



SNOWY EGRET

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The Valley Habitat

May/June 2026

*A joint publication of the Stanislaus Audubon Society
and the Yokuts Group of the Sierra Club*

Walking the Green Path

In the midst of war in the Middle East, I believe, it is a good idea to watch the news and read the newspaper or whatever publication you prefer. I read an article in the San Francisco Chronicle (3/12/26 "War raises argument for renewable energy") that covers the disruption of oil transport and alternatives that countries turn to which often is other fossil fuel sources. As you know clean/renewable energy is cheaper and developing quickly. Nevertheless, many do not wish to move away from fossil fuels be it countries, financial interests or individual consumers. The climate consequences seem to, often, be ignored. Recently, I spent time with relatives, many of whom I have had little contact with or had not seen for some time.

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The name "Yokuts Group" honors the Native Peoples who inhabited the area now known as Stanislaus County.

Sierra Club Monthly Programs

Socializing and Snacks: 6:45 PM | Presentation: 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM
Office of Valley Improvement Projects, 1224 K Street, Modesto

A NEW DESERT RIGHT UNDER OUR NOSES: THE SAN JOAQUIN REPTILES

**Speaker:
Michael Westphal, PhD
Friday, May 15, 2026**

Join us for an interesting and informative presentation. Dr. Westphal has a background in linguistics and zoology. His specialty is herpetology. He has done extensive research on San Joaquin Desert reptiles. See you there.

**June Potluck
1009 Clarksburg Way
Modesto Ca. 95355
Friday, June 5th, 2026
6:00 p.m. - ???**

Please join your fellow Yokuts members at the home of Doug and Judy Hardie for our annual potluck gathering. Bring your own service (helps cut down on trash), whatever you would like to drink and a dish to share. Please bring a lawn chair as well. Doug and Judy have a welcoming backyard and pool. It's a great time to visit with fellow Yokuts. If you know some non-Sierra Club members who are interested in environmental issues please bring them. There will also be a plant exchange featuring some of Doug's offerings as well as plants from members who want to share. Please mark your calendars for this one. Hope to see you there.

Trump Plans to Dismantle Science Lab

The Trump administration is planning on breaking up one of the world's leading climate and weather laboratories, the National Center for Atmospheric Research. Russell Vought, White House budget director, called the Colorado center "one of the largest sources of climate alarmism in the country."

Founded in 1960, the center is responsible for many of the largest scientific advances in understanding weather and climate. Its research is widely used in forecasting weather events and potential disasters, such as wildfires and hurricanes.

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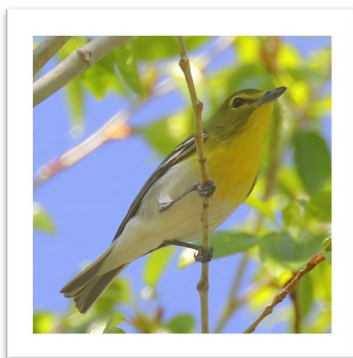
BIRDING IN THE LAND OF PROBABILITIES

By Salvatore Salerno

It happened on a mundane Monday, May 17, 2010. I chose randomly to bird at Horseshoe Recreation Area, just to see what migrating birds were moving through. I walked to the campground along the western trail of the pond. At 11:10 a.m., I sat at one of the picnic tables by the river. A few minutes later, some birds began foraging on a low bush overhanging the river. I saw a Townsend's Warbler and then a bird that I could not immediately recognize. It wasn't a common type of warbler or vireo; I knew instantly this was something different. Fortunately, I was still using my camcorder, so I began recording the movements of this bird, which stayed on that one bush.

Just then, the bird sang. I recalled a song that I had studied earlier, the same song as a Yellow-throated Vireo that I had experienced on at a recent Mono Lake Festival. I knew that it was a first Stanislaus County sighting of that species, but I didn't know that it was more until I went home to share my sighting online. I entered the written description and video clip on to two local list-serves. For

three days, that vireo was seen and photographed by many birders, traveling long distances to fulfill their curiosity, if not also their county lists. I learned subsequently that Yellow-throated Vireo was the first record of that species in the Central Valley! I have since found a few rare birds here and then, but I have never "hit one out of the ballpark" like that since then. If this seems like boasting, that's because that's exactly what I'm doing.



© by Richard Brown

I figure that I have shined a spotlight on so many other birders for so many years that I may as well step into its light myself occasionally. How did I discover a rare bird? That is the real take-away of this story. There are many factors that converged on such a moment, and surprisingly, a birder's skill set is only one of them. The first one is just getting

outdoors and looking around with binoculars at your favorite birding sites repeatedly. As soon as you leave your house, even to step into your backyard, the probability of finding a rare bird is low, but rise to above 0%. (One of the multiple joys of birding is knowing that *anytime* you lift your binoculars, you may happen to see some new bird or behavior.) Secondly, you must be familiar enough with the common birds to sense there is something uncommon there. Thirdly, and this requires no special skill, there's that random mixture of time, chance, and luck. In other words, the moment was simply structured that way.

If you should be so fortunate as to find a rare or uncommon bird, make an immediate record on the spot with your pen or camera, and then report your sighting to eBird or any of several other ways to communicate to the birding community. How will you know when a rarity crosses your path? The sentence I wrote in a piece from November 2015 still applies: *The only way to know is to go.*

STANISLAUS AUDUBON GENERAL MEMBERSHIP ZOOM MEETING

Current members of Stanislaus Audubon are invited to the next Zoom meeting on **Tuesday, May 19, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.** The purpose of this annual meeting is to elect officers for the 2026-27 term. The candidates are Sal Salerno, president; John Harris, vice-

president; Daniel Gilman, Secretary; and Annhenrie Campbell, Treasurer.

You are invited to a Zoom meeting. When: May 19, 2026 07:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Register in advance for this meeting:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/619bLS8q7AGutHm_spA

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Walking the Green Path cont.

I became more aware of how some lives revolve around transportation vehicles and the comforts they provide. Yesterday evening I watched a PBS program about Henry David Thoreau and his mentor Ralph Waldo Emerson. I have not read anything by Thoreau or Emerson. Having been notably influenced I ordered a copy of "Walden & On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" by Henry David Thoreau. I will keep watching the news but this book seems a good antidote. As always questions and contributions of information are welcome.

Steve Tomlinson
stomlinson015@gmail.com

modesto RECFEST
MAY 2, 2026 9AM-1PM

DISC GOLF
Discos Voladores

GUIDED BICYCLE RIDE
Paseo en Bicicleta

NATURE WALK
Caminar por la Naturaleza

PADDLING
Remo

ORIENTEERING
Orientación

YOUTH FISHING
Pesca Juvenil

GUIDED BIRD WATCHING
Observación de Aves

CHECK-IN AT GATEWAY PARK
 100 10th Street, Modesto CA 95354

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Bring your bikes, kites, fishing poles, paddle craft, and binoculars - or use ours - and join us for this recreation celebration! IT'S FREE!

FOR VOLUNTEER INFORMATION, SCAN THE QR CODE

FOR OTHER INFORMATION CALL (209) 236-0330.



SHARING NATURE WITH CHILDREN

The Yokuts Group of the Sierra Club encourages you to explore and enjoy the planet by sharing nature with children. Children are innately curious beings. They are like sponges, ready to absorb, and ask about, everything they see and experience. As your child's parent or caregiver, you can help enrich their understanding of nature. Here are some helpful tips for doing this:

Spend time together outdoors. You don't have to travel to distant places like a National Park to experience the wonders of nature - start in your backyard or neighborhood park. Poke through the grass to look for insects, look into shrubs or trees to see birds, look at flowers to talk about color, texture, smells. Let a child help you garden by sowing seeds and harvesting the plants you grow. Talk about how the sun and wind feel, the importance of water, how insects are nature's workers. Enjoy the wonders of mud and sand. Don't be afraid of questions you can't answer - you can learn together.

There are many places to connect with nature in and near Modesto. Here are a few you can try:

- Tuolumne River Regional Park - 1200 Tioga Drive, Modesto
- East La Loma Community Park - 2001 Edgebrook Drive, Modesto
- La Loma Native Garden - 1805 Encina Avenue in Modesto
- Hughson Arboretum and Gardens - 2490 Euclid Avenue, Hughson
- Ceres River Bluff Regional Park - 3761 E Hatch Road, Ceres
- Dos Rios State Park - 3559 Shiloh Road, Modesto
- Caswell Memorial State Park - 28000 S Austin Road, Ripon
- Knights Ferry Recreation Area - Sonora and Covered Bridge Roads, Oakdale

STANISLAUS AUDUBON ZOOM PROGRAMS

PARTNERING TO CONSERVE BIRDS AND THEIR HABITATS FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

Jim Cogswell

Friday, June 12, 2026

7:00 p.m.

Jim Cogswell is Coordinator of the Central Valley Joint Venture with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where he leads landscape-scale migratory bird and habitat conservation across California's Central Valley.



JIM COGSWELL

He has over twenty-five years of domestic and international experience, including wildlife program leadership in Hawai'i, and conservation advisory roles in West and Central Africa. His work spans stra-

tegic planning, endangered species recovery, protected-area management, and multi-partner collaboration. Jim holds degrees in Wildlife Management and Environmental Policy. The Central Valley Joint Venture, founded in 1988, is guided by a management board of twenty members. This presentation will explain our mission and the impressive work of the members of CVJV. They have successfully leveraged and increased investments to protect and restore bird habitats on both public and private lands, throughout the San Joaquin Valley and beyond. As a result, their efforts have supported healthy, robust wild bird populations that also benefit local communities. Learn how you may join us in advancing our mission and make a positive impact. Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/TkCC05oTQm2Xm7Lt1-Q30g>

Trump Plans to Dismantle Science Lab cont.

The move to dismantle the center would weaken research that is crucial to understanding the atmosphere, oceans, air pollution, and climate change. But, if your President claims that climate change is a hoax, I guess it makes sense to him and his minions to shut down a laboratory whose research could call that claim into question. Nothing to see here.

Kent Mitchell
Political Chair

STANISLAUS AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS

CALAVERAS BIG TREES STATE PARK
SATURDAY, MAY 16, 2026
 1170 CA-4, ARNOLD
 Leaders: Sal Salerno & TBD
 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

KNIGHTS FERRY RECREATION AREA
SUNDAY, MAY 24, 2026
 17525 Sonora Road, Knights Ferry
 Leader: John Harris
 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

DARDANELLE AREA
SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2026
 Stanislaus National Forest
 Leader: Xavier Sandoval
 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Our annual visit to the giant sequoias will be a unique opportunity to see and hear montane species of warblers, flycatchers, woodpeckers, wrens, and vireos. Uncommon species such as Pileated Woodpecker or Northern Pygmy-Owl may be experienced there, too. Participants meet the leaders at the main parking lot; there is a day entry fee of \$10 per vehicle. Bring lunch, sturdy shoes, and insect repellent. R.S.V.P. is not required, but recommended, by Tuesday, May 12.

This trip will focus on breeding birds and late migrants in Knights Ferry's diverse habitats. The area includes rocky hillsides, blue oak woodlands, and riparian forest. We'll look for Knights Ferry specialties Rock and Canyon Wrens and Rufous-crowned Sparrows along the trail above the parking area, and also check riparian habitat along part of the Russian Rapids trail. Later migrants such as Willow Flycatcher or Yellow-breasted Chat are possible.

Meet at the recreation area parking lot on the north side of the river, near the Army Corps of Engineers Visitor Center. There is a day use fee of \$10 (or have your National Parks pass). For more information, contact John Harris at jhh.birder@gmail.com

Please join me in the Dardanelle area on Highway 108, Saturday, June 6, 9 a.m. Meet at Columns of the Giants geological formation, with the large brown and yellow sign on the right, about 1.4 miles east from Dardanelles resort. We will continue to Forest Road 6N40Y, Douglas Flat Day Use, and possibly Donnell Vista. White-headed woodpecker, American Dipper, & Mountain Quail are possible. Bring binoculars, a hat, lunch, and walking shoes for easy hiking. Vault toilets available. The drive is over two hours or 104 miles from Modesto, over one hour or 54 miles from Sonora. Questions? Xavier Sandoval (209) 589-4107

ELKHORN SLOUGH AND MOSS LANDING
SATURDAY, JUNE 27, 2026
 Casa de Fruta on Highway 152
 Stanislaus National Forest
 Leader: John Fulton
 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

STANISLAUS AUDUBON OUTINGS



MOSS LANDING
 FEBRUARY 21, 2026

Join John Fulton for a break from the Valley heat as we explore the birds of Monterey Bay at Elkhorn Slough and Moss Landing harbor. A variety of shorebirds, waders, gulls and terns, sea ducks, cormorants, and grebes are likely. We'll look for any rare birds reported in the area. Meet at Casa de Fruta on Highway 152 at 9:00 a.m. If you want to meet at Moss Landing, meet where Jetty Road intersects Highway 1 around 10 a.m. RSVP suggested to John Fulton at Merced_birding@hotmail.com. Bring a lunch, water, and be prepared for variable conditions including wind and fog.

Watch for a possible pop-up field trip in April
 on our website
 and/or Facebook page

STANISLAUS AUDUBON SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2025-26

President, Newsletter: Salvatore Salerno **Vice President, Field Trips, Membership:** John Harris
jhh.birder@gmail.com

Treasurer: Annhenrie Campbell **Secretary:** Daniel Gilman **Conservation:** Jody Hallstrom

Christmas Bird Counts: Harold Reeve, Siera Nystrom , John Fulton **Social Media:** CeCe Hurst

Events, Education, Scholarship, Online Newsletter: David Froba, Chris Magaña, Kathy Rasmussen, Tom Myers, Xavier Sandoval, Ann Kohlhaas, Madeline Yancey, Bella Howell, Jim Ross

Advisory Committee Members: Eric Hopson, Richard Brown **Website Manager:** Jim Gain

Visit our website at stanislausbirds.org. Like us on Stanislaus Audubon Facebook and Instagram.

Those who wish to receive Valley Habitat online, please contact John Harris.

New members or renewing members: Use renewal form from National Audubon Society,

<http://www.audubon.org/renew>. Use Chapter Code C36.

Renewal date of membership is on the label of Audubon Magazine. Memberships are \$30 yearly.

Memberships are \$30 yearly.

New members: <http://www.audubon.org/membership/benefits>

Renewal members: <http://www.audubon.org/renew>

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION UPDATE FOR NEW OR RENEWING AUDUBON MEMBERS

Stanislaus Audubon Society memberships are processed by National Audubon Society. If you are a current member, your membership number and expiration date will no longer appear on your newsletter label, but on your Audubon Magazine label. You should receive Audubon Magazine quarterly. If you wish to receive Valley Habitat online only, or if you have questions about your membership status,

please contact John Harris at jhh.birder@gmail.com

If you are not a current member, please consider joining during this opportune time to do so. Membership donations from all new members go directly to your local chapter in your first year of membership. This would help to pay for our chapter's ongoing expenses, such as the Grayson Scholar-

ship, printing of Valley Habitat, tabling events, and presenting Zoom bird programs, among others. Our chapter code is C36. You may join National Audubon Society at this website: <https://www.audubon.org/membership/benefits>

Yokuts Group of the Sierra Club

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chair: Steve Tomlinson
stomlinson015@gmail.com
 Vice Chair: Vacant
 Political Chair: Kent Mitchell
 Secretary: Elaine Gorman
 Treasurer: Sandy Wilson
 Conservation and Sustainability Chair:
 Milt Trieweiler
 Membership Chair: Anita Young
 At-Large: Jeanne Homsey

SPECIAL / STANDING COMMITTEES

Finance

Sandy Wilson
 Steve Tomlinson
 Candy Klaschus
 Doug Hardie (Calendar Sales)

Outings

Chair: Vacant
 Elaine Gorman

Communications

Kathy Weise (Mailings)
 Vacant (Publicity)
 Kevin Augustine (Valley Habitat)
kaugustine@csustan.edu
 Jeanne Homsey (Hospitality)
 Vacant (Programs)
 Jason Tyree (Webmaster)
 Vacant (Elections/Nominating)

Recycling

Vacant

*Executive Committee officers are elected by the general membership and are appointed by the Executive Committee for two-year terms.



SIERRA CLUB
 FOUNDED 1892

Sierra Club membership enrollment form

Name: _____
 Email: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____
 State: _____ Zip Code: _____
 Phone: _____

Individual Membership	Joint Membership	
___ Special Offer	\$15	
___ Regular	\$39	\$49
___ Supporting	\$75	\$100
___ Contributing	\$150	\$175
___ Life	\$1000	\$1250
___ Student	\$25	\$35
___ Senior	\$25	\$35
___ Limited Income	\$25	\$35

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible. Your dues include \$7.50 for the subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1.00 for your chapter newsletter.

Payment Method: Check ___ Mastercard ___ VISA ___
 Cardholder Name: _____
 Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Enclose payment information and mail to:
 Sierra Club
 P.O. Box 7059
 Merrifield, VA 22116-7509

F94QW09051
 Yokuts Group

[Yokuts website](#)

[Yokuts MeetUp](#)

[Yokuts Facebook](#)



Yokuts Group
Mother Lode Chapter
Sierra Club
P.O. Box 855
Modesto, CA 95353

Non-Profit Organization
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Permit Number 139
Modesto, CA

CURRENT RESIDENT OR

Yokuts Outings

Check out the current outings posts at our Meetup page:

<http://www.meetup.com/S-M-S-SierraClub>



All adults are welcome, including those who are not members of Sierra Club. We generally meet at a designated local parking area and then carpool to the event site. We also have fun off the trail with social events such as dinners, movie nights, Christmas Parties, and potlucks.