

# THE HOOT OWL



May / June 2011  
Issue 3, Volume 49

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 13.

## FEEDING SONGBIRDS

Studies by the National Bird-Feeding Society have shown that black-oil sunflower, white poso millet, niger (thistle) seed and sunflower chips are the highly sought after seeds. Birds must consume a mix of fats, proteins, carbohydrates and various vitamins and minerals to fuel their metabolism, which can require up to 10,000 calories a day. "A backyard feeder is an especially efficient place to forage because it mimics what scientists call a "resource patch," a cluster of food much like a fruit-laden apple tree. Even with access to feeders, birds obtain most of their food from other wild sources. It has been found that growth rates, survival rates, breeding success, and clutch sizes all improve when birds have access to feeders". National Wildlife

Seeds for birds should be as fresh as possible, of high quality, and stored in a clean dry place. Birds choose seeds which are easily handled and digested. They may taste the fat content and seeds high in fat are usually high in protein as well. Birds may avoid your feeder if you put out old, moldy, or inedible seeds. Birds typically avoid cracked corn so avoid mixes which contain corn. It just stays around and molds.

A clean birdbath is important for your bird-friendly landscape. It is also important to clean seed feeders with a 10 percent solution of non-chlorine bleach solution. Then let it dry in the sun. Get rid of moldy food. It's also very important to locate the feeder away from windows and cats.

Birdscape: Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Steve Stocking, Education Chair

## FIELD TRIPS

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

Join leader Jim Rowth 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.

### **WEDNESDAY, May 11—Electra Road**

Join leaders Joann Katanic and Frances Oliver for this mid-week visit to Electra Road, on the banks of the Mokelumne River just above Jackson in Amador County. Meet at the Park-n-Ride at I-5 and Hwy 12 @ 7:00 for carpooling.

### **SATURDAY, May 14—Annual Chapter Picnic - Lodi Lake/WRP**

We will start off birding at 8:00 a.m. at Woodbridge Regional Park, combining our bird walk with the new monthly bird census of this delightful park. The pot luck brunch will follow at Lodi Lake Park at approx. 10:00 a.m., so bring a dish to share.

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

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

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

See entry for Saturday, May 7. Join leader Dave Wagner at the north end of Laurel Ave. in Lodi at 8:00 a.m.

### **SATURDAY, June 11—Calaveras Big Trees State Park**

Join leader Kurt Mize (915-6264, [k1mize@aol.com](mailto:k1mize@aol.com)) for this visit to one of California's oldest and most beautiful state parks. We'll be on the lookout for local specialties and breeding migrants. Bring drinks, a picnic lunch, mosquito repellent, and sunscreen. We'll picnic by the river. Meet at the park in the North Grove parking lot at 8:30 a.m., or at the Country Café in Lockeford at 7:00 a.m. if you wish to carpool.

### **SATURDAY, June 18—Woodbridge Regional Park**

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

### **SATURDAY, June 18—Annual Summer Butterfly Count**

At Oak Grove Regional Park. See article on Page 2. Call Kathy Schick (209)464-8304 or e-mail [kaschick@berkeley.edu](mailto:kaschick@berkeley.edu) for more information.

### **FRI-SAT-SUN, June 24-25-26—Yosemite/Mono Lake**

Details uncertain at time of printing. Call leader Dave Wagner (209) 943-6997 or e-mail [Dajwagner@aol.com](mailto:Dajwagner@aol.com) for more information.

## FEATHER FACTOIDS

It has been found that New Caledonian crows use sticks as tools to extract wood boring beetle larvae from their burrows. Just a few of these very nutritional larvae can satisfy a crow's daily energy requirements. Science Vol.329 9-17-2010.

Hawk migration counts have been found to offer a practical method to monitor populations of North American Ospreys and other hawks. Science Vol. 330. 12-3-2010.

A hand-painted print of Mockingbirds and 434 prints from Audubon's mid-19th century book Birds of America sold at Sotheby's in London for \$11.6 million. Only 120 copies are known to exist. Science Vol. 330 12-17-2010

A young Western Bluebird decides whether or not to disperse from the parents territory partly based on the amount of their favorite food-mistletoe-on his parent's territory. If they stay they also get more maternal care. These observations based on studies done at the U.C. Hastings Natural History Reservation in the Carmel Valley. Cornell Lab of Ornithology: BirdScope. Autumn 2007.

The length of one of the genes that influences migratory behavior influences the length of migratory flights! 14 populations of Blackcaps migrate very different distances. Those with the longer version of the gene were those which migrated longer distances. The gene specifies a peptide in the brain that influences daily rhythms and affects energy use increasing body temperature, metabolic rate etc.. Science 331. 2-25-2011.

More than 900 species of birds pollinate some 500 species of flowering plants. Bird extinctions, particularly on tropical islands, have led to plant decline. One example is on Guam where the introduced Brown Tree Snake has wiped out the avian pollinators of the coral tree. This has resulted in reduced seed production of this tropical tree with showy flowers which has sometimes been grown on coffee plantations to shade the coffee plants. Science 331. 2-25-2011.

"Fork-tailed Drongos in the Kalahari Desert act as sentinels, scanning for predators and producing regular "all clear" calls so other birds can spend more time looking for food. It's cooperative behavior, but it's also a protection racket: Drongos make false alarm calls and snatch the abandoned food." Smithsonian. Feb. 2011

"Feathers Are Flying Over Colombian Bird Name Flap" (I just love that title!) A new species of neotropical bird, Fenwick's Antpitta was named in honor of the family of the head of the American Bird Conservancy. This was one of the first times that a new species was based on the measurements and photographs of a live bird. The problem is that someone else, who has been given no credit actually found the bird. That bird was found dead in a capture net and was named by an employee of the foundation Pro-Aves. It gets more complicated and concerned with killing rare birds for science. The Pro-Aves organization has done much to protect bird habitat. Science 331 Mar 4,

Steve Stocking, Education Chair

## Sandhill Crane Docents Wanted

The California Department of Fish & Game invites potential new volunteers to interview and train for open docent positions in the popular Sandhill Crane Wetland Tour program at Woodbridge Ecological Reserve.

Individuals with a passion for conservation and an interest in birding who desire to learn more about wintering Sandhill Cranes and wetland habitat should take advantage of this opportunity.

The Season of the Cranes runs October through February with 3-hour "fly-in" tours scheduled on Saturdays and Sundays each month. Prospective docents should have good communication skills and must be able to volunteer one or two days each month for the late afternoon tours. All tours are conducted with teams of three docents.

A docent application can be obtained by sending an email to [gchristianer@dfg.ca.gov](mailto:gchristianer@dfg.ca.gov) or by calling (209) 948-7708. Applications will be taken during the month of May. Learn more about the Sandhill Crane Wetland Tours online at: [dfg.ca.gov/delta/cranetour](http://dfg.ca.gov/delta/cranetour)

## San Joaquin County Annual Summer Butterfly Count

Saturday, June 18

Saturday, June 18, 2011, we will hold the annual San Joaquin County Summer Butterfly Count. This family-friendly field trip is a cooperative project of the San Joaquin Audubon Society, the University of California Cooperative Extension, and the North American Butterfly Association.

We will begin at 8:00 am at the Nature Center Oak Grove Regional Park and finish the count between 3:00 and 4:00 pm. No experience or expertise is required for butterfly counters. All participants will need to bring a hat, sunscreen, water, and lunch or a snack (and books, binoculars, and nets if you have them). Call Kathy Schick (209)464-8304 or e-mail [kaschick@berkeley.edu](mailto:kaschick@berkeley.edu) for more information.

# Western Field Ornithologists Conference

Sierra Vista, AZ  
August 17-21, 2011

If you've never been to southeast Arizona during the late summer season (or even if you have), this is an opportunity you won't want to miss. Besides a program of speakers and workshops, we will offer field trips to all the southeast Arizona hotspots looking for local specialties like Scaled and Montezuma Quail, Gray, Short-tailed, and Zone-tailed hawks, a dazzling variety of hummingbirds and flycatchers, Elegant Trogon, Red-faced Warbler, Cassin's, Botteri's, Rufous-winged, and Five-striped sparrows and much more. To register and see full details go to [www.westernfieldornithologists.org](http://www.westernfieldornithologists.org) and click on the 'Annual Conference' banner in the middle of the page. You will probably want to download the Conference Details document and review before you begin registration.

## *Science Olympiad*

On March 12, San Joaquin Audubon participated in the San Joaquin Regional Competition of the National Science Olympiad. Alan England prepared the Ornithology Event PowerPoint quiz, ably assisted by Liz West and Jim Rowoth. The competition theme was bird identification, with additional emphases on bird morphology, ecology and behavior. Over 600 students participated in the multiple events of the Olympiad. Seventy-five middle- and high-school youth participated in the Ornithology Event, representing twenty-two San Joaquin County schools.

Following the local competition, Joanne Katanic coached one of our local winners, Emma Greene, as she prepared for the California State Science Olympiad. Then on April 9, a Lodi High team composed of Emma Greene and Jasmine Nguyen competed in Fresno and won fifth place out of twenty-four teams. Congratulations Emma and Jasmine; you did us proud!

## BIRD SIGHTINGS

*Mid-February, 2011 - April 18, 2011*  
*(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)*

Submitted by Liz West

For the "Great Backyard Bird Count" February 19<sup>th</sup>, Jim Rowoth reported a **Pacific Golden Plover** at the Lodi Sewage Ponds. The plover was last seen April 2<sup>nd</sup>. He hasn't seen one there since 2003.

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, David Yee reported a female "**Prairie**" **Merlin** (*Falco columbarius richardsonii*) at Armstrong Rd. and Hwy 99. This paler race winters primarily east of the Rockies.

For two months in a row, Joanne Katanic and Liz West saw **Violet-green Swallows** at the fish hatchery, February 20<sup>th</sup> and March 26<sup>th</sup>. We usually see the Violet-green's moving through just in February.

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, Steve Rottenborn found a first cycle **Glaucous Gull** on King Island and a first cycle **Glaucous-winged Gull** at the Stockton Sewage ponds. David Yee last saw the Glaucous Gull March 5<sup>th</sup>. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, Jim Lomax saw the Glaucous-winged Gull and a juvenile **Thayer's Gull**.

David Yee saw a female **Barrow's Goldeneye**, February 20<sup>th</sup> at the Lodi Sewage ponds.

On March 13<sup>th</sup> David Yee found a possible first cycle "**Kumlien's**" **Iceland Gull** at Empire Tract. In his e-mail he said it is part of a confusing complex that includes Thayer's gull and that the California Bird Records committee does not accept most sightings.

At a newly discovered gull spot at Gaffery Rd and the Delta Mendota canal, on March 27<sup>th</sup>, David Yee, Frances Oliver, Jim Rowoth, and Liz West watched a group of gulls move north into San Joaquin county. Included in the group were many bleached out **Glaucous-winged Gulls** and **Western Gulls**. On the Stanislaus county side were two first cycle **Glaucous Gulls**. The next day John Luther and Roy Carlson watched what must be a **Black-tailed Gull** fly into San Joaquin county airspace. These gulls are attracted to the large neighboring composting facility. A worker there said that they have been showing up for years. Michael Bumgardner discovered the flock, March 22<sup>nd</sup> while he was doing Kit Fox surveys. On April 12<sup>th</sup>, John Sterling reported a first cycle Glaucous gull and many Western and Glaucous-winged gulls.

Cheri Pillsbury last saw the **Painted Bunting** at her feeders March 14<sup>th</sup>. The **Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk** was last seen March 6<sup>th</sup> by David Yee at I-5 and Peltier Rd.

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

## Calif. Bird Alerts

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
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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:

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