim Rowoth 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.

**SATURDAY, April 11— *Cosumnes River Preserve / River Walk***

See listing for Sunday, March 8. Double check with Jim for start time.

*(continued on page 3)*

## One Good Turn: Birds Swap Energy-sapping Lead Role When Flying in V-formation

Date: February 2, 2015

Source: University of Oxford

Summary: Migrating birds 'share the pain' of the arduous task of leading a v-formation, so that they can then take turns saving energy by following in another bird's wake, a new study shows.

The research, by an international team led by Oxford University scientists, is the first convincing evidence for 'turn taking' reciprocal cooperative behavior in birds. It is also only the second good example of reciprocal cooperation in animals, following a study that revealed how vampire bats shared blood to keep other unrelated individuals alive.

The team studied 14 juvenile Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*) migrating from Salzburg in Austria to Orbetello in Italy. The 'human-imprinted' birds followed a powered parachute carrying their handlers. Tiny 23g data loggers worn by each bird enabled the researchers to examine how individuals within a flying v-formation interacted.

Although the human-imprinted birds followed a powered parachute the experiment was designed to replicate the behavior of wild ibis where juveniles from the same location tend to migrate together. The behavior of the ibis from the study, including group size and travelling speed, closely matches that of wild flocks.

The researchers found that individual birds changed position frequently within the flock, flying in formations of 2 to 12 birds. Overall, individuals spent an average of 32% of their time benefiting by flying in the updraft produced by another bird's flapping wings and a proportional amount of time leading a formation.

Migrations are inherently risky for birds: previous research suggests that up to 35% of juvenile birds can die of exhaustion on their first migration. Flying in formation can help to save vital energy: it is estimated geese can make energy savings of 10–14% by gaining lift from flying in the updraft of other birds.

The team investigated why supposedly 'selfish' individuals would 'altruistically' use up more of their energy leading a formation and how flocks guard against 'free-loaders' benefitting from travelling in the wake of other birds without ever leading themselves.

'Our study shows that the 'building blocks' of reciprocal cooperative behavior can be very simple: ibis often travel in pairs, with one bird leading and a 'wingman' benefiting by following in the leader's updraft,' said lead author Dr Bernhard Voelkl of Oxford University's Department of Zoology. 'We found that in these pairs individuals take turns, precisely matching the amount of time they spend in the energy-sapping lead position and the energy-saving following position.'

Even by travelling in a pair the energy costs for both individuals are reduced, whilst larger formations bring even greater energy savings (although large formations are more unstable).

'We found that larger formations of ibis were still made up of these 'turn-taking' pairs,' said Dr Voelkl. 'The checking that went on within these pairs was sufficient on its own to prevent any freeloaders hitching a free ride within a v-formation without leading. In fact, surprisingly, we found no evidence of 'cheating' of any kind within these flocks with the level of cooperation, with individuals benefiting from following 32% of the time, significantly higher than expected.'

'We think that it is the extreme risks associated with long migration journeys that have driven the evolution of such cooperative behavior where something like saving 10% of your energy can make the difference between life and death.'

Further studies are planned to see how the cooperative behavior of the juvenile ibis develops over time and whether they learn to fine-tune their energy-saving tactics. The team also say more research is needed to quantify the energy-saving benefits for individuals by fitting the birds with sensors to, for instance, monitor heart rate and respiration.

### Reference:

University of Oxford. "One good turn: Birds swap energy-sapping lead role when flying in v-formation." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 2 February 2015. <[www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/02/150202160709.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/02/150202160709.htm)>.

## FIELD TRIPS *(continued from page 1)*

### Wednesday, April 15— Kiln Canyon Hummingbird Hike

Join leader John Blades for our annual mid-week trip to this always-interesting spot. Meet in the parking lot at Toot Sweets (March Ln. and Quail Lakes Dr.) at 7:00 a.m. to carpool or at the entrance to Carnegie SVRA at 08:00

### SATURDAY, April 18— Woodbridge Wilderness Area

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

### SUNDAY, April 19— 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.

### SATURDAY, April 25— Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park

Join leaders Joanne Katanic and Kathy and Virginia Bonham for a visit to lovely little park nestled in a small valley in the foothills of the Sierra. The limestone outcrops in the park contain some 1185 mortar holes, making it the largest collection of bedrock mortars in North America. Highlights of last year's trip included Brown Creeper, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Pacific Slope Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Pileated Woodpecker, Rufous Hummingbird, Nashville Warbler, and Black-headed Grosbeak. Meet the leaders at 7:30 a.m. at the Park N Ride at Highway 99 and Highway 12 (Victor Road) in Lodi to carpool. Bring a lunch as we will be picnicking in the park.

## THANK YOU!

Thank you for your wonderful response to our end-of-year financial campaign. Your individual contributions of \$4285, combined with a generous contribution by the CA Webster Foundation, will allow us to continue to pay our bills, support nature education programs and contribute in a more substantial way to habitat preservation.

## BIRD SIGHTINGS

*December 15, 2014 - February 11, 2015*  
*(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)*

Submitted by Liz West

A female **Barrow's Goldeneye** continued through January 28<sup>th</sup> at the River Lakes development in Lathrop.

Pat Bacchetti found a female **Barrow's Goldeneye** in the gravel ponds at Koster Rd. on January 31<sup>st</sup>.

Also at the River Lakes development, near the boathouse, Terri Ronneberg found a **Horned Grebe** on December 28<sup>th</sup>.

On January 11<sup>th</sup>, Linda Pittman found a male **Barrow's Goldeneye** at River Lakes.

During the Stockton Christmas bird count December 20<sup>th</sup> Jim Rowoth heard a **Black Rail** at White Slough. Mark and Lorna Elness had a couple of **Band-tailed Pigeons** on private property.

Terri Ronneberg saw a male **Blue-winged Teal** at the Tracy Sewage Ponds December 21<sup>st</sup>. On January 11<sup>th</sup> Dave Kent found one at Woodbridge Ecological Reserve

Steve Huckabone found a **Red-throated Loon** on a pond near Kelso Rd., January 4<sup>th</sup>, last reported January 18<sup>th</sup>.

While looking for the continuing Red-throated Loon Frances Oliver and Joanne Katanic found a female **Red-breasted Merganser** on January 7<sup>th</sup>.

On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, David Yee reported a juvenile light phase **Harlan's Hawk** still hanging around Flag City on January 27<sup>th</sup>. It frequently perches on the Park and Ride lights.

At the very end of Eight Mile Rd., near Herman and Helen's Marina, David Yee found a **Bewick's** race of Tundra Swan in with 200 other Tundra Swans on January 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>.

The **Eurasian Wigeon** continued on Woodbridge Rd., last seen February 1<sup>st</sup>.

At Carnegie Recreation Area, Dan Kopp found two **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** and 59 **Band-tailed Pigeons** on January 28<sup>th</sup>.

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## Calif. Birding E-mail Discussion Groups

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