

Altacal Audubon Society, Inc.

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Chico, California 95927-3671
<http://www.altacal.org>



White-tailed Kite

October/November, 2006

Mission: To promote the awareness, appreciation and protection of native birds and their habitats through education, research and environmental activities.

October General Meeting – Monday, October 16, 2006, 6:30 p.m., [Chico Creek Nature Center](#)

Is bird-watching truly ecotourism? Can North American birders assist in saving tropical species? Join us on October 16 when Ms. Rita Guevara will speak to these questions as well as to the cultural experiences and birding opportunities that exist in her native Ecuador. Although no larger than the state of Colorado, [Ecuador](#) boasts an amazing 1,600+ species of birds! She will share slides and information on birding the cloud forests, high Andes, and upper Amazon.

November General Meeting – Monday, November 20, 2006, 6:30 p.m., Chico Creek Nature Center

When most people are eating dinner, watching TV, or sleeping, Dawn Garcia and her team of banders are out in the dark, with the intention of attracting [Northern Saw-whet Owls \(*Aegolius acadicus*\)](#) into mist nets. Twenty-three of the tiny, hand-sized owls, a nocturnal migrant, were documented in fall 2006 migrating through the [Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve \(BCCER\)](#) just north of Bidwell Park. For this presentation, Dawn will have an additional season of data; collectively, two years of data regarding the fall movements of the Northern Saw-whet Owl through the Reserve. This November, we invite you to see the Northern Saw-whet Owls of the BCCER.

Dawn is a graduate student at CSU Chico studying Applied Avian Ecology in the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences. Although her passion is songbirds, she enjoys the nighttime hours under the stars with the camaraderie of other night owls, both human and feathered! Dawn has been actively birding and banding birds for 13 years.

Help Wanted!

First off, many thanks to Mary Lue Moore who volunteered to be in charge of the hospitality function at our membership meetings. Many thanks also to Linda Rowell who did that job so well for so long.

We still have an opportunity (and a need) for someone to be on the Board of Directors as our **Membership Committee Chairperson**. If you'd like to contribute in a less formal way, let's say for example, by helping us update a membership spreadsheet occasionally, we'd be delighted to accept

whatever level of volunteer time and effort suits you. For details, contact Alison Shedd at 343-6919, ashedd@vninc.com. Also, we are looking for someone to be our **Finance Committee Chairperson**, a newly created Board of Directors position. For more information, contact Phil Johnson, 570-7139, pjohnsonhardwood@sunset.net

Finally, in all our areas of interest (e.g., Field Trips, Education, Conservation, etc.) we are trying to get things done more efficiently and effectively by asking members to contribute in any way they can by contacting a Committee Chairperson or other Board member and offering to help in some area of interest. There's no need to sign on for a particular position or office and you can be sure you'd be appreciated.

Welcome

We are happy to announce that Scott Huber has joined the Altacal Board of Directors and accepted the post of Field Trip Committee Chairman. Be on the lookout for not only the usual excellent leaders, bird walks and birding trips, but also new ones.

Thanks to you 125+ (so far) members for responding to our recent membership changes by joining the Altacal Audubon Society locally. Thanks also to those of you who sent donations above and beyond the new membership fee. If you haven't yet sent in your new local membership form (there's one in the back of the newsletter) please do so soon. As of the February/March issue of the *White-tailed Kite*, only local members will receive the newsletter by mail (although it will be available on our web site (www.altacal.org)). These changes in the membership structure are necessary, and will ultimately serve our local chapter better than the previous structure did.

September General Meeting – Monday, September 18, 2006, 6:30 p.m., Chico Creek Nature Center

Birds of Bidwell Park

[Dr. Roger Lederer](#), Professor Emeritus of Biological Sciences at CSU Chico, took more than 40 of us on a virtual bird-watching trip through [Bidwell Park](#) at our first-of-the-season general meeting. He told us about the fascinating diversity of birds found in the "Jewel of Chico" throughout the year – birds such as [Phainopeplas](#), [Belted Kingfishers](#) and [Wild Turkeys](#). Not only did he show us images of these beautiful birds but also presented amazing facts and curious myths about them. He showed us that Bidwell Park is the perfect place for both the experienced and novice bird watcher to learn about the birds we enjoy so much. It made for a very educational, entertaining and enjoyable evening.

In addition, we were especially pleased to have Dr. Robert M. King, Professor Emeritus at CSUC, in attendance. Dr. King came to Chico in 1956 and joined the local Audubon Society. This year marks his 50th year as a member of Altacal Audubon.



Sister Society (Cape Cod Bird Club) News

Our Sister Society, the Cape Cod Bird Club, was caught up in the excitement of birders all around New England in late August when a **Western Reef-Heron** (*Egretta gularis*) which is only accidental in North America, was seen in Kittery Point, Maine. At least ten folks from the Club ultimately saw the bird. A local mailing list,

<http://www.virtualbirder.com/bmail/massbird/200608/18/index.html> kept track of reports. Here's one early entry:

“This bird has got to be somewhere along the coast of MA, ME, or NH!!!
GET OUT THERE AND FIND IT TOMORROW!”

Otherwise, from the end of August through the first week of September, members of the CCBC experienced the following sightings in various places on and around the Cape:

Tropical storm Ernesto ran out of gas before reaching southern New England. There were no confirmed reports of southern species being swept northward along the storm path. But fall migration was well underway with good numbers from the usual hot spots.

A whale-watching trip to Stellwagen Bank on August 29 included a Sabine's Gull, a Northern Fulmar, a Long-tailed Jaeger, 50 Greater Shearwaters, 3000 Wilson's Storm-Petrels, 2 Leach's Storm-Petrels, 3 Parasitic Jaegers, 2 Pomarine Jaegers, 8 Red-necked Phalaropes, and 6 Red Phalaropes.

Highlights of a trip to South Beach in Chatham on August 30 included a Curlew Sandpiper, an American Golden-Plover, 1 Pectoral Sandpiper, 50 Black Terns, 1 Arctic Tern, and 150 Roseate Terns.

On August 31, a Massachusetts Audubon-led trip to North Monomoy Island in Chatham included views of a Peregrine Falcon, a Marbled Godwit, 6 Hudsonian Godwits, 1 Buff-breasted Sandpiper, and a White-rumped Sandpiper. On this same date, 38 Black-crowned Night-Herons were spotted at Hemenway Landing in Eastham and a partial list from South Beach in Chatham included 15 Western Sandpipers, 120 Black Terns, and a Black Skimmer.

The bird banding station at Wings Island in Brewster had a Blackpoll Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, and a Yellow-throated Vireo on August 31. On this date as well, at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham, 175 Red Knots, 250 White-rumped Sandpipers, and a Merlin were counted.

On September 2 an immature Bald Eagle was sighted at Great Hollow Beach in Truro, and on September 4 there was a possible sighting of a Red-necked Stint on South Beach in Chatham.

Rex Burress

Aunt Mamie and the Birds

Residents of the Feather River country of Butte County, California, have abundant bird life to watch. Perhaps we who are Audubon "birders" sometimes take this opportunity for granted and overlook the initial enthrallment that comes with discovering birds. There is a time to back up and consider the youthful bird-watching joys we once found so vivid as a child...and a time to reacquaint oneself with the sparrow in the dusk of life.

While walking beside the river early one morning, I was thinking of my Aunt Mamie Tolle who is 99 years old and in an Arkansas nursing home. She is invalid and hardly even recognizes anyone, but I am told that when she is wheeled to the back porch and sees the birds, she responds as if pleased.

When I gave animal shows to convalescent homes while with the Oakland Park Department, I noticed a similar peaceful countenance in those pits of descending age when I spoke of a bird or showed the incapacitated patient a feather or live animal. Birds have an uplifting quality whether in mental spirit or physical space.

I was quite impressed when I visited another aunt in my hometown Sunnyview Nursing Home at Trenton, Missouri, several years ago. Aunt Edith was born crippled, and even though thus handicapped had made her way to the age of 80 before dying. She had twisted hands and was unable to speak clearly, but she had something to show me. In therapy class she had been shown a feather and had painted a watercolor of it. I gasped with delight; it was beautifully done! That little painting hangs in my room, a treasured memento of that unfortunate life and a glimmer of her love for birds.

Aunt Mamie lived much of her life on an upland farm on a hill above No Creek, Missouri. Behind their unpainted old house there was a grove of locust trees full of holes, and sparrows and starlings occupied that domain like it was theirs. Even though that homestead is completely gone now, I can mentally hear those noisy birds clamoring about their nest sites. I imagine when Aunt Mamie sees the birds on the Gassville, Arkansas porch, she sees and hears a flick of wonderful days of long ago.

Although I am fond of exploring along the river and in the adjoining woods where the wild heron and hawks live, I am also pleased to see the birds attracted to my wife Jo's backyard bird feeders. She is expressing a love of birds equal to that of my Aunts as she reliably supplies those goldfinches, sparrows, finches, and doves with seed. Sometimes the towhee comes, or the nuthatch and grosbeak and oriole. The sugar-water feeder has its daily visitors, too. Birding is sometimes better in my backyard than in the dense forest.

Along the way, I know that Aunt Mamie and Aunt Edith noticed the Bobwhite Quail, Cardinal, Blue Jay, and sparrows common to the Midwest, since they were born children of the soil on the farms where they lived. When you're close to the land, you become associated with the life there, and much like serious bird watchers, depend on a bird presence whether fully realized or not.

I should mention the Queen of Bird-Ladies in our family, my grandma Oletta, who raised hundreds of canaries. The front room of their old two-story house far back in the hills hummed with the sound of singers filling the ancient structure with life.

Perhaps it was an angelic quality religious Ma saw since angels are portrayed as having wings. Ma believed "God moves in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform," and even though Ma would stand her ground with her canaries in the face of an oncoming storm, declaring it to be "God's will," Grandpa would take the lantern and march to the cellar, mumbling "God helps those who help themselves." After Ma died early and "crept out of her body shell to FLY free and grow," as John Muir said, Grandpa

always had a couple of yellow singers in his town house as if to be constantly reminded of the beauty of birds, and neither of those grandfolks or their birds ever got swept away by a tornado.

Little wonder that young naturalist Rex chose a career as a bird-keeping Refuge Naturalist later in life at Lake Merritt in Oakland, California, the oldest bird sanctuary in America. The woods, rivers, and birds ran in my blood like energy from ancestral roots. Thus it is with all who encounter birds in their lives; there is a sudden realization of the wonder of feathers and flight, a revelation that propels one onward with a desire to see more of the many lovely species in our land.

The transformation can come during a childhood quest to explore nature when a chestnut-backed warbler comes into focus in an old fashioned monocular, or it can come to a farm wife burdened with outdoor work as she is inspired by a bird song. It is an experience that will lift you to higher realms in the passage through time and make you a bird watcher forever.

"If the bird has not preached to me, it has added to the resources of my life, it has widened the field of my interests, it has afforded me another beautiful object to love, and has helped me to feel at home in this world." – John Burroughs

Upcoming Bird Walks and Birding Trips

All of our field trips are open to beginning birders. Anyone with a sense of wonder is welcome to participate.

Sunday, October 15, Upper Bidwell Park - Take a casual walk along the creek side and adjacent woodlands in search of birds that breed in Upper Park. No experience necessary. Just bring your binoculars, a field guide if you have one, hiking shoes, water and snacks. Meet at the newly constructed parking lot by Horseshoe Lake at 8 a.m. and walk until about 11:30 a.m. (2-3 miles). For more information, contact Phil Johnson at 570-7139.

Sunday, October 29, Paradise Ridge – This moderate-level walk will go where the birding is best in the lower Paradise and Magalia area. The group will meet at Terry Ashe Park on the Skyway at 8:30 a.m. (across from Jack-in-the-Box; below Long's Drug in the upper parking area by the playground). For additional details call the bird-walk leader, Gaylord Grams, at 872-0739.

Tuesday, October 31, Halloween Night Owl Prowl - What better time to go look for things that go bump in the night than on Halloween? Join us for a night of fun looking and listening for owls. Meet at the Park 'n Ride on Hwy. 32 nearest State Route 99 at 4:00 p.m. We will car pool up to the [Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve](#) (about 10 miles) and begin our search for owls. First, we will review some owl calls on tape, then try to call in a [Northern Pygmy-Owl](#). When it gets dark we will join Dawn Garcia at her [Northern Saw-whet Owl](#) banding station. Dawn will give us an overview of her owl banding and with some luck, we will witness the capture and banding of a Saw-whet or [Western Screech-Owl](#). It is possible that we may see or hear as many as four different owl species. We will return to the Park 'n Ride by 8:00 p.m. Bring warm clothes, flashlight, folding chair, hiking shoes, water and binoculars. It can be very cold up in the foothills at night. This outing will be limited to a maximum of 10 people due to the banding operation. Rain cancels the trip. A \$5.00 donation to Altacal Audubon is requested. For additional details or to reserve a spot, call or e-mail Mike Fisher, 624-4777 or fisherml@pacbell.net.

Saturday, November 4, Esquon Ranch / Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge, Llano Seco - For additional details check the Altacal web site (www.altacal.org) or call Gaylord Grams at 872-0739.

Sunday, November 19, [Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge \(SNWR\), Willows](#) - Meet at the parking lot of the Refuge at 8:45 a.m. Dress warm and bring a snack or lunch and water. We will take easy walks along the nature trails, then drive around the auto-tour loop. Most likely, the outing will end around 2 or 2:30, depending on what, and how many, birds are present. Participants are free to leave at

any time, as well as free to make their own car-pooling arrangements. Rain cancels the trip. For additional details call Gaylord Grams at 872-0739.

Sunday, November 26 - [Gray Lodge Wildlife Area](#) – This will sure to be a popular field trip when we travel down to Gray Lodge Wildlife Refuge for the breathtaking event called the "Fly-Out". At dusk you'll witness thousands of ducks and geese rise from the ponds around Gray Lodge and fly to nearby fields to feed during the night. As the skies fill with birds, the sound of their wing beats and calls is incredible and something you won't want to miss. Meet at the Park n' Ride at 3:00 p.m. We'll car pool to Gray Lodge and if there is enough time we'll take the paved trail out to the viewing platform. Gray Lodge Wildlife Area is accessible to people with disabilities. Restrooms, designated parking areas, a visitors museum, and a paved trail leading to a universally accessible viewing platform, can all be accessed from parking lot #14. A day-use pass is required for public access. The cost is \$2.50/person. Fees are waived for visitors under 16 years of age or those having a valid CA hunting, trapping or fishing license. Bring your own folding chair, warm clothing, hot chocolate, binoculars and bird field guide. Field trip leaders: Jennifer Patten 345-9356 jpchico@sbcglobal.net and Gaylord Grams 872-0739

Sunday, December 17, [Chico Christmas Bird Count](#)

Saturday, December 30, [Oroville Christmas Bird Count](#)

Saturday/Sunday, January 6/7 - [Tule Lake/Klamath](#)

Sunday, January 14, Oxidation Ponds / Indian Fishery - Half-day trip - leader: Mike Fisher

Saturday/Sunday, January 27/28 - Snow Goose Events

Saturday/Sunday, February 10/11, Bodega Bay – An overnight trip - leader: Mike Fisher

Bird Walk and Birding Trip Reports

Friday/Saturday/Sunday, August 4,5,6, Lassen Park Trip - Five of us met at the Manzanita Lake campground on Friday night for a weekend of birding. On Saturday morning we decided to join Park Naturalist Steve Zachary on a walk around Manzanita Lake. We saw [Spotted Sandpipers](#), [Western Wood-Pewee](#) (nesting), [Red-breasted Sapsucker](#), [Wilson's](#), [Nashville](#) and [MacGillivray Warblers](#), [Brown Creepers](#), [Mallards](#), [Buffleheads](#), [American Dipper](#), [White-headed Woodpeckers](#) and other common mountain species. At one point, we got a look at a [Common Nighthawk](#) resting in a pine tree. Across the road on the Lily Pond trail, we got a great look at a [Black-backed Woodpecker](#) and a [Western Tanager](#).

Later that day, we decided to hike up to Paradise Meadows from the Hat Lake trailhead. The wildflowers were at their peak and the lush green meadows were stunning. Once we arrived at Paradise meadows we stopped to witness the sights and sounds of a large thunderhead to the East. It showered on us briefly, then passed on its way, leaving us with beautifully clean air, a dust-free trail, and fresh, sparkling foliage. Birds sighted and singing along the trail were [Olive-sided Flycatcher](#), [Townsend's Solitaire](#), [Mountain Chickadees](#), [Red-breasted Nuthatches](#) and [American Robins](#).

Sunday we started out with a walk around Summit Lake. [Lincoln's Sparrows](#), [Townsend's Warblers](#), and a lone [Pied-billed Grebe](#) were seen. From there we made various short hikes to Cold Boiling Lake, Crumbaugh Lake, and up Brokeoff trail. Ever present, but not always seen, were the [Clark's Nutcracker](#) with his nasal grating call and the bold [Steller's Jays](#).

The Species Corner

by

Mike Fisher

Beep-Beep! The Other Cuckoo

Following Altacal's recent successful field trip to find the [Yellow-billed Cuckoo](#) in Butte County, and a trip to the deserts of the Southwest, I got to thinking... What's up with the other cuckoo that lives in Northern California? You guessed it, the [Greater Roadrunner](#) (*Geococcyx californianus*), a very scarce and local year-long resident of Tehama, Glenn and Butte Counties. Made famous in the 1940s by a cartoon character, the roadrunner may be the most fictionalized bird in popular culture.



Though it is not purple, does not go beep-beep and rarely is chased by a coyote, the real roadrunner is still a very unusual bird. With its streamlined appearance, a long tail often carried at an upward angle, a shaggy blue-black crest that it raises and lowers at will, and curious behavior, it is a comical creature. The Greater Roadrunner is relatively common and most easily seen in southwestern desert areas, where every sighting brings a smile to your face. But what is its status in Northern California and more specifically, Tehama, Glenn and Butte Counties? How common is it here? Where is it likely to be found? Have there been any recent sightings? A little investigation led to some interesting answers.

Thanks to the series of Warner Brother's cartoons starring Wile E. Coyote and the Road Runner, most people are somewhat familiar with this medium-sized bird. The head, neck, back and wings are dark brown-black and heavily streaked with white, while the breast is mostly grayish or buff. The legs are stout and it runs quickly, occasionally flying short distances. The feet are zygodactylous, two toes pointed forward and two toes pointed backward. The bill is long and stout with a hooked tip and the sexes are similar in appearance. Roadrunners are not easily confused with any other bird. The Greater Roadrunner is non-migratory and pairs defend their territories year-round. Nesting in the spring, they lay from two to eight white or pale yellow eggs. Although altricial (born helpless) the young develop rapidly. They can run and catch their own food at three weeks of age. They are primarily carnivores whose diet consists of large insects, scorpions, tarantulas, lizards, snakes (including rattlesnakes), mice and small birds. About ten percent of their diet is plant foods.



How common are they in our tri-county area? The simple answer is, not common at all. In fact they are very rare, possibly even extirpated in some local areas. Historically, though never common, they were much more numerous than they are today. Urban and agricultural encroachment, fragmentation, and intensity of human activity all correlate with reduction in roadrunner populations. Natural predators include Red-tailed and Cooper's Hawks, crows, ravens, raccoons, skunks and even some large snakes. And yes, the "wily" coyote is also a natural predator. Pets, feral animals, cars, and pesticides are some human causes of roadrunner mortality.

Where are they likely to be found? The Greater Roadrunner prefers arid deserts and other regions with a mix of scattered brush for cover and open, grassy areas for foraging. In our area, it may be found in grassland and chaparral and at the edges of woodlands. By far, the most likely of our three counties in which to find a roadrunner today is Tehama; specifically in western Tehama County, several miles west of Red Bluff. This area is mostly scrub, sand and grassy woodland and is still largely unpopulated. In Glenn County the likely spots to look are west of Orland and Willows, along County Road 306 near Stony Creek and west of Black Butte Lake. Sadly, it looks as though the Greater Roadrunner is very close to being extirpated from Butte County. The only recent sighting was in the far southwestern corner of the county. Most historical sightings in Butte County were in the foothills off Hwy. 32, along Cohasset Rd., along Neal road, on Kelly Ridge and at the Oroville Wildlife Refuge. In 1987, now almost 20 years ago, Jim Snowden heard seven roadrunners over a two week period in the foothills near Chico while doing deer counts. Subsequent years turned up only one bird.

Have there been any recent sightings? I was only able to find specific documentation on 22 sightings over the last 10 years in the tri-counties area. (See table) Sixteen, the vast majority, were in Tehama County, four were in Glenn County and only two were in Butte County. A sighting last June in Tehama County by Ed Pandolfino is the most recent in all of the tri-counties area and the only Tehama County sighting I know of this year. I found records of two sightings this year in Glenn County. The most recent was in May near Elk Creek, seen by Phil Johnson. And on March 15, Jackson Shedd and some friends spotted a Greater Roadrunner just west of Black Butte Lake. The most recent Butte County sighting was just last year on April 9 when the Gray Lodge Wildlife Area staff saw one at parking lot 13. It was seen again on April 10 and 11. The only other documented sighting I found within the last 10 years in Butte County, was nine years ago when Marilyn and Bob Gamette saw a Greater Roadrunner from the North Rim Trail in Upper Bidwell Park, and it was actually being followed by a coyote!

No doubt there are many sightings that go unreported and there are probably other records that I did not uncover. Still, the sad fact is that the future for the Greater Roadrunner in our area does not look good. Due in part to its relatively common status in other parts of the state and throughout the entire southwest, conservation efforts in Northern California are minimal. The declining status of the Greater

Roadrunner should be a reminder that we must appreciate and protect what we have, or before we know it, it could be gone. Keep your eyes open when in Greater Roadrunner country, because without a doubt, seeing a Greater Roadrunner anywhere in Northern California, darting along the ground, stopping and cocking its tail as it curiously looks back at you, is a very special event. And if you listen very closely, you can almost hear it go “beep-beep”.

Greater Roadrunner sightings as well as other rare bird sightings should be reported to Bruce Deuel at BDEUEL@dfg.ca.gov. Bruce is the compiler of county records for submission to the editors of North American Birds, for the counties of Butte, Tehama, Glenn, Colusa, Sutter and Yuba. He is interested in receiving all records of interesting species from all those counties.

Greater Roadrunner Sightings in Tehama, Glenn, and Butte Counties 1997 - 2006

Tehama County

- 6-15-06, Cannon Road, ~2 miles N of Reeds Creek Road, by Ed Pandolfino
- 1-24-04, Ridge Road and Gonsalves Road, ~18 miles W of Red Bluff, by Dave Dahnke
- 12-21-03, Salt Creek at Tuscan Springs Road, by Dave Dahnke
- 12-?-03, Xmas Bird Count, one seen in Red Bluff [CARB] circle
- 12-?-02, Xmas Bird Count, two seen in Red Bluff [CARB] circle
- 8-11-02, Ridge Road near Alta Vista, ~6 miles W of Red Bluff, by Dave Dahnke
- 5-?-02, Off Bowman Road at the end of Evergreen Road, Cottonwood, by David Lee-Johnson
- 3-?-02, ~15 to 20 miles W of I-5, SH 36, 2 roadrunners, by Brad Stovall
- 7-?-00, Just down slope from Manton in Blue Oak woodland, by John Sterling
- 12-?-00, Xmas Bird Count, one seen in Red Bluff [CARB] circle
- 10-11-99, SH 36, 1 mile NE of Hog Lake, by Bruce Deuel
- 9-2-99, Ridge Road near Strawberry Lane, ~6 miles W of Red Bluff, by Dave Dahnke
- 5-30-99, Reeds Creek Road, 11 miles W of Willard Road, by Bruce Deuel
- 1-2-99, Newville Road, by Kristy Nelson and others
- 4-22-98, Reeds Creek Road at Johnson Road, 8 miles W of Red Bluff, by Kathy Deuel
- 12-?-97, Xmas Bird Count, 2 roadrunners seen in Red Bluff [CARB] circle

Glenn County

- 5-?-06, Near Elk Creek, by Phil Johnson
- 3-15-06, Road 306 between Newville and Chrome, just W of Black Butte Lake, by Jackson Shedd
- 10-23-04, Road 306, ~2 miles S of Newville Road, 2 roadrunners, by Jim Lomax
- 4-5-03, Stony Gorge Reservoir, by John Luther and Luke Cole

Butte County

- 4-9-05, Gray Lodge Wildlife Area, parking lot 13, by Gray Lodge staff
- 1997, North Rim Trail in Upper Bidwell Park, by Marilyn and Bob Gamette

Opportunities and Events

Friday/Saturday/Sunday, November 3-5, Sandhill Crane Festival, Lodi, CA - The 2006 10th Annual Sandhill Crane Festival presents an appreciation of cranes and all wildlife that share the wetland habitat. Contact www.lodichamber.com/cranefestival.html or the Crane Hotline (800-581-6150) or (209) 367-7840 if you have any questions or need help booking a tour.

Thursday/Friday/Saturday/Sunday, November 16-19, 10th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium – Several of us attended this event last year, were impressed, had a good time, and are going back this year. In addition to many field trips and “The Birder’s Market”, there will be presentations

on the story of "Birds on the Wind", the "where, why, and when" of bird migration with Kevin Karlson, and his workshop on "Birding Made Simpler". You can marvel at the "Falcons of North America" by noted photographer John Hendrickson or consider the environmental implications of "\$4.00 a Gallon Birding" discussed by Kimball Garrett. Interested in raptors? Simone Whitecloud will help you out with "Raptors Demystified". If you want to wander farther afield, how about attending a program by Joe Morlan about the "Birds and Wildlife of Eastern Australia". If not, Ed Harper's program on "Sharing the Experience" of Central Valley Birding will be a delight. You can check out the offerings and register at their web site, <http://www.cvbs.org/>.

eBird beta-testing bulk upload from Excel, AviSys etc. – Previously in this column we've mentioned Citizen Science, My Back Yard and the e-Bird system – all set up by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to help track bird migration and help birders keep track of their own sightings. The Lab is testing its new bulk upload feature at eBird (www.ebird.org). This tool allows the user to upload existing data from Excel, Access, AviSys, etc -- any data that can be put into a CSV, or "comma separated values," file. If you have been keeping your field notes in Excel or have data in some other electronic format, and you're interested in testing the upload tool please contact bls42@cornell.edu. They'd be happy to help you get your old data into eBird and to help work out any potential bugs. This goes for individual users as well as bird clubs, Audubon chapters etc. They're interested in pulling in as much of the existing digital observational data as possible.

As an aside, some members of Altacal went to S. E. Arizona in August and saw [Aztec Thrushes](#) – rare visitors to the U.S. The Cornell Lab specifically mentions these birds and requests information about sightings of them. They hope that such folks go to the above-mentioned web site and let them know when, where, how many, etc. of the birds they saw. So, if this applies to you, by all means consider checking it out.

The Conservation Corner

Vote Yes on Proposition 84 - the Clean Water, Parks and Coastal Protection Act

California is facing enormous population growth in the coming years, with 25 million new residents expected by 2040. But our investment in infrastructure is not keeping pace with our population growth. Current funding for natural resources and environmental protection programs is critically low. In fact, funding for resources makes up less than 1% of the overall state budget. Proposition 84 makes the investments needed to ensure that all Californians will have access to safe drinking water, better protection from floods and opportunities to enjoy parks, natural landscapes and our rivers, lakes, beaches, bays and coastline.

A broad coalition of interests – water districts, conservation and environmental groups, local government entities, business organizations, museum and park interests, elected officials, and civic groups – has been formed to support Proposition 84, the Clean Water, Parks and Coastal Protection Bond Act. Altacal Audubon Society is among them, and urges you to vote for Proposition 84 in November. More information can be found online at:

<http://www.cleanwater2006.com/about/facts.php>

Redding Listening Session on Cooperative Conservation

Recently, senior Bush Administration officials from the United States Department of Agriculture, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service came to Redding for a "listening session" on "cooperative conservation". We anticipate that this listening tour will precipitate new legislation and administration of environmental laws that erode current protections. The conservation community organized ourselves to comment at the session and to demonstrate that cooperative conservation already exists and although important, cooperative conservation only works if we preserve the environmental protections of the Endangered

Species Act (ESA) and Clean Air and Water Acts. Audubon made a terrific showing with five speakers from Altacal, Wintu and Mt. Shasta Audubon. The lead quote in the story in the Redding paper came from the Wintu Audubon President, William Oliver, who said the ESA and other federal environmental protection laws are essential. And the penalties associated with them need to be enforced to get some companies and individuals to follow the laws. "Voluntary compliance is a beautiful idea, but we don't think it has a chance of working," he said. For the full article go to:

http://www1.redding.com/redd/nw_local/article/0,2232,REDD_17533_4991882,00.html

Sightings

(If you have any interesting sightings in October and November, you can send them to the Newsletter Editor at tim.ruckle@sbcglobal.net by November 20 for possible inclusion in the next newsletter.)

August, 2006 – On a trip to the Arctic Circle Scott Huber saw the following noteworthy species: [Red-throated Loon](#), [Long-tailed Duck](#), [Merlin](#), [Glaucous Gull](#), [Rough-legged Hawk](#), [Spruce Grouse](#), [Northern Hawk Owl](#), [Boreal Chickadee](#), [Gray-headed Chickadee](#), [Northern Wheatear](#), [Rusty Blackbird](#), [American Tree Sparrow](#) and [Hoary Redpoll](#).



[Scott took this photo of the Northern Wheatear]

August 6-13 - Jennifer and Warren Patten sighted [Rufous Hummingbirds](#), male and female [Western Tanagers](#), a [Black-headed Grosbeak](#), and a male [Hooded Oriole](#) in their Chico backyard. They also saw several [White-tailed Kites](#) fly over the house at around 8 p.m. four nights in a row.

August 26 – Laura and Mike Fisher not only picked up a life bird but had a life experience in viewing five [California Condors](#) in Julia Pfeiffer State Park in the Big Sur area. It was a moving experience for them and the realization of a boyhood dream for Mike.

September 11 – Kathryn Hood spotted a [Red-shouldered Hawk](#) and three [Red-tailed Hawks](#) on wires along Hwy. 162 going west to Willows during this week. She notes that the big birds are coming back to the valley! She also saw a flock of [Western Bluebirds](#) on the soccer goal outside her window at Hamilton City High School on September 18.

September 18 – Julie Nelson spotted a flock of six [Sandhill Cranes](#) flying over Llano Seco Refuge. They flew in from the private ranch into the sanctuary and were visible from the first platform. She said they sounded great!

September 18 – Phil Johnson saw his first [White-crowned Sparrows](#) of the season and on the Sacramento River near the Washout he saw a [Lawrence's Goldfinch](#).

Submission of Articles

(Notices or articles submitted for publication consideration should be sent by e-mail message to the newsletter editor as Microsoft Word (if possible) attachments by the 20th of the month for the next issue of the newsletter - tim.ruckle@sbcglobal.net – Thanks, Ed.)

Altacal Board of Directors

President:	Phil Johnson	570-7139/pjohnsonhardwood@sunset.net
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	Jackson Shedd	342-5144/jackson_shedd@sbcglobal.net

Board meetings are held at 5:00 p.m. on the 1st Thursday of each month (except July and August). The usual meeting place is the Altacal Audubon Society/Snow Goose Festival office at 635 Flume St., Chico. The public is welcome to attend.

Local Chapter Membership Application

Please join us! Your membership will help Altacal Audubon Society continue its important work. Altacal Audubon Society (AAS) is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. In addition, AAS is a separately incorporated non-profit organization. With a local chapter membership, 100% of your membership dues goes to support local projects and activities. AAS is an all-volunteer organization that conducts all of its programs with no paid staff. We offer regularly scheduled field trips focused on birds and bird habitats, our own website, www.altacal.org/, a bi-monthly newsletter (*White-tailed Kite*), monthly membership meetings which include lectures and media presentations on birds and other natural history-related topics, and advocacy to protect and conserve local habitats as well as special projects and programs. Other AAS activities include:

- sponsoring and participating in the annual Snow Goose Festival
- sponsoring and participating in the annual Endangered Species Fair
- founding and providing continued support to the Chico Creek Nature Center
- owning and managing the Arneberg Sanctuary as a wildlife habitat and research area
- helping to monitor the bird populations at the Del Rio Wildland Preserve near the Sacramento River
- paying to maintain public access and a wildlife viewing blind at the Chico Oxidation Ponds
- leading annual Christmas Bird Counts in Chico and Oroville for the past 50 years

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Welcome to the Altacal Audubon Society! Please indicate your choice of membership options:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Basic Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Sponsor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Patron |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Sustaining | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Benefactor |

Important: Membership in Altacal Audubon does *not* include membership in the National Audubon Society. We encourage you to also support National Audubon in their important education and lobbying efforts. To join the National Audubon Society contact them at their website www.audubon.org/

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Please make checks payable to **Altacal Audubon Society**, and mail to: AAS, P.O. Box 3671, Chico, CA 95927