



SNOWY EGRET

© Rich Brown

The Valley Habitat

September/October 2026

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

Walking the Green Path

The effects of climate change are glaringly apparent. Fires, heat domes, warming oceans, ecosystems on the verge of collapse or having begun such a decline. The more serious consequences for humans have only begun. News-casts post us on the continuance of conflict at the Strait of Hormuz, its spread to other parts of the Middle East and the impact on the price of gas. Many of us are quite dependent on fossil fuels, a major cause of climate change. I'll share a couple of efforts in the Bay Area to chip away at our dependence. Napa is considering a ban on new and expanded drive-thrus as a means of reducing idling emissions.

Cont. on page 5

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

STATE OF THE CENTRAL SIERRA

Speaker:

John Buckley, CSERC

Friday, September 18, 2026

Our presenter, John Buckley, served as a wildland firefighter for 13 years prior to setting up a non-profit conservation center, the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center (CSERC). The organization is intensely engaged in all forest issues affecting millions of acres of the central region of the Sierra Nevada. His slideshow will also contain some great photos of the forest and wildlife. Join us!

TESLA: HISMET WAREP

(SACRED EARTH)

Speaker:

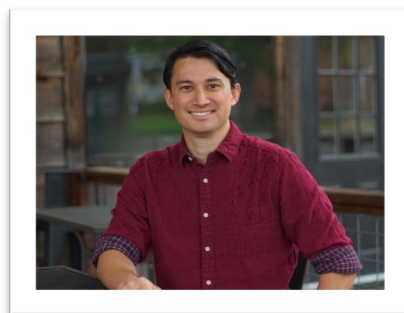
Celeste Garamendi

Friday, October 16, 2026

Join us to learn about the state parkland known as Tesla. Located in eastern Alameda County near the San Joaquin County line in the Corral Hollow, Tesla has been at the center of conservation efforts in the Northern Diablo Range for over two decades. Celeste Garamendi, a founding member of Friends of Tesla Park, will discuss Tesla's rich natural and cultural landscape.

Sierra Club Endorses Masuda for Congress

We are proud to announce that Michael Masuda, candidate for the 5th District, U.S. Congress in California, has been endorsed by the Sierra Club. Our Yokuts Group initiated the endorsement process which consisted of a questionnaire and Zoom interview. His opponent, Rep. Tom McClintock, declined to participate. Our Yokuts Executive Committee voted unanimously to endorse Masuda. After that, the MotherLode Chapter and the Tehipite Chapter (Fresno area) concurred. Finally, National Sierra Club confirmed the formal endorsement.



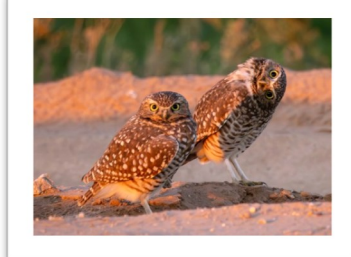
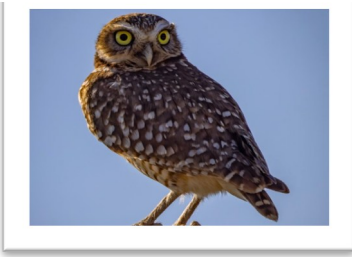
MICHAEL MASUDA

During the endorsement process, Michael Masuda impressed as a bright, young, energetic man of principles - the kind of person we need in Congress.

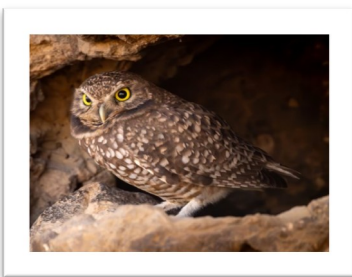
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SPOTLIGHT ON LOCAL BIRDS: BURROWING OWL

By Jim Gain



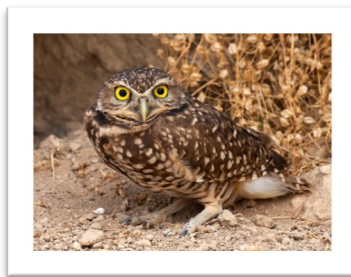
Characteristics: Burrowing owls have a short, square tail, long, slender legs and yellow eyes. They lack ear tufts and have pale brown plumage, spotted and barred with white. Juveniles are not as heavily spotted as adults. Similar to other species of owls, they are mostly crepuscular (active primarily during the twilight period) hunters, as they can utilize their night vision and attuned hearing to maximum potential during sunrise and sunset.



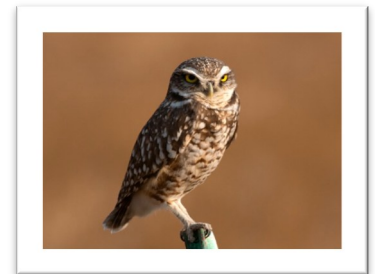
Diet: The diet of the Burrowing Owl primarily consists of insects; however, they will also feed on snakes, frogs, small lizards, birds, and rodents.

Occurrence & Distribution:

The Burrowing Owl is a year-round resident throughout much of the Central Valley with Christmas Bird Count data, 1959–1988, showing a decline in midwinter numbers. The California Fish and Game Commission unanimously voted (10/10/2024) to protect western burrowing owls throughout California as a “candidate” species under the California Endangered Species Act.



Fun Fact: Burrowing owls are one of the smallest owl species. Unlike most owls, they are very active during the day and nest in underground burrows which they themselves cannot actually dig.



For more information and photographs, please visit my [Burrowing Owl](#) webpage.

Nesting: Burrowing owls nest in abandoned burrows of ground squirrels and rodents. They prefer areas with loose soil, some elevation, and nearby lookouts. They are often found in suburban areas near golf courses and airports.



RECENT SIGHTINGS OF RARE OR UNCOMMON BIRDS

JUNE-JULY 2026

*Review Species

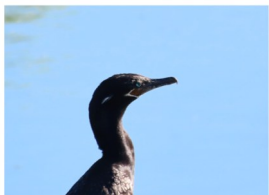
STANISLAUS COUNTY

Anonymous E-birder found a male **SCARLET TANAGER*** in a residential area of Cornell Avenue on June 20. This is the first record of this species in Stanislaus County, and a rare bird anywhere in California.



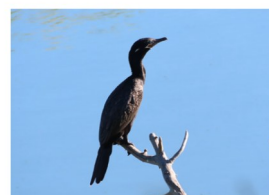
SCARLET TANAGER
© Mark Elness

Daniel Gilman had a **NEOTROPIC CORMORANT*** at Dos Rios State Park on July 25.



NEOTROPIC CORMORANT
© Daniel Gilman

This is only the second record of this species in Stanislaus County.



NEOTROPIC CORMORANT
© Daniel Gilman

Sierra Club Endorses Masuda for Congress cont.

Michael was born in Green Bay, grew up in Amador County, and is currently a resident of Riverbank.

In the Sierra Club questionnaire, Michael pledged to:

Defend and expand upon the progress we made to address the challenge of climate change and support additional action to put the country on a path to meet or exceed carbon reductions of 50% of 2005 levels by 2030 and a net-zero economy-wide by 2050. Support protecting 30% of our lands and waters by 2030 in order to protect our public lands from drilling and the impacts of climate change.

Oppose any new leasing or drilling on federal lands, and support legislation to repeal drilling mandates in the Arctic Refuge, new areas in the Gulf of Mexico, or other previously protected lands in the west.

Support and aggressively defend legislative actions that protect and strengthen free and fair elections, like campaign finance reform, voter protections, and the policies laid out in legislation such as the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

In Michael's own words: "My commitment to environmental leadership spans both federal policy work and the vision I'm bringing to this campaign. At the U.S. Department of State, I led policy development on "smart cities" initiatives that integrated data, technology, and public policy to reduce CO2 and greenhouse gas emissions, advance climate resilience, promote environmental sustainability, and

build circular economies. Equity was a core design principle because the communities least responsible for climate change too often bear its greatest consequences. That work extended beyond Washington DC. I partnered with U.S. cities, nonprofits, and companies to build international coalitions that shared promising climate and sustainability practices, creating substantial exchanges between American cities and partners abroad. Environmental progress demands both local commitment and global cooperation.

On the campaign, I'm fighting for policies that treat environmental protection and economic opportunity as inseparable. In California's Central Valley, there is real potential to expand circular economy models that repurpose agricultural waste, reduce emissions, and create economic opportunity for working farming communities. In the Sierra Nevada,

I support sustainable forestry practices that prioritize forest health, reduce catastrophic wildfire risk, and protect these irreplaceable ecosystems. These include responsible biomass management as one tool in a broader strategy to restore and protect our forests and the communities that depend on them." Michael was kind enough to join us at our Yokuts potluck in June. Several Yokuts Executive Committee members are either currently assisting or will be helping the Masuda campaign. If you would like join the effort, go to VOTEMASUDA.COM to volunteer or donate. Thank you.

Kent Mitchell,
Political Chair



MASUDA WITH
YOKUTS MEMBERS

STANISLAUS AUDUBON ZOOM PROGRAMS

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF NORTH AMERICAN WOODPECKERS

Paul Bannick

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2026

7:00 p.m.

Paul Bannick is an award-winning author and photographer who makes images to inspire education and conservation. Paul's new program is based upon his latest book, *Woodpecker: A Year in the Life of North American Woodpeckers*. He uses his intimate, yet dramatic images, up-to-date science, and first-hand narratives to explore the lives of North American woodpeckers. He compares and contrasts typical behavior and anomalies among the woodpecker species in North America, and shares their conservation outlook for the future.



PAUL BANNICK

He explores the yearly life cycles of woodpeckers through all four seasons, including courtship, mating, and nesting in spring; fledging and feeding of young in summer; dispersal and learning independence in fall; and movements for survival in winter. His exploration of these charismatic birds and their habitats

include species from the Arctic through southern Mexico, as well as those of the Caribbean Islands. Bannick's startling images reflect their shared behaviors, as well as some surprising exceptions and adaptations. More than just backdrops, the varied habitats reveal wildly rich stories of their own. Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/hA2gT8MZS7mavEPI-VEglw>

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

NOTE: this program will not be recorded.

MALHEUR N.W.R. AND HARNEY COUNTY, OREGON

Harry Fuller

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2026

7:00 p.m.

The Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Oregon is famed for its amazing variety and abundance of migratory and breeding bird species. The renowned and well-travelled birder Noah Stryker has called this refuge "my favorite birding destination on the entire planet." Harry will explore every corner of the refuge in this program, showing you which birds will be there throughout the seasons. He will also guide you to other birding hotspots in the numer-

ous wild areas within the ten-thousand square miles of Harney County.



HARRY FULLER

Harry Fuller is an Oregon birder and natural history author. His fourth book is *Birding Harney County*. The others are *Freeway Birding* about the I-5 corridor; *The Great Gray Owl in California, Oregon, and Washington*; and *San Francisco's Natural History*. He leads field trips for Malheur Field Station, private clients, and birding groups. Harry is a member of Salem Audubon Society. His birding blog: ecowise.wordpress.com. (No charge to view.) Most of his working days were spent doing TV and Internet news in San Francisco.

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/mpd9gqx9Sc-uAwKJj4Q1xg>

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

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 Scholarship, 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>

STANISLAUS AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS

STANISLAUS AUDUBON FIELD TRIP

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2026

Vasche Library, Stanislaus State

Leader: Sal Salerno

9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

This is the fifth annual indoors "field trip" to view the masterwork of Adrew Jackson Grayson, *Birds of the Pacific Slope*. This ornithologist and artist was a founder of the town of Grayson in Stanislaus County, and during his life was known as the "Audubon of the West." The 156 prints of his watercolors will be viewed in the Special Collections Department on the third floor of the Vasche Library. This visit is limited to the first eight participants who register, and there will be a wait list. Photo ID will be required. To register, RSVP no later than Friday, September 18 at bees2@sbcglobal.net. Questions about parking and the library may be directed to Mary Weppler-Van Diver at mweppler@csustan.edu.

DOS RIOS STATE PARK

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2026

3559 Shiloh Road, Modesto

Leader: Xavier Sandoval

8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Dos Rios State Park is a new state park, having opened officially on June 12, 2024. As of this writing, there is no entrance fee during its initial opening phase. We will meet at the entrance parking lot and bird the Oxbow Pond and a portion of the park's extensive trail system. We should have good opportunities to see herons, egrets, cormorants and other water birds, as well as birds of riparian habitats. There is a restroom and picnic area. For questions, contact Xavier Sandoval at (209) 589-4107

OAKDALE RECREATION AREA

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2026

9400 Liberini Ave., Oakdale

Leader: John Harris

8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Oakdale Recreation Area is a great birding spot at any time of year, with its combination of ponds and riparian forest. We hope to find year-round resident birds and late migrants at this park on the Stanislaus River. Oakdale Recre-

ation Area is located on Liberini Road off of River Road, north of Highway 120 at the west end of Oakdale. Drive to the end of Liberini, past the animal shelter to the first parking area after the park entrance. A public restroom is available, and participants should bring water and snacks. For more information contact John Harris at jhh.birder@gmail.com

MERCED NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2026

7430 West Sandy Mush Road, Merced

Leader: John Fulton

8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Merced National Wildlife Refuge is teeming with waterfowl and other birds in winter. Most of the birds are easily viewed, making for enjoyable and easy birding. Sandhill Cranes will have returned from their breeding areas by this date. We will meet at the kiosk and viewing platform located at the end of the entry road on the main portion of the Merced NWR. Note that this is an approximately 75-minute drive from Modesto. We will start our birding in the kiosk area and then go on the 5-mile-long auto tour loop, stopping frequently to look at birds. We may also take a short walk at the Bittern Marsh trail. Participants of all skill levels are welcome and should bring binoculars, water, snacks, and insect repellent. For questions, please contact John Fulton at Merced_birding@hotmail.com

O'NEIL FOREBAY AND

SAN LUIS CREEK S.R.A.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2026

10021 Pacheco Pass Highway, Hollister

Leader: John Fulton

8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

O'Neil Forebay is part of the San Luis State Recreation Area of the State Park System. There is a \$10.00 entrance fee per vehicle. We will meet at the San Luis Reservoir Medeiros Kiosk on Donohugh Rd. W. off Highway 33 at 8:00 a.m. We will bird from the Medeiros east side of the forebay and then move to the San Luis Creek unit on the west side of the forebay. This large body of water will have gulls, egrets, a few shorebirds, grebes, and possibly

loons. By this date there should be several species of waterfowl, including Ruddy Duck, Bufflehead, Northern Pintail, Common Goldeneye, Lesser Scaup, and possibly Red-breasted Merganser. Raptors such as Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Northern Harrier, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, and both species of eagle are possible. Bring water, lunch or snacks, and binoculars. Trip leaders will have spotting scopes, but it is useful to bring your own if you have one. For questions, please contact John Fulton at Merced_birding@hotmail.com

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

Walking the Green Path cont.

This is termed as 'a broader effort to shift away from car-oriented development'. The article (SF Chronicle 7/22/26) describes other cities in California taking similar measures to limit drive-thrus. Obviously, the impact on some age-groups or populations is part of the discussion or opposition. In Berkeley Ca. a proposal was approved to transform the layout of Hopkins Street. This entails eliminating 145 parking spaces for cars and creating bike lanes on both sides of the street. Improved safety for cyclists is cited as a benefit. This is described (SF Chronicle 7/31/26) as "a focal point in the Bay Area's debate over walkability and car centrism". As you would expect there is opposition to this plan from businesses and some residents. It is encouraging to hear of such efforts and to know that renewable alternatives to fossil fuels are available. I have found and continue to believe that our individual efforts to move away from fossil fuels, use of plastic, our consumerism, water waste (the list goes on and on) is our best bet for our own well-being and saving our planet. I find that the most effective strategy is to *plan and implement* moves to alleviate concerns listed above. You can search on-line, read books etc. Please feel free to send me examples of such strategies you have implemented. Information and questions are always welcome.

Steve Tomlinson

stomlinson015@gmail.com

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.

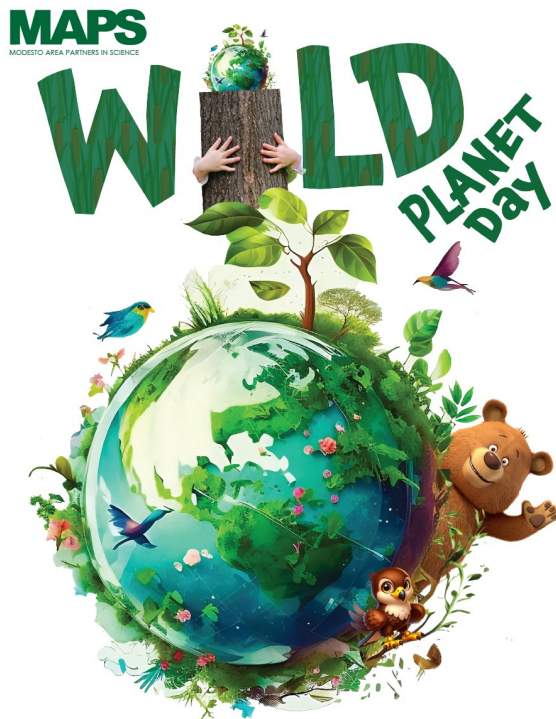
New members or renewing members: Use renewal form from National Audubon Society, <http://www.audubon.org/renew>. Use Chapter Code C36.

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>



SEPT. 19TH

10 AM - 2 PM | **SCIENCE COMMUNITY CENTER**
 MODESTO JUNIOR COLLEGE WEST CAMPUS
Free & Open to All



This year it is all about Beaks, Jaws and Claws! Join us for a great day of family fun while learning about our native predator species and the crucial roles they play in our environment. Attend a live show from West Coast Falconry and Mad Science of Sacramento. Let a butterfly flutter by you in the Butterfly Experience and visit tables from community organizations and MJC STEM Clubs! Visit mjc.edu/sem/maps for more information.

MODESTO JUNIOR COLLEGE | School of Science, Engineering & Mathematics
 209-575-6173 | mjc.scienceandmath@modjco.edu | mjc.edu/sem/maps
 It is the policy of Modesto Junior College not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or disability in its educational programs and its employment practices.



School of
 Science, Engineering
 & Mathematics

STANISLAUS AUDUBON OUTING



MOSS LANDING
JUNE 27, 2026

Yokuts Group of the Sierra Club

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chair: Steve Tomlinson

stomlinson015@gmail.com

Vice Chair: Vacant

Political Chair: Kent Mitchell

Secretary: Vacant

Treasurer: Sandy Wilson

Conservation and Sustainability Chair:

Milt Triewweiler

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

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
U.S. Postage PAID
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.

