



White-tailed Kite

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALTACAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Chapter of the National Audubon Society serving Butte, Glenn, and Tehama Counties of Northern California

DECEMBER 2016 / JANUARY 2017

ALTACAL Programs

Programs for the general community are normally held on the third Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m., at the Chico Creek Nature Center, 1968 E. 8th St. Chico.

In December the program is held on the second Monday and in July and August there are no programs.

December

Monday, December 12, 2016 6:30 p.m.
Chico Creek Nature Center

January

Wednesday - Sunday, January 25 - 29, 2017
Chico, California

MEMBERS' SLIDE SHOW



See what Altacal members and friends have been up to as they show off their photos for our annual Members' Slide Show, a favorite program for many. There are always some great new, and sometimes old, (that's OK too) pictures to see and tales to hear. Join in and bring a few of your own photos of birds / wildlife / nature (on disk or memory stick). We will have plenty of time for all who want to participate. Also at this program we will hear about plans for the annual Chico and Oroville Christmas Bird Counts taking place over the following weekends. Call or email Jennifer Patten, 345-9356 (jpchico@sbcglobal.net) so we know ahead of time how many will be showing photos.

Red-breasted Sapsucker by Lisa Winslow

The 18th Annual SNOW GOOSE FESTIVAL of the Pacific Flyway

Altacal Audubon is having its biggest program of the year! All sorts of wonders are in store for birders and outdoor enthusiasts of all skills and ages at the 18th Annual Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway, Wednesday-Sunday, January 25 - 29, 2017, Chico, California.

This action-packed 5-day event celebrates the remarkable journey of millions of waterfowl and raptors along the Pacific Flyway that call the Northern Sacramento Valley their home during the winter months.

With over 60 field trips, workshops and presentations, free family activities, exhibits, vendors, and the amazing Pacific Flyway Art Exhibit in downtown Chico, the festival is a great opportunity to spend the day or all five-days learning about the natural wonders of the Pacific Flyway and its inhabitants.

(continued on page 2.)



ALTACAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Director - at-Large	VACANT

January (continued from page 1.)

Alvaro Jaramillo joins the festival this year as our Keynote Speaker at the "Gathering of Wings" Banquet & Silent Auction. Alvaro will share his knowledge and insight into a birder's brain.



Come hear his lighthearted and informative explanation of how we identify birds and why birding is a great addition to anyone's life. Don't miss this special event!

Visit our website for program and registration information. For early notification of our exciting field trip and work-

shop schedule, be sure you are on our email list and "like" us on Facebook as that is a great source for instant Festival information and updates.

www.snowgoosefestival.org

info@snowgoosefestival.org

530-345-1865

Snow Goose Festival, P. O. Box 1063

Chico, CA 95927



Immature Snow Goose at the Chico Oxidation Ponds
by David Fundakowski

BOARD MEETINGS

5:15 p.m.

2nd Wednesday of each month

Altacal Audubon Society / Snow Goose Festival Office
635 Flume Street, Chico

Altacal Audubon Members are welcome to attend

by STEVE OVERLOCK

from the President



GREETINGS MEMBERS,

As 2016 runs its course it's a good time to reflect on what makes Altacal such a fine organization year in and year out. And it's the members, and especially those members who donate their time, experience and expertise to help all of us grow in our knowledge and enjoyment of the great outdoors. The birders who lead us on bird-counts, on trips to the coast, the mountains, the many local hot spots, are one of a kind and the essence of Altacal Audubon. Though it may be their passion, the fact they generously share it with all members goes above and beyond a passion and makes Altacal what it is. You are appreciated and gratefully thanked.

We will see many of these folks at the 2017 Snow Goose Festival. There is an excellent write up inside and the Festival is shaping up to be as good as ever. Also, if you think you might have an inkling to help out this year please get in touch by phone or email. It's a big endeavor and there are many various opportunities so chances are good there is one to fit your schedule.

Finally, speaking of migratory birds and the SGF, If you haven't seen it yet here is a link to a most enjoyable Holiday short movie: Raising Kid Colt <https://youtu.be/Ufa36YiHBoc> filmed by Nina Faust in Homer Alaska, for Kachemak Crane Watch. How amazing to think that the Sandhill Cranes we are now seeing in the rice fields could have been in this thirty-five-minute video. Have a wonderful Holiday Season, Happy Birding now and all through 2017.

Thank you again and Happy Birding Steve O



UPCOMING *Birding Trips*

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

December 10, Saturday

RAPTOR RUN

Trip Leaders: Matt Forster and Mary Muchowski

Join us in our search for raptors in Butte County! We'll be traveling by car to Cottonwood Rd and Nelson Ave to view the returning hawks, eagles, falcons, and owls. Cottonwood Rd boasts one of the best landscapes in Northern California for raptors. Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks are regular visitors. Peregrine and Prairie Falcons can be seen perched on the surrounding power poles. While viewing a soaring Golden Eagle last year, I was pleasantly surprised by a beautiful Mountain Bluebird that flew within 20 feet of my car! Breathtaking! We'll then travel to Richvale and check out the fields for swans, geese, and ducks. Maybe we'll get lucky and find Trumpeter Swans. Bring binoculars, spotting scopes, water, walking shoes and proper clothing for the expected weather conditions. Light rain will not cancel. We'll meet at the first parking area at the Chico Park & Ride at 8 am. The trip will be 5-6 hours. Matthew Forster, findforster@yahoo.com, 619-347-2269.

January 7, Saturday

LLANO SECO VIEWING PLATFORM BIG SIT

Trip Leader: Matt Forster

Give your legs a rest and your eyes a treat on this leisurely afternoon at Llano Seco Viewing Platform. Bring your lawn chair, binoculars, and snacks, sit back and relax as the birds come to you. You'll learn to identify the waterfowl species that frequent this idyllic setting. Then at dusk the waterfowl will fly-out from the ponds to nearby fields to feed at night. As the sky fills with birds, their wing beats and calls are incredible. Meet at Llano Seco Viewing Platform at 3:30 pm. Limited parking, limited to 20 people. To reserve contact trip leader Matthew Forster, findforster@yahoo.com, 619-347-2269 by January 3rd.

January 25 - 29

THE 18TH ANNUAL SNOW GOOSE FESTIVAL

Registration begins in early December! Make sure you get tickets to Saturday's "Gathering of Wings" Banquet & Silent Auction to listen to international bird guide and author, Alvaro Jaramillo, will share his knowledge and insight into a birder's brain. Come hear his lighthearted and informative explanation of how we identify birds and why birding is a great addition to anyone's life!

Christmas BIRD COUNTS

December 17, Saturday

CHICO CBC

COMPILER: Mary Muchowski

530-228-0625 or mmuchowski@earthlink.net

All levels of birders are welcome. Bring warm clothes, hiking shoes, lunch, bird books and binoculars. You will be assigned an area and spend the day counting birds in this area. RSVPs encouraged!

MEET at 7:30 am

Chico Creek Nature Center,
1968 East 8th Street, Chico

COMPILATION DINNER 4:30 pm TBA

December 30, Friday

OROVILLE CBC

COMPILER: Gaylord Grams

530-533-1624 or gg2canoe@yahoo.com

All levels of birders are welcome. Beginners will be paired up with experienced birders. You will be assigned an area and spend the day counting birds in this area. Bring warm clothes, hiking shoes, lunch, bird books and binoculars. To do a half-day, contact Gaylord Grams ahead of time.

MEET at 7:30 am

Butte County Ag Commissioners Office,
316 Nelson Ave, Oroville east of Hwy 70 across from Home Depot.

COMPILATION DINNER 4:30 pm at TBD

December 31, Saturday

RED BLUFF CBC

COMPILER: Karen Scheuermann,

530-347-1687 or karens2020@gmail.com

Cottonwood, Tehama Co, CA

Please let Karen know if you plan to join the count



American Pipit by David Fundakowski

Get to know YOUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES!



by HALEY HENDERSON, Visitor Services Assistant

Fire fighters are generally thought of as professionals who put out fires. So why are they starting them at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Complex)? Although starting fires may seem counterproductive, it is actually beneficial for wildlife, vegetation, and even wildlife viewers. Prescribed or controlled burns are used for a variety of reasons on the Complex. The main reasons they are used are to enhance wildlife habitat, manage invasive species, and reduce hazardous fuel. The fire program's primary objective at the Complex is to reduce hazardous fuel loads to prevent wildfire. However, multiple objectives are often times obtained and end up benefiting both wildlife and visitors.

Controlled burns have both positive and negative effects on vegetation. Non-native or invasive species of plants are burned to provide space for native species. Once the invasive species are burned, native grasses are planted. These grasses provide food and habitat for waterfowl, and a buffer zone for future fires. Although burns are carefully planned around trees, some trees will inevitably end up damaged. Despite this negative affect, the dead, leaf-less tree will provide birds of prey with the perfect perch and wildlife viewers a great shot of these majestic birds.

Prescribed burns can benefit wildlife and wildlife viewers in several different ways. Open space is generated by burning vegetation which enables tractors to get into areas that would otherwise be blocked and creates viewing lanes for wildlife watchers. Viewing lanes are also beneficial for biologists and provide them with easy access to conduct surveys and look for dead or diseased birds.



Birds benefit from the open spaces as well. Ducks, in particular, prefer a certain ratio of open to closed spaces. This environment is created not only for ducks, but geese and songbirds as well. Burn sites that have new vegetative growth provide geese with an area to "browse" in. Goose browsing occurs when new vegetation grows; geese move to the open fields to feed which serves as a secondary food source before migration. Controlled burns also produce desirable habitat for Canada geese.

Canada geese enjoy open fields that are surrounded by water and tall plants. Songbirds also appreciate sparsity of vegetation to build their nests in. When the riparian areas become overgrown with too many dense layers of tule and cattails, songbirds run out of room to construct their nests. The Complex experiences an increase in the number of tricolored black-bird nests, in particular, by burning portions of overgrown vegetation.

In 2001, the National Fire Plan was implemented across all federal agencies and included federally funded programs to ensure fire preparedness and reduce hazardous fuels. Hazardous fuels reduction was defined as, "any strategy that reduces the amount of flammable material in a fire prone ecosystem". Because of these changes, the Complex was able to add a fire crew to their staff. The fire crew was tasked to increase a prescribed burning program that had previously been completed by biology staff. Today, the fire crew is managed by a Fire Management Officer and is able to staff up to two fire engines.

The fire crew and other Complex employees are able to improve wildlife habitats and food supply while also clearing hazardous fuels and reducing the likelihood of wildfire. They are able to kill two birds with one stone... so to speak.

USFWS

OWLS, GIRL SCOUTS and PARTNERS, TROOP 70079 NIGHT OUT!



One of our project's goals is to educate people about Saw-whet owls. On Friday we got to introduce an owl to a group of eight girl scouts and two moms (Troop 70079). My colleague at the US Forest Service, Maria Cisneros, organized this group so we were representing the USFS, Altacal Audubon Society and the Reserve, a great team! Wyatt, one of the owl banders, entertained the girls with moon, stars and wildlife stories, Maria shared binoculars, headlamps, flashlights, and treats and I even got to tell a spooky ghost story. Perfect under-the-milky way conversation! And then came an owl.....

On our last run, voila! there she was, all feathers and golden eyes. So our conversation went to ooohs and aaaahs and the value of owls in the ecosystem, the importance of forests and snags for their breeding, Reserve habitats for migration refueling and wintering, owls as individuals and their amazing feathered toes, large asymmetric ears and keen vision. The saw-whet cast her spell again and left 8 girls, no doubt dreaming about owls!

The NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL Migration Monitoring UPDATE 2016

It's a good season so far with 45 new owls and 7 same season recaps through November 5, 2016. This is a record for owls recaptured in one season and indicates that the owls are using the Reserve at least as a refueling site which means a good prey base of rodents. And we can attest to that because some of the birds have been quite chunky at over 100 grams! Typical mass is 85-95 grams. We will continue to band through November 15 when our season, season 12 of monitoring NSWO, will end.

THANK YOU ALL VOLUNTEERS

Ken Sobon, Julie Newman, Julie Woodruff, Wyatt Hersey, Erika Iacona, Maureen Morales, and Kim Armstrong for this year's banding efforts! See <http://birdbling.blogspot.com/> for fun photos and banding info.



Northern Saw-whet Owl, Dawn Garcia and Girl Scout Troop 70079

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. AAS is a separately incorporated non-profit organization with a local chapter membership. 100% of membership dues goes to support local projects and activities. AAS is an all-volunteer organization that conducts all of its programs with unpaid staff.

We offer regularly scheduled **field trips** that focus on birds and bird habitats; membership **programs** with media presentations on birds and related topics; a bi-monthly **newsletter**, the White-tailed Kite; **website** www.altacal.org/; and **advocacy** to protect and conserve local habitats as well as special projects and programs.

Submission of Articles to the *White-tailed Kite*

Articles for publication should be sent to Denise Devine by email to dsrdevine@hotmail.com on the first of the month, prior to the next issue.

THANKS to all of you who contribute regularly by sending in reports, articles and photos for the White-tailed Kite – Denise, Editor.



OTHER ALTACAL ACTIVITIES

Major sponsor, participant and fiscal agent for the annual
SNOW GOOSE FESTIVAL

Founder and ongoing supporter of the
CHICO CREEK NATURE CENTER

Sponsor of the City of Chico
OXIDATION PONDS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Leading annual **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS**
in Chico and Oroville for over 55 years

Focusing on our **YOUTH** through
SCHOLARSHIPS and **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

Advocating for **BIRDS** and **WILDLIFE**
when they are threatened

Conducting surveys and participating in
AVIAN RESEARCH PROJECTS

ALTACAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Basic | <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Student / Low Income |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Sponsor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Sustaining | <input type="checkbox"/> \$_____ Additional Donation |

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ email _____

- | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Save Paper! Send me an email only | <input type="checkbox"/> New Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal | <input type="checkbox"/> Gift |
| <input type="checkbox"/> email me <i>Altacal in Action Alerts</i> | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I would be interested in volunteering to help | <input type="checkbox"/> Cash | <input type="checkbox"/> Check | Date _____ |

IMPORTANT: Membership in Altacal Audubon Society 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/

Please make check payable to ALTACAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
Mail to AAS, P.O. BOX 3671, CHICO, CA 95927-3671

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POST OFFICE BOX 3671
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Requested
In-home Delivery
11/28 - 30/2016
3-Day Window

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 86
Chico, Calif. 95927

CURRENT RESIDENT



White-tailed Kite

DECEMBER 2016 / JANUARY 2017

DATES TO REMEMBER

Dec	10	Raptor Run
Dec	12	Program - <i>Member's Slide Show</i>
Dec	17	Chico Christmas Bird Count
Dec	30	Oroville Christmas Bird Count
Dec	31	Red Bluff Christmas Bird Count
Jan	7	Llano Seco
Jan	25 - 29	SNOW GOOSE FESTIVAL

For updated information check the Altacal website
altacal.org

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

ALTACAL Program



Dec 12

Members' Slide Show

Jan 25 - 29

Snow Goose Festival

ALTACAL

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