

THE HOOT OWL



March / April 2021
Issue 2, Volume 59

San Joaquin Audubon Society
San Joaquin Audubon Society

PROGRAMS

There will be no in-person general membership meetings until Covid-19 pandemic conditions allow. In the interim, we will do our best to offer programs via Zoom or other media.

TUESDAY, March 9, 7:00 p.m.

John Sterling

“Changes in Bird Distribution and Population in the Central Valley over the last 80 Years”

VIRTUAL MEETING

John will discuss the changes in our knowledge of bird distribution and population in the Central Valley since the publication of Grinnell and Miller’s book on California birds in the 1940s. Loss of habitats, creation of new habitats, reduction of ranges, invasions of new species and other topics will be explored as we reconcile the fact that more species are detected now than prior to the book’s publication.

John has been a hard core birder in California since he was shown a Pileated Woodpecker in 5th grade camp in 1971. He is a professional ornithologist and has worked for the Smithsonian Institution, US Forest Service research stations, HT Harvey & Associates, Arizona and Oregon state universities among other organizations since 1981. John has traveled extensively throughout California learning about local bird distribution and is an authority on that state’s avifauna. In 2015 he set the California’s new big year record with 501 species and has many big day records as well. He has traveled internationally as a guide and ornithologist for many institutions including projects as a Smithsonian ornithologist to Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, The Philippines, Sumatra, Canada and Russia. John currently has his own company, Sterling Wildlife Biology (www.sterlingbirds.com), specializing in international birding tours, birding classes, research and environmental consulting for The Nature Conservancy, National Audubon’s International Alliance Program, CA Dept. of Water Resources among other organizations.

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FIELD TRIPS

(Cancelled until further notice)

All: Due to the ongoing pandemic, all upcoming San Joaquin Audubon Society field trips will remain cancelled. We hope to resume as soon as Covid-19 pandemic conditions allow. Meanwhile, we hope you are all able to bird in the county and beyond, keeping your safety, and the safety of others in mind. Please share your trip information or pictures on one of our many social media outlets.



Breeding Burrowing Owls: Photo by John Ehrenfeld

Volunteers Needed For Burrowing Owl Survey

The San Joaquin Audubon Society is organizing a countywide survey of breeding pairs of Burrowing Owl populations in the spring and summer of 2021. To accomplish this project, a number of volunteer birders will be needed. Burrowing Owls are a species of special concern in California. Their decline is due primarily to the loss of suitable habitat for breeding.

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PROGRAMS

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TUESDAY, April 13, 7:00 p.m.

Daniel Mathews

“Trees in Trouble”

VIRTUAL MEETING

Daniel will discuss his book, *Trees in Trouble*, about the effects of wildfires, insect infestations, and climate change on Western forests. He presents hopeful solutions to succeed in sustaining our forests through the challenging transition to a new environment.

Daniel Mathews is the author of *Natural History of the Pacific Northwest Mountains*, *Rocky Mountain Natural History*, and *Cascade–Olympic Natural History*. During a career of learning and writing about the natural history of western North America, he has backpacked far and wide, watched for fires from Desolation Peak Lookout, watched a forty-foot fir crash onto his family's house in a storm, and lived for years in a forest cabin without electricity, heating with firewood and writing by kerosene lamp. He lives in Portland, Oregon.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

December 15, 2020 - February 14, 2021
(All sightings pertain to San Joaquin County)

Submitted by Liz West

The **Franklin's Gull** continued to be seen at the Stockton Sewage Ponds through December 15th. The **Black-headed Gull** was last reported on January 17th.

Konshau Duman reports continuing **Lapland Longspurs** on Staten Island in a publicly inaccessible area on December 17th.

The **Barrow's Goldeneye** continues at Riverbank Sewage Ponds through January 1st. Konshau Duman reported a female **Barrow's Goldeneye** in Mokelumne river to the west of Staten Island on February 9th.

Lynette Williams reported a female type **Red-breasted Merganser** on December 23rd. It was in the Mokelumne River on the west side of Staten Island. On January 2nd, Kasey Foley found a female **Red-breasted Merganser** at the Mokelumne River Day Use Area.

Konshau Duman reported a female **Vermilion Flycatcher** in an inaccessible area of Staten Island on January 12th.

Lynette Williams spotted a **Yellow-billed Loon** just south of Staten Island on January 14th in the South Mokelumne River. There was no good public access to this bird, the only semi-tolerated viewing area was from underneath the Highway 12 bridge (private property). All other sites are private and clearly marked no trespassing. Bouldin Island and Staten Island beyond the sign are strictly off limits. That said the loon was viewed by many through February 9th.

Konshau Duman saw a first cycle **Glaucous Gull** on Staten Island, January 28th. On February 1st, Dave Fries saw one on Woodbridge Rd. possibly the same individual.

This winter there has been an exceptional irruption of **Pine Siskins** and **Purple Finches** in San Joaquin County and the valley.

See Page 3 for photos of some of the rarities seen in San Joaquin County recently.

Photos of some recent San Joaquin County Rarities

(See Bird Sightings column on Page 2 for details of these and other recent sightings in San Joaquin County)



Pine Siskin, Photo by Kasey Foley



Barrow's x Common Goldeneye, Photo by Frances Oliver



Yellow-billed Loon, Photo by Bruce Mast



Red-breasted Merganser photo by Kasey Foley

Volunteers needed for Burrowing Owl Survey

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SJ County was last surveyed as part of a statewide survey done in 2006–07 and results published in 2010 as reported in the following link:

https://birdpop.org/docs/pubs/Wilkerson_and_Siegel_2010_Assessing_Changes_in_Dist_and_Abundance_of_B_UOW_in_CA.pdf.

The survey is done by dividing the county map into 5 km square blocks. It is estimated that the number of blocks in the county is about 150, not all of which have suitable habitat for the owls. All blocks where breeding pairs of owls were found in previous surveys or reported on eBird will be resurveyed. In addition, as many of the remaining blocks which have habitat deemed suitable for burrowing owl breeding will be investigated. Historically, the owl preferred grasslands but has adapted to other environments.

You don't have to be an expert birder to help with the project as some training will be made available to volunteers. Dates of the survey will extend from May 15 through June of 2021. Persons interested in participating in the project should contact David Fries, Conservation Chair of the SJ Audubon Society at dfries.audubon@gmail.com.

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Website: www.sanjoaquinaudubon.org

Listserve: <http://groups.io/g/SJBirds>

Other California Birding E-mail Listserve

<https://groups.io/g/calbirds>

<https://groups.io/g/centralvalleybirds>

<https://groups.io/g/StanislausBirds>

https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/CSAS_Birds/info

Membership

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 quarterly *Audubon Magazine* and to the bimonthly chapter newsletter, *The Hoot Owl*. For national membership, send check payable to the **National Audubon Society** to the address below.

• National Audubon Membership Rate: \$20

San Joaquin Audubon Society

Attn: Membership (National)

P.O. Box 7755

Stockton, CA 95267

Local-Only Membership

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—electronic copy \$15

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