

The Foothill Quail

Yosemite Area Audubon



Sep/October 2008

The Hummingbird Monitoring Network: Protecting the Joy



Anna's Hummingbird

This female Anna's hummingbird was originally banded as an adult bird during a training session in 2003. She has returned to Barbara and Duane Robinson's ranch on Indian Peak Road every year since and is now at least six years old.

It's that time of year when people who feed hummingbirds think about putting away their feeders for the winter. After all, rufous hummingbirds, those aggressive coppery dazzlers, have come and gone and the fall migration is essentially over. So why continue to leave out your feeders?

Local residents Barbara and Duane Robinson of the Hummingbird Monitoring Network (HMN) will shed some light on this question, along with many others, at the October program of the Yosemite Area Audubon Society. They will present a slide program, "The Hummingbird Monitoring Network: Protecting the Joy," an updated version of their earlier presentations, at the monthly Audubon meeting Thursday, October 9, at the Mariposa Methodist Church parish hall on 6th Street in downtown Mariposa. The program will begin at 7:00 p.m. The Robinsons joined the Hummingbird Monitoring Network (HMN) in 2004 and established an official monitoring site at their ranch between Mariposa and Oakhurst at the 2,000-foot elevation. Barbara was previously a hawk bander with the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory in the San Francisco Bay Area for 13 years before she and her husband, both

professional architects, moved to the foothills in 1997. She had developed her interest in birds during a trip to the Galapagos Islands in 1981 when she helped rescue a red-footed booby tangled with fishing line, and as they say, the rest is history.

As certified hummingbird banders for the past five years, the Robinsons now have more than 8,000 records in their database. Barbara, who is now a Master Bander, believes that locally there are three distinct populations of Anna's hummingbirds, the most commonly seen hummer in the foothills. Some Anna's migrate through the area, others winter here and some are here year-round. She suggests that if you maintain your feeders during the winter, you may be able to enjoy them even when snow blankets the area. (Cont Pg. 4)

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Did you know?

Our large Buteos such as the ubiquitous Red-tail Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk and the Swainsons Hawk are called the Wind Masters. They are called this due to their wonderful soaring flight. What a sight!



Yosemite Area Audubon

Society

Field Trips

Year 2008-2009

October 18, 2008

YAAS will lead a beginners' birding trip along Mariposa Creek from the Mariposa Art Park to Idle Wheels. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the art park. The trip is free and the public is welcome. Bring binoculars, field guides, lunch and water. Call (209) 742-5579 for more information.

November 15, 2008

Hornitos Road to Mc Swain forbay. Meet in town at the rest stop by the History Museum at 8:00 am

**December 2008
YAAS Date TBA
Christmas Bird Count**

January 17, 2009

Yosemite Lake area

Meet in town at the rest stop by the History Museum at 8:00 am

February 21, 2009

Merced Wildlife Refuge

Meet in town at the rest stop by History Museum at 8:00 am

March 21, 2009

White Rock Road to the end and home via Ben Hur Road

Meet at the Mariposa fair-ground at 8:00 am

April 18, 2009

To be determined.

May 16, 2009

Foresta and Big Meadows.

Meet at the Midpines Community Center at 8:00 am

Fresno Audubon Field Trips

As a result of recent discussions a decision has been reached to share field trips with the Fresno Audubon Society and their partial schedule is listed below.

September 20 & 21:

Mojave Desert, Galileo Hill, California City

October 25

San Luis National Wildlife Refuge

November 9

(Sunday): Kern National Wildlife Refuge

November 22

Woodward Park & Jensen River Ranch

December 13

Madera foothills & Merced NWR

What do the California Condor, the Western Snowy Plover and the Tri-Colored Blackbird have in common?

All three are priority species of conservation concern. The Tricolored Blackbird bears the unfavorable distinction of inclusion on the Audubon Watch list (red-listed in California and yellow-listed nationwide). The Western Snowy Plover and the California Condor are listed on the Federal Endangered Species List.

Conservation Corner By Joseph Frank

Annual Raptor Migration

Each fall Raptors from around the No American continent begin gathering and starting their annual southern migration, sometimes as much as thousands, sometimes tens-of thousands of miles (Swainsons Hawk) on their trips South.

Raptors of course are the birds of prey we call hawks and the Europeans call Buzzards. There are about 19 species commonly seen in the western USA grouped into several groups known as Buteos, Accipiters, Falcons, Vultures and others including Osprey, Eagles, and Kites. These are classified as Diurnal or day feeding birds. Owls are also raptors predominately classed as nocturnal (night time) birds of prey. Watching any of them hunt and soar is a rare treat and a not uncommon one here in the foothills and the nearby Central Valley. Two different patterns of diurnal migration are used by different species of birds-those that migrate at nighttime and those



Alison Sheehey

Our November 13, 2008 guest speaker will guide us through the natural history of Kern County from its beginnings:

geology, tectonics, paleontology, Floristic Provinces, Native Americans, early settlers and about the diverse assemblage of flora and fauna in the modern day. This whirlwind journey is the result of 20 years of reconstructing the pieces on why this region is so diverse.

Alison Sheehey is the Outreach Coordinator for Audubon California's Kern River Preserve. Her duties include authoring the website: <http://kern.audubon.org>, newsletter, educational material, leads field trips, coordinates 4 nature festivals each year, and is the project manager for the new Audubon Center expected to be completed by 2012.

She moved the westside of Kern County in 1980 and now lives in the Kern River Valley. Her deep appreciation of all things Kern began with her explorations of the desert environs of the Tumbler Range (the western border of Kern County) where she fell in love with the intricacies of the geology, flora and fauna in a place many regarded as an ugly wasteland.

Seeing beauty in every natural niche is one of the many talents of "Nature Ali". A member of Audubon Society since 1985, she has been a staunch advocate for the environmental protection of Kern County and this planet preferring to quietly affect policy through education.

Her website www.natureali.org provides an encyclopedia of free information on the natural history of Kern County. Abhorring a vacuum she has been the webmaster for Yosemite Area Audubon Society for the past few years where her support and guidance has been invaluable to YAAS.

Results of the Tricolored Blackbird 2008 Census

by Rodd Kelsey, Audubon California, Landowner Stewardship Program

August 2008

As part of its ongoing effort to conserve and restore Tricolored Blackbird colonies in California, Audubon California in April 2008 coordinated a statewide survey of the species in partnership with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The survey – largely conducted by citizen science volunteers – recorded significantly more Tricolored Blackbirds than other recent surveys. In all, just under 395,000 Tricolored Blackbirds were observed. A total of 155 volunteers participated in the 2008 survey, visiting 361 historic and new sites in 38 counties within California. The new report discusses the results of the survey, and includes some initial analysis about what these numbers might mean for Tricolored Blackbird conservation.

The survey itself constitutes a success for Audubon California's citizen science program wherein volunteers in the field contribute directly to science and conservation.

American Ornithologists' Union

Founded in 1883, the American Ornithologists' Union is the oldest organization in the New World devoted to the scientific study of birds. The AOU is the largest and most diverse ornithological society, with over 3500 members. Although primarily an organization for professional ornithologists, it welcomes to its ranks many students, conservationists, birders and others who cherish the birds of the world. More at: www.aou.org.

About Audubon California

Audubon California is building a better future for California by bringing people together to appreciate, enjoy and protect our spectacular outdoor treasures. Audubon California is a field program of Audubon, which has more than 50,000 members in California and an affiliated 48 local chapters dedicated to protecting birds, wildlife and the habitats that support them. More at www.ca.audubon.org.

Southbound Shorebirds Return to California!

Grab your bins and scope and head out to your local mudflat--shorebirds are returning to California after their short arctic breeding seasons.

Mudflats and beaches around the state are becoming flooded with newly arrived migrants. Some of the earliest arrivals showed up by 15 June, essentially passing the latest spring migrants heading north!

Annual Raptor Migration Cont'd from Page 2

that migrate during the day. Reasons for these patterns are due to air movements and thermals in the atmosphere which can inhibit or enhance flight.

Those that flap in their migration flight tend to migrate at night as air currents and thermals are far less troublesome to flight. Those that soar and ride the thermals are daytime migration flyers because the air waves and thermals are much more prevalent then. The Buteos (Red Tails, Swainson etc) are referred to as The Wind Masters as they so readily adapt to soaring flight and thermal navigation.

Migration routes vary throughout the USA but remain very consistent from year to year with some points in the country providing heavy concentrations of migrating birds. Cape May New Jersey is one of the natural funnels and it witnesses one of the highest concentrations of migrating raptors in the USA. There are other migration areas across the US that generally follow North South mountain ranges. Large bodies of water do not generate thermals and particularly the Buteos don't like to fly across these natural features. The US funnels down (narrows) as you go North to South towards the Mexican border and raptor populations concentrate the closer you get to Mexico. The funnel at the Marin Headlands is caused by the geography of that ridge as it comes to the San Francisco Bay. Again the Buteos do not like to fly across water and you can see the birds circling as they prepare to make the journey across

The Bay.

Here in California there are several areas that one can view migrating raptors in their fall migration. Kern County and along the San Gabriel and San Bernardino mountains are worthy of viewing and also display significant spring migration northward.

One of the major California funnels is in the Marin Headlands just North of San Francisco. The Golden Gate Raptor Observatory (GGRO) has had a monitoring, banding and tracking operation there since 1983 and they have an excellent spot to view the fall raptor movements. Here in the Central Valley there are some great spots for viewing raptors and our own club, Yosemite Area Audubon Society, takes part in an annual Raptor Run (count) with volunteers from the community and our membership. Lowell Young, our field trip organizer, is the coordinator for the YAAS program that is organized by Ed Pandolfino and Zach Smith. This program consists of 20 different routes on public roads from Shasta County to Kings County.

Volunteers are assigned to various routes for a specified number of count days and keep detailed results of their sightings on data sheets for sorting and collecting of the data for interpretation. Goals of the counts include establishing baseline information on the status, trends and distribution of winter raptor populations in the Central Valley. So in our little corner of California we take an active part in this national annual phenomenon.

The Hummingbird Monitoring Network: Protecting the Joy

Cont'd from Pg. 1

For those frosty nights, though, you'll have to set your alarm clock so you can put out room-temperature sugar water at the crack of dawn. As for the other five species that frequent our area, you may be surprised to learn

that the admonition to take down your feeders in the winter to encourage migration is an "old wives' tale." If the bird is a true migratory species, the urge to migrate is so strong that leaving your feeders out will not discourage them from flying south.

The HMN, a non-profit organization, is a group of scientists, citizens, land managers and property owners who are dedicated to the conservation of hummingbird diversity and abundance throughout the Americas. The HMN now comprises 30 sites in British Columbia, California, Arizona, Colorado and Texas.

However, at their site in the Sierra foothills, the Robinsons, with the help of their assistants, continue to band more hummingbirds than any of the other sites in the network. All HMN sites follow the same protocols, and all banding/monitoring sessions occur within the same five-day window every other week from March through October. Each year the local team captures and processes more than 1,500 hummingbirds, both newly banded birds and birds banded in previous years. The Robinsons will explain in their presentation for Audubon how they capture these little jewels and describe the complexities in identifying the various species that occur in the foothills.

This presentation is open and free to the public, although donations to defray program costs and to support Audubon's local activities are welcome. Refreshments will be available.

**Yosemite Area Audubon Officers
2007- 08**

| | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| PRESIDENT | Kris Randal |
| SECRETARY | Betty Boykin |
| TREASURER | Joseph Frank |
| PROGRAMS | Len McKenzie |
| CONSERVATION | Open |
| TRIPS | Lowell Young |
| HOSPITALITY | James Spott |
| MEMBERSHIP | Shirley Schmelzer |
| NEWSLETTER | Joseph Frank |

Membership Chairperson

Shirley Schmelzer
4512 Varian Road
Mariposa, CA 95338

Check our website

[http://mariposa.yosemite.net/
audubon](http://mariposa.yosemite.net/audubon)

Calendar

October 2008

October 9, 2008 (Thursday)

Pot Luck: Call Jan Maxstadt at (209) 966-6786

October Program

Thursday October 9

Hummingbird banders Barbara and Duane Robinson will present a slide program, "The Hummingbird Monitoring Network: Protecting the Joy," at 7:00 p.m. Public invited, free, refreshments. Call (209) 742-5579 for more information.

October 18, 2008 (Saturday)

YAAS will lead a beginners' birding trip along Mariposa Creek from the Mariposa Art Park to Idle Wheels. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the art park. The trip is free and the public is welcome. Bring binoculars, field guides, lunch and water. Call (209) 742-5579 for more information.

Yosemite Area Audubon Society monthly meetings are held the second Thursday of each month October through May at 7 p.m. Public welcome.

Mariposa Methodist Church
Parish Hall
6th St., Mariposa (between Hwy. 140 and Bullion St.)
Mariposa CA.

November & April Meetings
Oakhurst Senior Center
Oakhurst CA

The Yosemite Area Audubon Society is affiliated with the National Audubon Society. Both the national organization and the local chapter are dedicated to the preservation of natural habitats and native species, and to educating and inspiring others to help protect those resource values.