



# White-tailed Kite

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALTACAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

JUNE / JULY 2016

## 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.*

## June

Monday, June 20, 2016 6:30 p.m.

Chico Creek Nature Center

## ALTACAL AUDUBON'S POTLUCK

Come join us and celebrate friendships and our common love for birds and the natural world at our ANNUAL POTLUCK DINNER, Monday, June 20, 6:30 pm at CHICO CREEK NATURE CENTER. We'll have a chance to visit with old friends and new ones; talk about birds and birding and share stories of recent and future adventures and travels. It's been another remarkable year for Altacal Audubon and this will be our last chance to get together as a group until our next program in September. Remember, there are no programs during July and August so you don't want to miss this one. Bring a dish to share, a beverage for yourself or to share, a plate and fork, and a chair if you like. **See you there!**



CHICO CREEK NATURE CENTER 1968 E. 8th St. Chico.

## ALTACAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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## Water-Wise and Habitat-Friendly SPRING GARDEN TOUR

by MELINDA TEVES

Altacal Audubon recently partnered with the Mount Lassen Chapter of the California Native Plant Society and Butte Environmental Council to sponsor a Water-Wise and Habitat-Friendly Garden Tour in Chico. The event took place on May 1st and was a wonderful success. Two-hundred visitors registered to see 17 terrific local 'habitat' gardens. There were also four different 'local favorite' demonstration gardens open to the public at Patrick Ranch. These were created by the Butte County Master Gardeners.

The gardens on tour featured a variety of attractive and valuable landscaping ideas. Many of the plants were native to California and ideally adapted to our climate and to the needs of local wildlife. Some gardens mixed native plants with pollinator-friendly herbs and vegetable gardens. There were bird baths and ponds to provide essential sources of water. Some gardens had small brush piles or decomposing logs (good for beneficial insects...and for shelter). Different vegetation layers provide wonderful habitat for birds. Many of the gardeners used the 'sheet mulching' method to replace lawn thus, avoiding the use of harmful chemicals. One garden had a 'catio' so that the owner's cats could enjoy the outdoors without coming into contact with birds.



Garden owners generously shared their garden successes and their challenges with the visitors on the tour who came away with much valuable information for use in designing and planting their own water and habitat friendly yards. Visiting so many unique, pretty gardens made for a really fun day.

*Thanks to all!*

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### 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*

## *from the President*

BY STEVE OVERLOCK

**A**s expected it has been a full Spring and as we welcome the Summer we also welcome Altacal's new Secretary, Cris Cline. Cris is a long time member and seasoned birder. We look forward to her insights and inputs, as well as her Minutes - Welcome, Cris and a sincere Thank You.



Remember, all members are welcome at our Board Meetings. And if you have a special issue that would fit in with Bird Conservation, we would be happy to hear about it. One ongoing concern of Altacal's is the implementation of a Grebe Grant received from National Audubon. Contact Maureen Morales, [maurmor@hotmail.com](mailto:maurmor@hotmail.com), if you would like more information about our efforts to protect the Western and Clark Grebes at the Thermalito Afterbay.

Lastly, once again, our very own Melinda Teves teamed with our friends at the Mount Lassen Chapter of the Native Plant Society in May to showcase the many yards in Chico that have replaced their grass with water and bird friendly native plants, as you have read in the above article. By every estimate it was a most successful event and Altacal is most fortunate to be a part of Melinda's efforts. Be sure to visit her Neighborhood Habitat link on our webpage for more information.

Happy Sumer Birding and we hope to see you at the Potluck...



Water-Wise and Habitat-Friendly Garden Tour in Chico. May 1, 2016

# UPCOMING

## *Birding Trips*

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

June 4, Saturday

### **COLBY MEADOWS**

Trip Leaders: Larry Crisman (Sierra Club), Altacal Audubon

We'll be getting a special tour of a less traveled portion of Colby Meadows with help of the Sierra Club. Meet at Chico Park & Ride west lot (closest to Hwy 99) at 9am, caravan up to the Butte Meadows Snowmobile Park, and caravan the rest of the way. We'll be looking for Northern Goshawk, White-headed Woodpecker, Pacific Wren, and Mountain Chickadee. Contact: Larry Crisman at 530-513-8425.

June 10 - 12, Friday - Sunday

### **SIERRA VALLEY / YUBA PASS**

Trip Leaders: Mac McCormick and Jennifer Patten

This trip covers a variety of mountain habitats; marshes and open fields at the headwaters of the Feather River, the sagebrush lowlands of the Sierra Valley, the conifer woodlands of Yuba Pass and the Lakes Basin area (Sand Pond Boardwalk). This trip always gives us a good variety of birds. We'll meet at our campground on Fri afternoon/evening and camp out on Friday and Saturday nights. The campground will be Wild Plum Campground in Sierra City. The weather should be nice this time of year, but rain or snow cancels. To reserve a space contact Jennifer Patten at 530-345-9356 or [jpchico@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jpchico@sbcglobal.net)

June 11, Saturday

### **KAYAKING ON THE THERMALITO AFTERBAY**

Trip Leaders: Gaylord Grams and Matt Forster

Join us on a leisurely kayaking trip on the beautiful Thermalito Afterbay. We'll be in search of Western and Clark's Grebes, Least Bittern, Osprey, Double-crested Cormorant, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Launching off Wilbur Road south at 8:30 am. This is the dirt road that leads to a large clump of trees. There is plenty of parking, shade, and easy access to put in the kayaks. We'll be out on the water for 3-4 hours, so bring your sunscreen and plenty of water! Contact Matthew Forster: [findforster@yahoo.com](mailto:findforster@yahoo.com) or 619-347-2269.

June 18, Saturday

### **BUTTE MEADOWS HIKE**

Trip leader: Matt Forster

Enjoy a leisurely Saturday afternoon exploring Butte Meadows and Colby Meadows for mountain birds. Birds of interest will be Evening Grosbeak, Townsend's Solitaire, Pileated Woodpecker, White-headed Woodpecker, Pacific Wren and Mountain Chickadee. There will also be a chance to see Mountain Quail and American Dipper along the way. We'll meet at Chico Park & Ride on west lot (Hwy 99/32) at 8 am. Please pack a lunch as we won't be heading back to Chico until 2-3 pm. Contact: Matthew Forster [findforster@yahoo.com](mailto:findforster@yahoo.com) or 619-347-2269.

June 24 - 26, Friday - Sunday

### **LASSEN VOLCANIC NATIONAL PARK CAMP OUT**

Trip Leader: Jennifer Patten

We have enjoyed the birding and camping at the Lost Creek Group Campground over the years, so we are scheduling this event again this year. Group Camp Site #5 has been reserved for Fri, June 24 and Sat, June 25. The park road should be free of snow by late June and it ideal for observing nesting birds. Wintu, Redwood Region and Altacal Audubon Society are invited. Folks can camp at Lost Creek or drive up for Saturday and Sunday. Campers can arrive at the campsite at a time of their choosing on Friday afternoon. Saturday day trippers should meet at the Redding Civic Auditorium (Convention Center) at 8 am to car pool. We'll bird Manzanita Lake and vicinity on Saturday morning. The rest of the itinerary is open and will depend on the interests of the participants. Day trippers for Sunday, June 26, will meet at the campsite at 9 am. Lost Creek has primitive facilities; pit toilets and no electricity. Potable water is available. Contact Jennifer Patten for more details, [jpchico@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jpchico@sbcglobal.net), 530-345-9356.

June 26, Sunday

### **FEATHER FALLS**

Trip Leader: Matt Forster

Feather Falls Loop Trail is a 7.6 mile moderately trafficked loop trail located near Oroville that features a beautiful waterfall. At the falls, we'll be able to see the splendid Black Swifts as they soar throughout the skies. Along the trail we will be looking for Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Canyon Wrens, Pacific Wrens, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Band-tailed Pigeons and many more mid-elevation birds. Because this trail can get pretty hot during the summer days, we'll leave the Chico Park & Ride on west lot (Hwy 99/32) at 6 am. Bring plenty of water, a lunch and mosquito spray. Contact Matthew Forster: [findforster@yahoo.com](mailto:findforster@yahoo.com) or 619-347-2269 for more information and interest in joining.

MORE TRIPS on page 8.



## Get to know YOUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES!

by LIZ BELO-REX, Visitor Services Assistant

Seasonal, semi-permanent and permanent wetlands are essential habitats for wildlife at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Complex). Some wildlife depend on the water that is diverted from the Sacramento River, which floods our complex in early autumn. The majority of the Complex's wildlife are waterfowl, that migrate north during the Central Valley's dry summer months, but a few species are year-round residents, such as the giant garter snake (*Thamnophis gigas*). The giant garter snake is a federally-listed as threatened California endemic species, which relies heavily on semi-permanent and permanent wetlands as a key habitat during the dry summer months in the Central Valley.

Unlike waterfowl which migrate to find favorable habitat conditions, giant garter snakes cannot travel far, and must overwinter in underground burrows called hibernacula to survive the cold winter months. In March, they emerge from their overwintering sites, located in levees and uplands, and set out in search of wetlands. These highly aquatic snakes depend on wetlands to provide their food source of fish and frogs. They will frequently bask on rocks, tule clumps and levee tops near the water's edge and dive deep into the water when disturbed. Historically, giant garter snakes were found in the naturally-occurring summer wetlands of the Central Valley, which were fed from the snow melt in the Sierra Nevada. But California has lost 90-95% of its natural wetlands since the 1800's due to human development, and the giant garter snake has come to rely heavily on refuges, agricultural wetlands, and canals. Rice fields, which are flooded in the summer, have come to be an important part of giant garter snake conservation. Without rice fields and the irrigation canals for both agricultural and refuge lands, these snakes would be even more impacted. Their range, which used to extend through the entire Central Valley, is now limited to small portions of the Sacramento Valley, and the northern San Joaquin Valley. They are now extinct from an estimated 98% of their former range in the San Joaquin Valley.

Giant garter snakes, which historically ate native frogs and fish, are now faced with introduced non-native frogs and fish that are larger and compete for smaller prey. Bullfrogs are known to consume young giant garter snakes, as well as compete with them by eating smaller prey. Predatory fish such as largemouth bass and catfish also share common prey with these snakes, and will eat young garter snakes. The snakes have adapted to eating introduced fish such as mosquito fish, as well as small bullfrogs and their tadpoles.

On the Complex, visitors are most likely to see the giant garter snake on Colusa and Sutter NWRs during the summer, when they are active around wetland edges and irrigation ditches. The Complex actively creates and manages summer wetlands for giant garter snakes, and a USGS study even found increased numbers of snakes on a restored wetland at Colusa NWR. With a stable source of summer water, radio-marked snakes were less reliant on adjacent rice fields and did not have to travel as far for food and shelter, decreasing their risk of exposure. Although many natural wetlands have disappeared, man-made wetlands still continue to provide important habitat for wildlife such as the giant garter snake, and migratory waterfowl.





# TRICOLORED BLACKBIRD (*AGELAIUS TRICOLOR*) SURVEY OUTING

by DAWN GARCIA  
Conservation Chair

On April 23, Deren, a member of the Tricolored Blackbird Technical Advisory Group (coordinating with Audubon CA) met with Altacal Vice President Ken Sobon, me, and a group of 7 Audubon members to introduce us to the behavior and habitat of Tricolored Blackbirds (Trics). The Tric is a near endemic species to California and has been proposed to be listed under the Endangered Species Act due to habitat loss and agricultural practices.

Trics are communal nesters, colonizing an area in the hundreds to thousands. They historically nested in open wetland habitats loaded with bulrush and cattails. As we converted and destroyed natural wetlands, Trics used agricultural crops like wheat to build their nests. Unfortunately these crops are harvested before the Tricolored young fledge, so nests full of young, new fledglings and sometimes adults, are killed, reducing the population to a critical state. There is so much more to tell! See: <http://ca.audubon.org/birds-0/tricolored-blackbird>

Our outing was to visit historical Tric sites in Butte County (even back to 1933!) and look for new potential nesting habitat. Butte County is a very good place to host nesting Tricolored Blackbirds and help document and enhance their populations. Not only does our chapter contribute funds to this cause but we help survey and monitor their populations. Thank you so much for your help! We still need sighting information if you are aware of Tric habitat so please contact us. Below is an update from our leader Deren. He was very impressed with our results.

Yesterday, I met with Ken Sobon, Dawn Garcia, and a small group of folks from Altacal Audubon Society. We surveyed the length of the Butte County foothill grassland study area. We split into two groups. One group (Dawn and crew) went north and covered uncharted territory from the Humboldt Road site (Chico) up to Lassen Road. They also checked Cherokee Road up to Table Mountain (1933, N. Oroville site). The second group (Ken, myself, and crew) went south and checked the known sites north and south of Oroville. Here's the results of yesterday's survey.



## **IN A NUT SHELL:** 3 active sites (858 tricolors setting up) and 4133 foraging. **TOTAL= 4991 TRICOLORS**

### *North of Oroville (Dawn, Carolyn Short, Ruth and Victor Paz)*

- No nesting colonies or likely potential habitat was found, although we saw 2 small groups of Trics. They were within mixed colonies of red-wings, Brewer's and yellow-headed blackbirds and starlings.

### *South of Oroville (Deren, Ken, Cris Cline, Missy and Brian O'Donnell)*

- Dove Ridge Road: No breeding activity but we did observe approximately **80 tricolors**, mostly female foraging nearby.
- Nelson Road had **4000 tricolors** foraging/roosting. Mostly males (approx. 75%).
- Lone Tree Road: one small group of **6-8 tricolors** were setting up in blackberry.
- Ross Lane: The site is occupied and active with approximately **800 tricolors**.
- Cox Lane: **50 tricolors** but could be more.

# *Bird Walk* and *Birding Trip* REPORTS

April 24, 2016

## **BUTTE CREEK ECOLOGICAL PRESERVE**

Trip Leader: Joseph O'Neil

We had 13 birders, from astute veterans to a few beginners. Always great to have experienced eyes and ears along to help find birds. Just as great to have newer birders who are excited to learn and see lifers! With my never ending mission to teach birders about trees and plants, I am seeing success from the birders that have gone on my previous Bird and Tree Walks. I personally love the big picture of nature, learning and sharing about how it is interconnected. The trees were freshly leafed out and we got to see their different flowers, that turn into either winged seeds, catkins or acorns. These then become food for different species of birds.

We ended up having a phenomenal day finding and observing birds. First a small flock of **Cedar Waxwings** flew over us then we spotted a couple of **California Quails** in flight. Soon **Black-headed Grosbeak, Lesser Goldfinch, Violet-green Swallows, House Finch, and Acorn Woodpeckers** were seen. We then heard **Oak Titmouse, California** and **Spotted Towhees, Nuttall's Woodpecker** and **Yellow-breasted Chat**.

As we reached the open area, two **Wood Ducks** flew over. We also saw **Brown-headed Cowbird, Phainopepla** and **Bewick's Wren**. Continuing toward the creek, Jennifer Patton spotted a **House Wren** and a **Warbling Vireo**. Before long, Diego Bustamonte discovered a Black-headed Grosbeak nest with the female sitting in it and the male close by. Jon Aull also showed us a hummingbird nest from last year. Carter Moore found a Bush Tit nest. **Tree Swallows** were seen perched and in flight, **Bushtits** and **Anna's Hummingbird** were also seen.

Reaching the creek, we found a **Western Tanager** and a **Belted Kingfisher** was heard. We then got great looks of a singing Yellow-breasted Chat. **Black-throated Gray** and **Orange-crowned Warblers** were spotted as well as a **Downy Woodpecker** and a **Hutton's Vireo**. A **Red Shouldered Hawk** and two **Red-tailed Hawks** soared above. We also found **Bullock's Oriole, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Kingbird**, and a pair of **Common Mergansers**. We also saw a female **Mallard** fly out of the berry brambles, finding her nest with seven large blue eggs

Reaching the pond we saw a pair of Wood Ducks and a nesting **Canada Goose** on top of the little island. **Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Song Sparrow, Northern Flicker** and a **Great Egret** were also in this area, We heard both a **Wilson's Warbler** and a **Pacific-slope Flycatcher**. In addition, Carter spotted a **Peregrine Falcon** that came and flew directly over the pond. We also had an amazing display of behavior from an **Osprey**. Shaking water off mid flight, circling and hovering. **Western Pond Turtles** were also basking on a log.

We then went to what I call "Magic Beach." It seemed a bit anti climactic and not living up to the legends of jumping salmon and a bear sighting. So Diego decided to chide me and ask.. Where is the magic ??? Immediately an adult **Bald Eagle** flew about 25 feet above the creek below the treetops soon to return carrying a fish, flying upstream being chased by a **Raven**.

We really had an amazing morning of Birding among the natural beauty of the Tuscan Canyon with the El Nino invigorated Butte Creek. A truly spectacular morning of spring birding. Our total species count for the day was 52. Thanks to Kathy Trevino for keeping track of what we saw.



Sooty Grouse, Butte Meadows by Ken Soban

# Bird Walk and Birding Trip REPORTS

April 30, 2016

## BIRDING UPPER BIDWELL PARK

Trip Leader: Steve Overlock

Another great day in the Park for a bird walk. Windy and chilly before the start and calm and warm shortly after leaving Horseshoe Lake. There were birders of all levels so everyone had something to gain. We found an **Anna's Hummingbird** and **Acorn Woodpeckers** and **European Starlings** were actively making their presence known. Our State Bird, the **California Quail**, which has only made a comeback in the Park since the Chico Cat Coalition removed 1,000 cats (ref. Birds of Bidwell Park, pg. 13, Roger Lederer, PhD.) ran across the trail. We got a quick look at a **Bullock's Oriole** (Latin for Golden). First heard, then located an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** and a **Willow Flycatcher** stayed in an oak tree long enough for us to make a positive identification. Next, we checked off the resident **Western Scrub Jay**, **California Towhee**, **American Robin**, **Red-winged Blackbird**, and **Oak Titmouse**. Kathy records a truly unique sighting in her journal: "...we came across something truly unusual – an Acorn Woodpecker with a bright yellow crown in place of the usual red one". Then, two separate really good views of a **Yellow-breasted Chat** were quite rewarding for us all. Total species count for all participants was 36, not quite up there with our fellow birders who were doing The Big Day at the same time, 125, but most enjoyable nevertheless. This Report was based on a Journal entry by Kathy Trevino.



Yellow-breasted Chat  
by Steve Overlock

May 7, 2016

## SPRING BIRD SONG

Trip Leader: Scott Huber

Ten determined birders braved non-stop drizzles to experience beautiful avian music on Scott Huber's SPRING BIRD SONG field trip on May 7. Great listens lead to great views of: **blue-gray gnatcatchers**, **California thrashers**, **western tanagers**, **black-headed grosbeaks** and many others. Here is the group going "all-ears" for an excited **house wren** that posed while singing just 15 feet away!



## UPCOMING *Birding Trips*

from page 4.

July 15 - 17, Friday - Sunday

### JUNIPER LAKE

### LASSEN VOLCANIC NATIONAL PARK

Trip Leaders: Joseph O'Neil and Gaylord Grams

Please join us for a multi-day camp, hike, and bird watching adventure. Lakes, streams and geysers are close by to Juniper Lake's campground which is 1/4 mile before Drakesbad Guest Ranch. This is located on the east side of the park and accessed from Chester. We'll be seeing summer upper elevation birds such as Cassin's Verio, Pileated Woodpecker, Black-backed Woodpecker, Evening Grosbeak, possibly the coveted Goshawk and a multitude of warblers.

We'll be leaving on Friday from Chico, possibly another group will be leaving early on Saturday. Contact to confirm plans. Water and pit style privy are the amenities (no showers). Bring your Lassen Park pass or \$14 a day per camp site for the Iron Ranger. Bring dinner food to share, also your own lunches, water, breakfast and snacks. We'll be making reservation very shortly, so please call and confirm that you are going as soon as possible. Contact Joseph O'Neil josephoneil@earthlink.net or Gaylord Grams at 530-533-1624 for more information and finalized plans.



# 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/](http://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](mailto: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 |

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| <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/](http://www.audubon.org/)

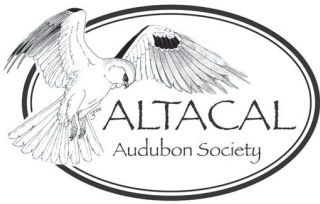
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Mail to AAS, P.O. BOX 3671, CHICO, CA 95927-3671

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Requested  
In-home Delivery  
5/26 - 28/2016  
3-Day Window

Non-Profit Organization  
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CURRENT RESIDENT



## *White-tailed Kite*

JUNE / JULY 2016

### **DATES TO REMEMBER**

Jun	4	Colby Meadows
Jun	10-12	Sierra Valley/Yuba Pass
Jun	11	Kayaking Afterbay
Jun	18	Butte Meadows
Jun	20	Altacal POTLUCK
Jun	24-26	Joint Lassen Campout
Jun	26	Feather Falls
Jul	15-17	Juniper Lake LVNP

For updated information check the Altacal website  
[altacal.org](http://altacal.org)

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

## **ALTACAL Program**



JUNE 20

**Altacal POTLUCK at CCNC**

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# ALTACAL

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