



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 2014

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 23, 2014 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 23, 6:30 p.m. 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.

It's also time for

nominations to the Altacal Board of Directors. Elections for a two year term will be held at our Annual Meeting in September. Please submit your nomination for President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer to one of our three Nominating Committee Board Members: Kathryn, Mike, or Kate.

The slate of nominations put forward by the Nominating Committee is:

President - Steve Overlock

Vice President - ***Open***

Secretary - ***Open***

Treasurer - LeAnn McConnell

For more information contact Board Member, Steve Overlock. Thank you.



Altacal Potluck at Chico Creek Nature Center June 17, 2013

ALTACAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
Board of Directors

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| President | VACANT |
| Vice President | STEVE OVERLOCK 530 892-0635 stephenoverlock@sbcglobal.net |
| Secretary | VACANT |
| Treasurer / Finance | LEANN MCCONNELL 530 893-4703 leannmc2006@sbcglobal.net |
| Membership | CATHY CARTER 530 521-0381 acd2@digitalpath.net |
| Publications / Newsletter | DENISE DEVINE 530 345-8444 dsrdevine@hotmail.com |
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| Sanctuary / Lands / Refuge | MIKE BOYD 345-0758 boyd1m@comcast.net |
| Conservation | DAWN GARCIA 872-2165 mel.dawn@sbcglobal.net |
| Education | MELINDA TEVES 530 828-0486 altacal@outlook.com |
| Programs | JENNIFER PATTEN 345-9356 jpchico@sbcglobal.net |
| Sac NWR Bookstore | MARILYN GAMETTE 343-3154 gamettec@aol.com |
| Director - at-Large | KATHRYN HOOD 321-2852 verdant44@gmail.com |
| Director - at-Large | KATE BRICE 773 206-0876 bricekc7@gmail.com |
| Director - at-Large | DEREK DUNN 414 698-3851 derekwdunn@gmail.com |



**HELP MAKE SURE
 FEDERAL DROUGHT BILL
 DOESN'T HARM BIRDS**

Your help is needed to ensure that federal drought response legislation doesn't do more harm than good to birds and nature in California's Central Valley. Your voice can make a huge difference.

California Senator Dianne Feinstein is advancing a bill to address a wide variety of issues related to the drought. While she has committed to preserving environmental laws, there are indications that these protections may not survive in the final legislation. These safeguards are vital for the survival of birds and habitat in the Central Valley.

We are particularly concerned that Feinstein's bill will incorporate elements of recently passed legislation in the House of Representatives that would suspend Endangered Species Act protections, halt the San Joaquin River restoration, and divert water from the 19 Central Valley refuges that are so vital to the survival of millions upon millions of migratory birds.

check out <http://ca.audubon.org/>



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 (Vice) President

by STEVE OVERLOCK, Vice President

TWO BIG THANK YOUS



Greetings, I would like to start with a huge thanks for all the renewed memberships we have received the past two months. Thanks so much for supplying your local Audubon Chapter with the means to continue our truly important work that educates, protects, restores and provides

hope for the future. We are very grateful for your support, input, time, and enjoyment of all things Birds.

And a second big thank you and welcome to Cathy Carter, Altacal's new Membership Chair. Cathy works full time as a graphic designer and has generously volunteered her time and talents here to keep our membership file current. Make no mistake, Cathy has already been very busy updating our database with all these most recent membership renewals. Thank you Cathy.

WELCOME

We also welcome Kate Brice and Derek Dunn to our Board as Directors-at-Large. Look for these two young, bright, energetic college students to wear many hats as they increase Altacal's presence in the digital/social arena.

ONE DIFFICULT GOODBYE

Our most adept Secretary, Ruth Kennedy, will be turning in the keys this election cycle after many years of dedicated service. It is difficult not only because of her exceptional work but also because of the input she has provided keeping Altacal on target. Best of everything to you, Ruth, and looking forward to crossing paths with you many more times in the future -- thank you for your invaluable service with Altacal.

Of course you know what else this means: Altacal is in need of a Secretary. Please give it thoughtful consideration and feel free to contact Ruth or any Board member with questions.

LINKS NEAR AND FAR

There are some great sightings going on at Altacal's Goggle Groups page, (<https://groups.google.com/forum/?fromgroups#!forum/altacal>). A Swainson's Thrush was heard in Paradise, and besides a Heron and Egret Rookery just off Pentz Road at the Lime Saddle turn off, there are two Great Blue Heron nests with young at Upper California Park Lake. There are a number of other exciting postings including a variety of hummingbirds, a Willet in Chico, and a Poor Will, please do avail yourself of reading and posting.



GBBC - At the Great Backyard Bird Count web page (<http://gbbc.birdcount.org/photo-subs-2014/>) there is quite a bird photo contest in full swing. Be forewarned, one click will lead to many, many more.

Also, get on over to BirdNote (<http://birdnote.org/>) then let our excellent local Public Broadcasting Station know you would like to have it aired locally. It is a short 2 minute audio out of Seattle that discusses birds and more. Woody Elliot brought it to Altacal's attention and we are seeking to have it picked up here.

Be sure to check out all the Bird Trips coming up, from Sierra Valley to Lassen to a Pelagic event and more. It's a full schedule.

Hope to see everyone at the Potluck on June 16.

HAPPY BIRDING

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.*

June 6 - 8, Friday - Sunday **SIERRA VALLEY / YUBA PASS**

Trip Leader: Mac McCormick

This trip covers a variety of mountain habitats. We will bird the 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 we'll take a short trip to the Lakes Basin area (Sand Pond Boardwalk). This trip always gives us a good variety of birds. We will meet at our campground on Friday 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 could cancel this trip. For more information and to reserve a space on this trip, contact Jennifer Patten at 530-345-9356 or jpchico@sbcglobal.net

June 22, Sunday **BUTTE MEADOWS HIKE**

Trip leader: Matthew Forster

Enjoy a leisurely Sunday 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 will meet at the Chico Park & Ride on Hwy 32 in Chico 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 or 619-347-2269 for more information and interest in joining.

June 27 - 29, Friday - Sunday **CAMP-OUT AT LASSEN VOLCANIC NATIONAL PARK**

Trip Leader: Steve King

We have enjoyed the birding and camping at the Lost Creek Group Campground in Lassen VNP over the years and we'll be doing it again with the Wintu, Redbud and Redwood Region Audubon Chapters joining us. Group Camp Site #4 has been reserved for the nights of Friday, June 27 and Saturday, June 28. This year the park road should be free of snow by late June and it should be ideal for observing nesting birds. Last year we were a month later and nesting season was mostly over. People can either camp at Lost Creek or drive up for either or both Saturday and Sunday. Campers can arrive at the campsite at a time of their choosing on Friday afternoon. We will 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 28, will meet at the camp site at 9 am. Lost Creek has primitive facilities, pit toilets and no electricity, but potable water is available. Group size is limited. If you would like to join us please contact Steve King, 530-566-6136 or sking.chico@gmail.com



Upper Bidwell Park
April 12, 2014
report on page 7.

July 11-13, Friday - Sunday

**FLAMMULATED OWLS
OF PLUMAS NATIONAL FOREST**

Trip Leaders: Jennifer Patten, David Arsenult, Plumas Audubon

See the Flammulated Owls in their nesting territory, camp at Lake Davis and see the birds of Plumas National Forest during this weekend camping adventure. Friday we arrive, set up camp and bird. Saturday we'll do some local birding in the Plumas National Forest during the day. Then we'll meet with David Arsenault from the Plumas Audubon Society for an early evening hike to see the Flammulated Owl. Sunday depart for home, with birding along the way. More details will become available at a later date. Participants will be limited to 15 for the owls sake and pre-registration is required. Please call or email Jennifer Patten, 530-345-9356



July 13, Sunday

**YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO
AND LESSER NIGHTHAWK**

Trip Leaders: Matthew Forster

We will be scouring Pine Creek and other Units of the Sacramento River Wildlife Units in search of the ever-elusive Yellow-billed Cuckoo. The trip will begin at 7 am and will be meeting at the parking lot out at Pine Creek off of Hwy 32, just east of Hamilton City. We will also be driving over to the Capay Unit in Glenn County to walk the beach and see if we are able to flush up a couple of Lesser Nighthawk. Other notable birds of interest will be Blue Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, Caspian Tern and Forster's Tern. Once we have completed the loop trail at Capay, we will head over to Indian Fisheries, which is located directly across the river from the Capay Unit. There will be an assortment of warblers, Bullock's Oriole, and flycatchers. Please pack a lunch, as there are picnic tables at the Indian Fisheries and a bathroom. This is one of my favorite local Butte County birding spots so please come and join in the fun. Please contact Matthew Forster: findforster@yahoo.com or 619-347-2269 for more information.

July 17 - 20, Thursday - Sunday

**HIKE THE RUBY MOUNTAINS
FOR HIMALAYAN SNOWCOCK
AND BLACK-ROSY FINCH**

Trip Leader: Matthew Forster

We will be driving from Chico to the Ruby Mountains just outside of Elko, NV to try and see the Himalayan Snowcock. If you have seen the movie The Big Year, this is the bird Jack Black and Steve Martin were able to chase down from a helicopter after narrowly crashing in to the side of the Ruby's. This trip won't be as dangerous, but will require some serious hiking to get to the area where this bird is most reliable. Depending on the weather, we will be planning on camping at the base of the trail on Friday night, with an early start Saturday morning. The hike will be roughly 3-4 miles in, but we will surely be able to find some local rarities such as the Black-rosey Finch. This will be a four-day trip, so plan on leaving at 8 am, Thursday morning and returning around 5 pm on Sunday afternoon. Please respond within two weeks of the trip so trip leaders can plan transportation and camping availability. Please contact Matthew Forster: findforster@yahoo.com or 619-347-2269 for more information.

August ?

**POSSIBLE
PELAGIC OUT OF MONTEREY BAY**

This is to gauge interest in a possible Pelagic Trip out of Monterey Bay. The cost will most likely be \$160-\$200 per person. Depending on how many people we can get together, I will be looking into group rates to try and cut down on the cost. If you have any interest in joining for a Pelagic, please contact Matthew Forster: findforster@yahoo.com or 619-347-2269. Please respond by July 1, so we can throw something together! Thanks in advance!

Get to know YOUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES!

PART 9 - JUNE / JULY



by LORA HALLER, Visitor Services Manager



The Butte Sink Wildlife Management Area is part of the Sacramento NWR Complex that visitors are often curious about, but unable to visit. The Butte Sink Wildlife Management Area (WMA) consists mainly of private lands that are protected under conservation easements (32 properties totaling ~10,311 acres) and a single US Fish and Wildlife Service owned property known as the Butte Sink Unit (733 acres). The Butte Sink WMA lies within the Butte Sink, located between the Sutter Buttes and the Sacramento River. A geographic sink is a depression in land where water collects with no visible outlet.

The Butte Sink WMA was established in 1979 with the primary purpose of preserving native wetland habitat to perpetuate the migratory waterfowl resource in the Central Valley and Pacific Flyway. Managed wetlands comprise the majority of the WMA and consist primarily of seasonal wetlands with fewer semi-permanent and permanent wetlands. The wetlands occur in a floodplain and are characterized by a strong riparian forest and emergent vegetation component. Butte Creek and its tributaries meander through the WMA providing a water source for many of the wetlands. It represents the largest contiguous block of wetlands in the Sacramento Valley and is home to the largest concentration of waterfowl per acre in the world, typically supporting up to two million wintering waterfowl. It also hosts large numbers of the State-listed as threatened greater sandhill crane. These wetlands also support significant populations of breeding herons, egrets, and other waterbirds. Butte Creek and its associated wetlands also support anadromous fish, including federally threatened spring-run Chinook salmon and Central Valley steelhead.

Because the easement properties of the Butte Sink WMA are privately-owned, and its isolated location of the Butte Sink Unit, public access is not permitted.

Bird Walk and Birding Trip REPORTS

March 8, 2014

SECOND SATURDAY

BIRDING THE CHICO OXIDATION PONDS

Trip Leaders: Raina King and Steve King

For the March *Second Saturday* field trip, we headed to the Oxidation Ponds Wildlife Sanctuary. The nice weather brought out 23 birders! **Sandhill Cranes** flew over the parking area. We also had **Killdeer**, **Brewer's Blackbird** added to the list before heading to the back ponds. Other than a lone **Common Raven**, not much else was seen on the walk back, which is pretty unusual. The first pond had **American Coots** and **Marsh Wrens**, **Song Sparrow**. But not much else. We decided to take a clockwise route which would take us down between the ponds and then on the west side of the ponds on the walk back. The second pond was also quiet but we did see **American Wigeon**, **Cinnamon Teal**, **Ruddy Duck**, and **Gadwall**. A raptor was spotted in a far-off tree, and after careful examination through the scope, we decided it was a **Northern Harrier**. Walking down the middle road, we picked up **Cooper's Hawk**, **Red-tailed hawk**, **Canada Geese**, with **Wild Turkeys** seen in the distance through the spotting scope. Reaching the back of the Sanctuary, things picked up with **Great Egret**, **Western Bluebird**, **Western Scrub-Jay**, **Northern Mockingbird**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, **Lincoln's Sparrow**, **Fox Sparrow**, **Golden Crowned Sparrow**, **California Towhee**, **American Robin** and **Yellow-rumped Warbler**. Back at the parking area, many of us lingered around talking about birds and birding trips. This turned out to be a good thing because while we visited, we picked up **White-fronted Geese**, **Snow Geese**, **Eurasian Collared Dove**, **Dark-eyed Junco** and a **White-tailed Kite**. The abundance of birds was low but we did pick up a total of 41 species of birds, which is not too bad! It was a great group and a great time.



April 12, 2014

SECOND SATURDAY

BIRDING IN UPPER BIDWELL PARK

Trip Leaders: Raina King and Steve King

Raina and I want to thank everyone who came out to our *Second Saturday* field trips this year. It was another great year and we hope to see everyone on the other field trips planned for the rest of the spring and summer. Thanks also go to the other trip leaders who often lead this field trip. And thanks to all the great birders with the good ears that hear all those birds I no longer hear!

We had 9 people show up for our field trip in Upper Bidwell Park. Weather was in the high 60s and low 70s by the time we returned to the parking area. Sunny day and some of us put on the sun-screen. We started with checking out the birds around Horseshoe Lake. We picked up **American Coot**, **Red-winged Blackbird**, **Killdeer**, **Acorn Woodpecker**, **White-crowned Sparrow**, **Violet-green Swallow**, **Western Scrub-Jay** and **European Starling**. We took the usual route from the parking area to the start of the Yahi Trail and turn around point would be the Day Camp Parking area. Along the route we took to the Yahi Trail, we picked up **California Towhee**, **Golden-crowned Sparrow**, **Lark Sparrow** and **Song Sparrow**. We may have seen a Lincoln's Sparrow but decided to leave it off the list since it was between us and the sun. Once on the Yahi Trail, we saw **Oak Titmouse**, **Western Bluebird**. A **Tree Swallow** and **Mourning Dove** perched on a power line for all of us to get good looks. We mostly heard but also saw both **House** and **Bewick's Wrens**. A **Downy Woodpecker** also showed up and gave us good looks. **Nuttall's Woodpeckers** (both male and female) were seen. Continuing, we picked up **Wilson's Warblers**, **Hermit Thrush**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, **Spotted Towhee** and **White-breasted Nuthatch**. A few of us were able to see a pair of **Wood Ducks** on the creek.

The trip back to the cars from Day Camp was quick as usual with no new species of birds to add to the list. But the **Western Kingbird** was present on the fence by the golf course on the way out. Total Species count was 45 birds. Another great outing. Thanks everyone who came and a special thanks to Kathy for doing a great job of keeping track of what birds we saw and where.

April 13, 2014

ALTACAL'S BUTTE COUNTY BIG DAY

Trip Leader: Matt Forster Report by Kathy Trevino

Matt Forster led this amazing trip all around Butte County. Five of us met Matt at the Chico Park & Ride bright and early (before 6 am) to spend the day trying to find as many bird species as possible in one day in the county. We returned around 7 pm. Our group included Joyce Bond, Tess McGuire, Robin Rodgers, Ken Sorbon (who birded until noon), and me. It was a mild but windy day for the most part, but it was very cold at the upper elevation, which was our first stop. On our way there we found **American Crow, Common Raven, and Cooper's Hawk.**

Arriving at Colby Meadows shortly before 7:30, we were surprised by the cold and the breeze. In fact in some places on our hike, our shoes were crunching on lightly frozen ground. However, before we left the parking area, we were able to see **Hairy, Downy, White-headed, and Pileated Woodpeckers, Brown Creeper, Steller's Jay, Evening Grosbeak, and American Robin.** We also heard **Golden-crowned Kinglet and Red-breasted Nuthatch,** which we later saw in Forest Ranch. We took a little hike back into the meadow and found **Dark-eyed Junco, Tree Swallow, Song Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Mountain Chickadee.**

From there we decided to drive up toward Humboldt Summit to see if we could get **Mountain Quail.** Although not all of us saw them, as is usually the case with this species in my experience, Ken and Matt did see two making a short flight up on the hillside. We then drove down to the bridge that is west of Cherry Hill Campground and found two **American Dippers,** one with nesting material in its beak for the nest it was working on under the bridge.

We then made a quick stop at the big meadow just east of the town of Butte Meadows. There we found **Barn Swallow, Brewer's and Red-winged Blackbirds, Mallard, and Band-tailed Pigeon.** A bit farther down Humboldt Road, Ken and Matt spotted a **Townsend's Solitaire** in the road that then flew into a tree. We all stopped and were able to see it as well as a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet.**

Continuing down to Nopel Road in Forest Ranch, we found **House Finch, Bewick's Wren, Bushtit, Hermit Thrush, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Black Phoebe, and Lesser Goldfinch.** We also saw an **Orange-crowned Warbler** singing, noting how its whole body seemed to vibrate as it did so. We also heard two different **Black-headed Grosbeaks,** but couldn't catch sight of them.

Our next stop was Tuscan Loop on Hwy 32. A **Wrentit** was singing as we got out of the car, and soon we heard **California Thrasher.** A **Red-tailed Hawk** was seen soaring before we started our walk. Here we were able to see **Anna's and Rufous Hummingbirds, Western Scrub-Jay, Acorn Woodpecker, Golden-crowned and White-crowned Sparrows, Turkey Vulture, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Black-throated Gray Warbler.** We also heard an **Ash-throated Flycatcher.**

Continuing on toward Chico, we drove down Old Humboldt Road. By driving slowly with periodic stops, birding mostly from the car, we were able to identify **Western Bluebird, Lark and Savannah Sparrows, Bullock's Oriole, Western Meadowlark, Oak Titmouse, and Western Kingbird.** We dropped Ken off at the park & ride, made a quick stop for snacks in downtown Chico (finding *Rock Pigeon* as we did so), and continued on to McIntosh Ave hoping to find a Hooded Warbler in the palm trees that line the south side of the road just east of Dayton Road. We found one there as well as European Starling.

The Chico Oxidation Ponds were our next destination. We found **California Towhee, Cliff Swallow, and Killdeer** right away, and **Wood Duck, American Wigeon, Great Blue Heron, and Cinnamon Teal** were found in the irrigation ditch just above Chico River Road. As we walked back to the pond we added **Mourning Dove** to our list. **American Coot, Marsh Wren, Black-necked Stilt, and Northern Shoveler** were found in the first pond, and Joyce spotted a **Belted Kingfisher** perched a good distance away on the power lines. Then Tess spotted tiny **Canada Goose** goslings along with their parents and several others, and Matt found a **Northern Harrier** in flight. We walked to the center trail and headed south seeing **Gadwall, Great Egret, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Common Yellowthroat,** and hearing **Sora and American Bittern.** We walked back to the cars along the western side and found **Northern Mockingbird and American Goldfinch.**

From there we drove to the Indian Fishery, and along the way we saw an **Osprey** perched in a tree enjoying his freshly caught fish. Reaching our destination, we heard **California Quail, Spotted Towhee,** and **Pied-billed Grebe** and saw **Nuttall's Woodpecker, House Wren, and White-breasted Nuthatch.** We left there and headed toward Llano Seco, a Wildlife Management Area of the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex. On the way we

stopped briefly at an area known as the washout along the Sacramento River. There we found **Greater Yellowlegs, Forster's Tern, Western Sandpiper, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, and Cedar Waxwing.**

Just before we reached the Llano Seco viewing platform, Matt instructed us to look in the trees to our right for a **Great Horned Owl**, and sure enough, we found one! Once at the platform, we were able to spot **American Avocet, Black-bellied Plover, Long-billed Dowitcher, Ruddy Duck, Northern Pintail, and Green-winged Teal** on the water. Scanning with the scope, Matt found a few **American Pipits** at the edge of the water quite a distance away. We left the platform and headed south on Seven Mile Lane where we found large groups of **Snow** and **Greater White-fronted Geese** as well as a **Double-crested Cormorant** in the southern section of the Llano Seco Unit. A little farther down the road on the left, Matt pointed out a male **Ring-necked Pheasant** standing in a field. It was a great look at this beautiful game bird.

Our next destination was the Thermalito Afterbay. Driving east across the valley on Hwy 162, we spotted **American White Pelicans** in flight just west of the Butte County boundary. Fortunately for us, they were headed east and soon crossed the county line so we could count them for our Butte County Big Day. Soon we also found **House Sparrow** along this road. Reaching the Afterbay, we found **Western, Clark's** and **Eared Grebe**. In the area close to the restrooms, Matt spotted an **American Kestrel** and an adult **Bald Eagle**.

Pressing on, we headed for the Table Mountain Bridge in Oroville and found **White-throated Swifts**. We watched them zipping around and then a few of them quickly flew up and into the weep holes on the underside of the bridge. Their speed and accuracy in this maneuver is amazing! We then drove up past the Feather River Nature Center where Matt had previously seen **Rufous-crowned Sparrows**. He spotted one and we all got a great look at it. We walked up to check out the Diversion Pool and found **Ring-billed Gull**.

From there we drove to Oroville's Bedrock Park and walked west from there on the paved trail along the Feather River. We didn't find anything new except for a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** that Matt saw. We decided it was time to head back to Chico, but on the way home Tess, Robin, Joyce, and I decided to stop and see if we could find a Burrowing Owl in a previous nesting spot of theirs along Durham-Pentz Road. We did not find an owl, but we did spot a **White-tailed Kite** on the opposite side of the road. This was our 119th species for the day and a fitting last bird for an Altacal Audubon Society's Butte County Big Day, seeing as *White-tailed Kite* is the name of our newsletter.

April 27, 2014

BUTTE CREEK ECOLOGICAL PRESERVE

Trip Leader: Joseph O'Neil

Report by Kathy Trevino

A dozen of us gathered on this chilly, drizzly morning to bird and learn more about trees from arborist Joseph O'Neil. The group included Carol Anderson, Jeannie Trizzino, Lisa Kasza, Diego Bustamante, Jennifer Patten, Billie Sommerfeld, Nancy Jensen, Steve Hall, Jon Aull, Ruth Kennedy, and Kathy Trevino. Before heading out, Joseph spent some time telling the group about the different trees that we were seeing and would see. He told us about one tree in particular that we would see two examples of, the rare **Oracle Oak**, which is a natural cross between a Black Oak and Interior Live Oak.

We found 51 species of birds, with some of the more notable being **Purple Finch**, two **Green Herons** flying together, **Nashville Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Violet-green** and **Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Ash-throated** and **Pacific-slope Flycatchers, Western Kingbird, Cedar Waxwing, Black-headed Grosbeak, Wrentit, Vaux's Swift, and Pileated Woodpecker.** The



swifts were found near the pond, and the Pileated Woodpecker was a flyover heading deeper into the canyon seen by Diego and Jennifer. We were also fortunate enough to see two occupied nests, one belonging to **Bushtits** and the other to **Black Phoebes**, and we could actually see the young phoebes in the nest. A place that usually produces some special sightings is a spot Joseph likes to call "Magic Beach." On this day the fish were jumping, the swallows passing inches above the water, and best of all, an **American Beaver** swimming slowly by. With this fun experience and the unusual sightings of the Pileated Woodpecker and Vaux's Swifts, it had been a fun and educational day despite the coolness and the spitting precipitation.

A WHITE PELICAN LANDS ON THE RIVER

by REX BURRESS

On April 23rd I was pleasantly surprised to see a lone white pelican on the river. I immediately was reminded of Hector and Helen, the two white pelicans that lived at Lake Merritt in Oakland for almost as long as I worked there. In 1970, the duo were transferred to the lake by Fish and Wildlife to become probably the most photographed pelicans in the world.

Hector, so named because we thought one to be a male, died in a tangle of floating rope about 1985, and Helen lived on until 1995, finally succumbing, and given a proper burial on the lake's Duck Island.

The river visitor that I encountered looked so much like my Lake Merritt friend, I thought Helen was reincarnated and had returned to see me! After-all, I had helped feed Helen her daily two pounds of smelt for 23 years. However, all white pelicans look much alike, but usually they travel in flocks, so it was a mystery why only one was on the river.

I watched as the visitor stood in the shallows poking fun at the nearby Canada geese and mergansers. The residents were fully amused, I imagine, at such a gangly bird with the long orange beak equipped with a rubbery pouch. *Petecanus* peered intently into the clear current, as if trying to see some food. The distorted depths held steelhead, but five pounds was too much even for a pelican.

The drifter tarried for awhile, and then looked up-river sizing a take-off, hunched over, and took a running start with large webbed feet whacking the water. The wings thrashed the air, straining to lift the feathery bulk into the sky, and then it was gone.

White pelicans are normally inland birds, nesting in great numbers at places like Pyramid Lake in Nevada and Great Salt Lake in Utah, but flocks pass over Oroville occasionally, gliding in jumbled circles high in the sky like some kind of soaring convention.

Pod of pelicans takes part in a feeding frenzy on Lake Merritt
Oct 23, 2013, Oakland, CA (Laura A. Oda/Bay Area News Group)



Passing flocks would land on Lake Merritt as if paying Hector and Helen a visit. H and H had been pinioned to keep them there as ambassadors of their kind since folks of the city rarely see them closeup.

The lake is salt water and large runs of smelt would annually slip through the control gates, becoming a target for fisherkids,

cormorants, egrets, terns, and gulls, as well as pelicans, since our two joined right in. It was always a show to see the duo work together, slashing their beaks into the water in unison to come up with a pouch full of fish. The bag attachment will hold about three gallons of water.

Brown pelicans that live along the coast would also be attracted by the fish. Their method was to fold the wings and go into a power-dive beak-first, and come up with a pouch of Pisces. One brown pelican noticed the daily fish hand-out at

the Nature Center and hung around. Staff member Stephanie attached names to the refuge's odd birds, and soon we had Hector in our line-up. Pelicans are as intelligent as they are comical, and Hector soon learned that if he flew around the island and back, he would be rewarded with a fish! A wave of the hand and he was off!

Lake Merritt birds were an exception to the wild state of affairs, but was and is a very valuable service to the nature-loving public. Food, habitat, and protection are the keys to having a concentration of birds, and being the first Wildlife Refuge in America added some status. The City of Oakland paid for the supplies in the days of monetary surplus, especially for tons of milo to feed the wintering migrant waterfowl and the resident birds. Feeding time kept them close to shore for easy observation. The famous bird illustrator, Roger Tory Peterson, would come there to get pictures and said Lake Merritt was the greatest place in the world for viewing migrant waterfowl.

Wars and conflict may rock the world, but the birds live, and we are better for it. Long live the birds!

*A strange bird is the pelican;
its beak can hold more than its belly can...*

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

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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/

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CURRENT RESIDENT



White-tailed Kite

JUNE / JULY 2014

DATES TO REMEMBER

| | | |
|-----|-------|-------------------------------|
| Jun | 6-8 | Sierra Valley / Yuba Pass |
| Jun | 22 | Butte Meadows |
| Jun | 23 | Altacal Potluck |
| Jun | 27-29 | Lassen Volcanic National Park |
| Jul | 11-13 | Flammulated Owls at Plumas NF |
| Jul | 13 | Yellow-billed Cuckoo |
| Jul | 17-20 | Ruby Mountains |

For updated information check the Altacal website
www.altacal.org

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ALTACAL Programs

JUNE 23

Altacal POTLUCK at CCNC



ALTACAL

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