

THE HOOT OWL



September / October 2017
Issue 5, Volume 55

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, September 12

Jim Rowoth and Pat Paternostro

"Fall and Winter Birding Tips for Enjoying our Monthly Field Trips"

Our fall kick-off program will highlight local birding hotspots. Please join Pat Paternostro and Jim Rowoth as they discuss upcoming arrivals, wintering birds, what to expect when you're expecting (to bird), and local specialties! Jim will also discuss the eBird app and how to use it.

Pat is currently President-elect of the San Joaquin Audubon Society and is originally from Williamsport, Pennsylvania. He has been birding since he was twelve, and his hobbies include birding, hiking and fly-fishing.

Jim is a past San Joaquin Audubon Society President and current Board Member who is retired and happily birding around the world.

PLEASE NOTE DATE AND TIME CHANGE FOR OCTOBER MEETING!

MONDAY, October 27 7:00 p.m.

Pete Otteson

"Reflecting on Nearly 50 years in the Outdoor Media"

This is our annual joint meeting with the Sierra Club. Pete Otteson is an award winning outdoor writer and educator.

In 1986, he was a founding director of the Outdoor Writers Association of California and has won every first-place writing award the organization presents annually, including Writer of the Year in 1995.

Pete has engaged in many conservation causes, and has been active in efforts to provide quality water for wildlife in the Central Valley.

The recipient of many awards and honors for his contributions to the outdoors and education over the years, Pete's impact on the public has been far reaching and long lasting.

FIELD TRIPS

SATURDAY, September 2— *Introductory Birding*

Join leader Pat Paternostro 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.

SATURDAY, September 9— *Cosumnes River Preserve*

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, September 16— *Woodbridge Wilderness Area*

Join leader Pat Paternostro 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, September 17— *Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery*

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

WEDNESDAY, September 20— *Ripon Oak Grove & Sewage Ponds*

Join leader Jim Rowoth for a visit to this 55 acre park on the banks of the Stanislaus River in Ripon. 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, or in Ripon at 7:30 a.m. If driving yourself, from Hwy 99, take the Main St. exit in Ripon to S. Stockton Rd. and go south. Before S. Stockton Rd. curves to the west and changes to Doak Blvd., pass the Diamond Pet Food plant on the left, and take the next driveway on your left to the unpaved parking area. Bring drinks and repellent. Call Jim (209) 487-3489 or email at rowoth@sbcglobal.net with any questions.

SATURDAY, September 23— *Birds & Fall Colors of Hope Valley*

Bring your camera and capture the Sierra Aspens as they change their colors from green to GOLD, plus Sierra BIRDS. Meet leader Joanne Katanic at 7:00 am at Hwy.12 and 99 (Victor Rd.) Park 'n Ride in Lodi. Bring a lunch.

SUNDAY, October 1— *Bear Creek Bike Trail*

Join leader Susan Schneider for this easy 2-mile walk featuring riparian and marsh habitat. Extra binoculars and field guides will be available. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot of Michael Faklis Park which is off Cosumnes Dr. near Mokelumne Circle, SW of I5/Eight Mile Road interchange.

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FIELD TRIPS

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SATURDAY, October 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.

SATURDAY, October 14 – *Woodbridge Wilderness Area*

Join leader Susan Schneider 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.

SATURDAY, October 21— *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.

SUNDAY, October 22 — *Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery*

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

Two Tips for Telling a Bird's Age by Its Molt Patterns

By Nate Swick

June 8, 2017

Late summer is the time when ragged, disheveled-looking birds start showing up at feeders. Gone is the sleek, clean look of spring. Some birds may even be missing feathers, as if they've come out the other end of a bar fight.

These birds aren't sick—they're molting. Feathers are the defining characteristic for birds, and critically important for everything from attracting mates, to keeping warm, to escaping predators. But they don't last forever, and most feathers wear significantly over the course of a year. Breeding season can be particularly rough, because of the frenetic activity and increased abrasion from dozens of visits to well-hidden nests in dense brush or cavities.

By late summer feathers are often at their worst, but fortunately food resources—insects and seeds—are abundant. So there is plenty of energy around for birds to put into growing new feathers. After chicks have fledged and before it's time to leave for migration, most adult birds take the opportunity to replace those worn feathers. The chicks, on the other hand, are fresh out of the nest, so their molt schedule is slightly different.

Knowing a bit about what birds look like during the molt can be very useful information. In birding circles, molt has a reputation as an advanced skill. But if you arm yourself with just a couple of basic ideas, they can reveal fascinating secrets about the birds you see.

Two-toned Towhees

Take a towhee, for instance—Eastern or Spotted, depending on which side of the continent you live on. A young towhee just out of the nest looks almost nothing like the dapper black-and-white adult males. Juveniles are brown and streaky, showing the towhee's sparrow heritage, the better to stay hidden from threats while the young birds learn the ropes.

By fall these birds will have replaced those streaky body feathers with the more traditional towhee pattern: shiny black on the head and back (brown in females), with chestnut flanks and a white belly. But young birds molt only the body feathers, not the flight feathers in the wings and tail, because flight feathers need to be sturdy and so take more energy to replace. First-year towhees won't replace their brownish flight feathers until the next fall.

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Two Tips for Telling a Bird's Age by Its Molt Patterns

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So if you ever see a towhee hopping around your feeder with two-toned wings—nice black or rich brown scapulars and wing coverts; dingy brown primaries, secondaries, and tail—you can be sure that bird is a youngster that just hatched that past summer.

American Goldfinches also show a difference between adult and young birds due to molting. For example, male American Goldfinches all look shiny yellow in summer, but if you see one with faded brown-black primaries, you know it's a bird that just hatched the previous year. It looks a little like a person wearing a new suit and worn-out shoes. And once you can spot this pattern in towhees and goldfinches, you can look for it in other species, too.

Molt Limits: Mind the Gap

In its second year, a young bird will finally replace its first flight feathers. That's a good time to check out its wings. Look for a pattern of worn old and pristine new feathers located right next to each other. This is called the "molt limit," so named because it shows how far the bird has progressed in molting. It can be visible in adult birds, but is easiest to see in the second year.

Larger birds have larger feathers, which make them great subjects for looking at molt limits. While smaller birds squeeze in their molt between the end of breeding and the beginning of migration, larger birds don't have that luxury. Feathers can only grow so fast, so larger birds often show evidence of molt for more of the year.

This condition allows birders to easily distinguish young birds from older ones. Take the Turkey Vulture, which can live for 16 years or more. Juveniles and adults look nearly identical, but adults nearly always show obvious signs of molt in the warmer months. It takes a Turkey Vulture over one year to grow its foot-long flight feathers, one by one. While adult Turkey Vultures are molting, their older flight feathers are tattered and abraded, and there are noticeable gaps in the wings where new feathers are growing, not unlike the toothy smile of a first grader. On the other hand, young Turkey Vultures recently out of the nest will show a pristine profile with brand new feathers all in good condition and giving an even outline to the wing. It's a distinction that is obvious even when birds are soaring at great distances.

And it works for most large birds, not just Turkey Vultures: try it out with your local Red-tailed Hawks, pelicans, and cormorants. In fact, in the early 1980s this technique was instrumental in determining exactly how many California Condors remained in the wild.

These two patterns are just the beginning of what molt can reveal about a bird. Some scientists have used molt patterns to understand whether a bird is a long- or short-distance migrant, or even as clues to when and where a bird breeds. So take a second look at those worn feathers. There's a lot to be learned even when birds are not at their best.

From the Summer 2017 issue of Living Bird magazine.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

June 16, 2017 - August 8, 2017

(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)

Submitted by Liz West

On July 15th, Jim Hoagland photographed a **Northern Parula** on private property along the Mokelumne River.

David Yee found a **Semi-palmated Sandpiper**, **Solitary Sandpiper**, and **Lesser Yellowlegs** at the Lodi Sewage Ponds August 3rd.

San Joaquin Audubon Society
P.O. Box 7755
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National Membership

By joining the National Audubon Society you are also a member of the San Joaquin Chapter. This includes subscriptions to the award-winning *Audubon Magazine* and to the chapter newsletter, *The Hoot Owl*. Both publications are bimonthly. For *national membership*, send check payable to the **National Audubon Society** to the address below.

- National Audubon Membership Rate: \$20

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

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This includes a subscription to the bimonthly chapter newsletter, *The Hoot Owl*. For *local membership*, send check payable to **San Joaquin Audubon Society** to the address below.

- Chapter Newsletter—mailed paper copy \$15
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