

# Sierra Squawker



## Greetings CSAS Members and Friends!

I hope and assume that you have been enjoying our feathered friends during the breeding season and now into the summer doldrums. We usually don't produce newsletters during the summer, but I thought to break the trend with this edition.

I'm thoroughly enjoying this period with some fascinating bird behaviors that I've managed to video in various places. Actually, I spent 3 weeks driving around Turkey in April/May which was a pretty good start to my activities and although birding wasn't my focus, I saw quite a lot (I'd like to organize a birding tour in the eastern part of Turkey where I spent most time). In one beautiful valley several wrens were singing loudly to announce their territory and availability although, in typical wren fashion, were rarely easy to see. However, I was surprised to discover that in Eurasia there is only one wren species, the Winter Wren, as against our nine species.

Perhaps my sweetest moment was two weeks ago when a Common Merganser mother practically walked under my car to get to Lake Alpine and, when I stopped the car, I noticed that six youngsters were running behind her on their maiden trip to the lake; their little legs moving at blinding speed! As life would have it, my camera battery was flat and so all that I managed to shoot were six little specks with my cellphone!

Here in Murphys at the house of one of our members, Noreen Seeders, I was privileged to observe Ash-throated Flycatchers shyly raising their young in a nest box while Western Bluebirds were enthusiastically feeding and weaning their youngsters in quite a beautiful family affair. Very interesting to observe the vastly different behavior patterns of various species in similar circumstances.



At the Google complex in Mountain View I was able to watch and video Great and Snowy Egrets displaying and breeding in nine large sycamore trees - quite spectacular as you can imagine from this male who is just about to reach towards



the sky to impress a female. Such a rookery with many birds and nests is a noisy - and messy - affair. It's good to see that Google and the City of Mountain View closed off the sycamore street allowing only pedestrians and bikers (and photographers!) to get close. In 2016 I'll arrange one or two field trips so you too can enjoy this fiesta.

Over at Mono Lake I watched a pair of Ospreys caring for their two youngsters while doing extensive nest repairs after the big storms.

While over there, I enjoyed watching a Red-breasted Sapsucker excavating sap wells - and then a Yellow Warbler coming in to savor sap or sticky insects!

Anyway, if you come to my presentation on September 16th as we commence our new season of public presentations, you'll see these and more in action!

## RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS

June 28

**R**ufous Hummingbirds have started to arrive for the summer as usual. Usually their timing matches the “red” flowers. The whole spring bloom started about 3 weeks early this year. Not sure that the red flowers will last until late August when most of the Rufous have finished moving through.

**M**ountain Bluebirds have already finished their nesting -a couple of weeks early. Most of the other usual birds here seem to be on schedule.

**Ken Brunges, Bennett Juniper 8400’, Tuolumne County**

June 28

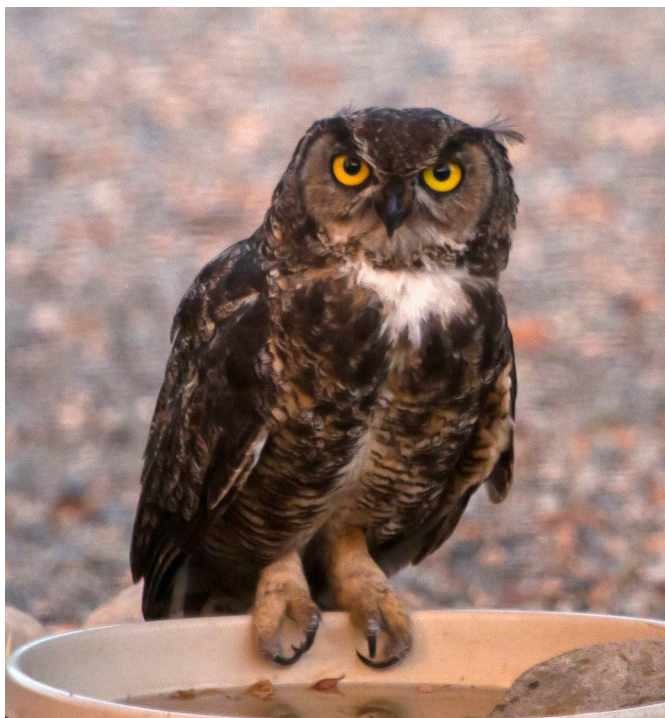
**H**ad about 20 Bushtits come thru yard, feeding on digger pine pollen cones. Also, very unusual this time of year, a young male Rufous Hummingbird.

**M**ost nesting birds have fledged now. Last -Brewers Blackbirds and Western Bluebirds done yesterday.

**Charlotte Ginn, Red Hills, Chinese Camp, elev. 972ft.**

June 30

**A** Great Horned Owl juvenile flew in to our driveway and walked (rocking back and forth) up to the water dish we have sitting on the ground. Actually it did the same thing on



Sunday evening. This time it was 8:35pm and the light levels were falling quickly as I shot the photo.

**John Turner, Elevation 1075-ft., blue-oak savanna, Lake Don Pedro, Tuolumne County**

July 1

**J**ackie Bobrosky and I took a leisurely bird walk on Sunday morning at Pinecrest. We started at the Ranger station and then headed toward the lake traveling parallel to the main road through the woods behind the old gas station to the boardwalk by Meadowview Campground. Then we meandered through the streets with the cabins. While we didn’t see anything unusual, we saw lots of activity of adults feeding fledglings especially the Fox Sparrows and Red-breasted Sapsuckers.

**O**n Saturday morning, from our fishing boat my husband and I saw a Violet-green Swallow bringing food to its nesting cavity in a stump near the shore of the lake.

**Ellen Reintjes, Pinecrest**



*Violet-green Swallow - Ellen Reintjes*

July 11

**R**ufous-crowned Sparrows are back. They come every summer.

**Charlotte Ginn, Red Hills, Chinese Camp, elev. 972 ft**

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## UPCOMING CSAS FIELD TRIPS

August 5 GCSD

**T**he first Wednesday of the month Bird Walk at the Groveland Community Services property at 18966 Ferretti Road, Groveland is led by Jeanne Ridgley. The property encompasses an area of more than 200 acres of oak, pine and willow habitat with three water storage ponds. Meet the group in the GCSD parking lot at 8:00 AM. Bring binoculars and a birding field guide if you have one. Rain will cancel the trip. The walk will last about two-three hours.

**Jeanne Ridgley (209)962-7598.**

## FIELD TRIP REPORTS

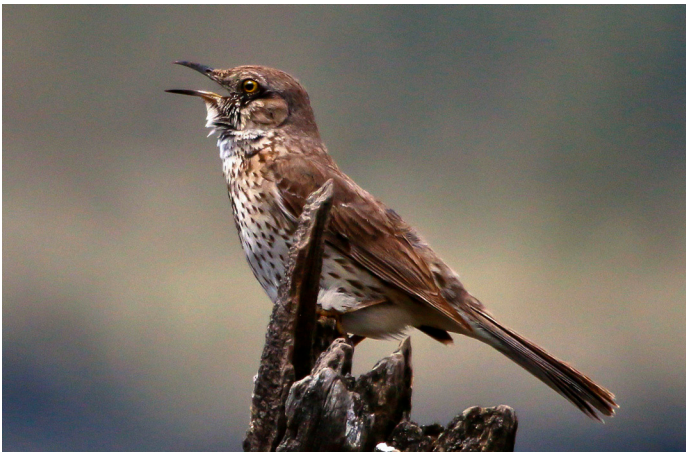
### **June 5 - 7. Yuba Pass & Sierra Valley**

Trip leaders John & Sandi Turner arrived a day early to scope out the Yuba Pass, Sierra Valley and Gold Lake Highway areas. On Friday, Tom & Kathy Harrington, Rick Baird & Jan Jorn-Baird, John Petter & Pat Pauch, Ken & Evelyn Smith, and Tom & Augusta Parrington had all arrived in time for dinner at Herrington's Sierra Pines. We birded the Gold Lake Highway area, with its glacial lakes on Saturday and noted the birds were reduced with fewer species seen.



*Photo: John Turner*

On Sunday we first stopped at Wild Plum Campground just off Highway 49 where we were able to find nesting American Dippers under the bridge. We stopped at Yuba Pass and birded the area before proceeding down to the Sierra Valley area. Quail Mountain Road provided some interesting birds,



one of the more interesting being this Sage Thrasher.

The drought affected the area with virtually no vernal pools and very little water flow under the old iron bridge. Again the numbers of birds were reduced, but the total species count for the outing was 89 species which was good considering the drought conditions.

**John Turner**

### **July 10 - 12. Lake Davis Flammulated Owl Trip**

A group of 13 avid birders had a delightful experience with biologist David Arsenault and his crew from the Plumas Audubon Society when we joined them to observe banding of Flammulated Owls. The first (and closest) nest was lost due to predation so a long drive trip over logging roads to the nearest successful nest site was an eye opener to what David faces daily in his research. The viewing and banding of the tiny Flammulated Owl at a mere 2 ozs. was definitely the high point of the trip. It was inspiring to see the thrill and awe displayed by his research students as they held this tiny owl so carefully for the very first time. It takes me back to my own undergraduate days as a biology student.



*Flammulated Owl (fem) ready for banding*

*Photo: John Turner*

Meeting earlier in the day at Eagle Point and Jenkins Point to view the various nesting grebes was a wonderful introduction to the wildlife and beauty of area, as this was a first visit for many who attended. The arrival of a Peregrine Falcon at Jenkins Point caused many birds to take flight. During this uproar, we observed a California Gull take advantage of the fear and confusion by stealing an egg from a Western Grebe nest.

**Ken Smith, Field Trip Chair**

## GREAT NATURALIST TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

**California Naturalist  
5 week certification training at  
Calaveras Big Trees State Park**

Sept. 11/12, Sept. 18/19, Sept. 24, Oct. 2/3, and Oct. 9 /10

**B**ecome a 'citizen-scientist' as we explore California's natural environment. Learn about opportunities that you can take on to share and engage others in natural resource stewardship through education and service.

**R**egistration is required and participation is limited to 30. To register, please go to: [http://ucanr.edu/cbt\\_canat\\_2015](http://ucanr.edu/cbt_canat_2015)

**C**ost for this workshop is \$350.00 per person. There are a limited number of scholarships available. To apply for a scholarship, please go to: [http://ucanr.edu/cbt\\_canat\\_scholarship\\_2015](http://ucanr.edu/cbt_canat_scholarship_2015)

**F**or more information on the California Naturalist Program, please go to: <http://calnat.ucanr.edu/>

**University of California  
Agriculture & Natural Resources**

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### **Largest Winged Dinosaur found in China**

**T**he evolution of birds from their dinosaur heritage has always fascinated scientists and all of us who so enjoy them. One of the major topics has been the original role of feathers - were they for warmth (adults, eggs and youngsters) or flying. The consensus is that they evolved for warmth but turned out to have the magical quality of enabling flight. Seems rather like the human brain as our spacecraft hurtles past Pluto doesn't it?

**A** fascinating new and (astonishingly) almost complete fossil has been discovered in China that was living but apparently not flying around 125 million years ago.

*Here's an artistic impression of the dinosaur*



You can read about it at:

[http://news.sciencemag.org/biology/2015/07/big-bird-dino-researchers-discover-largest-ever-winged-dinosaur?utm\\_campaign=email-news-latest&utm\\_src=email](http://news.sciencemag.org/biology/2015/07/big-bird-dino-researchers-discover-largest-ever-winged-dinosaur?utm_campaign=email-news-latest&utm_src=email)

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*Flammulated Owl (male) John Turner*

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### **Central Sierra Audubon Society - CSAS**

Chapter of the National Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 3047, Sonora, CA 95370

**General Meetings:** Third Wednesday at 7pm (except July and August), in the Tuolumne Public Library on Greenley Road, Sonora.

**Board Meetings:** Third Wednesday at 3pm (Sept. - May) at the Blood Bank Conference Room behind Rite Aid on Greenley Road, Sonora.

#### **Membership of National Audubon & CSAS**

If you are not already a member, we would be honored to have you join us. You can join as a full member of National Audubon Society which includes dues for CSAS membership or, alternately, you may join as a local member of CSAS in which case you will receive the monthly Squawker newsletter and be privy to all other CSAS activities. An application form is on the front page of the CSAS website at [www.centralsierraaudubon.org/join-us/](http://www.centralsierraaudubon.org/join-us/)

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