



# The Valley Habitat

## March/April 2021

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

### Yokuts Chair's Corner

By Jeff Olson

I am sure you are all excited, as I am, that we are finally clawing our way back to normal, with the end of Covid-19 in sight. The Sierra Club recently announced that all in-person Sierra Club activities continue to be suspended through this July 4<sup>th</sup>. I am hopeful we will be able to resume at least some limited in-person activities following the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday.

If so, I hope I will be able to get back on the backpacking trails with Sierra Club members. And hopefully our Yokuts Group will be able to host our monthly programs at the Modes-to church beginning this fall.

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### Sierra Club Monthly Programs

Sierra Club Monthly Programs for the months of March and April will be hosted on Zoom. Ask **Jeff Olson**, [rayjeff49@gmail.com](mailto:rayjeff49@gmail.com), to send you an invite or get it on the Meetup App.

Your computer, tablet, or smart phone with internet access will enable you to watch programs live! Programs begin at **7:00 P.M.** and last about one hour.

**Friday, March 19**

**"Beyond Coal in California"**

**Presenter — Jacob Klein**

**7:00 P.M.**

Come learn about the presence of coal in California! Known as a "dirty fuel," coal dust can cause severe health complications, typically to already marginalized communities. Hear about where coal is currently running through and the battles to stop this. We'll cover the organizing and legal campaigns of the Bay Area and Delta regions, the problems with coal, and what you can do about it!

Jacob Klein (pronouns: they/them) is the Regional Coal Organizer for Sierra Club, Mother Lode, Redwood, and San Francisco Bay Chapter. In previous positions, they've worked on issues of LGBTQ inclusion, anti-racist organizing, and community building. They live in Oakland on unceded Huchiu Ohlone land.

**Friday, April 16**

**"John Muir's Grand Yosemite: Musings and Sketches"**

**Presenter — Mike Wurtz**

**7:00 P.M.**

Nineteenth-century naturalist John Muir made hundreds of drawings of Yosemite between 1869 and his death in 1914. Mike Wurtz, curator of the Muir collections at the University of the Pacific, will present some Muir's drawings and tell Muir stories along with his own stories of finding Muir's drawing sites in Yosemite from his book, **John Muir's Grand Yosemite: Musings and Sketches**.

Mike Wurtz is the Head of the University of the Pacific Holt-Atherton Special Collections and Archives. He oversees the use and preservation of the historical archives of nearly 500 collections such as the John Muir Papers, the George Moscone Collection, and Japanese American Internment during WWII collections. He holds Master's degrees in History and Library Science.

## Audubon Zoom Programs

NOTE: THE INVITATIONS TO THESE ONLINE EVENTS WILL BE SENT TO [sasfieldtrips@yahoo.com](mailto:sasfieldtrips@yahoo.com), BOTH 48 HOURS BEFORE THE PROGRAM, AND AGAIN ON THE DAY OF THE EVENT. IF YOU ARE NOT ON THIS EMAIL GROUP AND WISH TO BE INCLUDED, SEND AN EMAIL REQUEST TO THAT ADDRESS, OR CONTACT RALPH BAKER, [sasfieldtrips@yahoo.com](mailto:sasfieldtrips@yahoo.com)

### SKETCHING AND DRAWING BIRDS FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 2021 7:00 P.M.

Matthew Dodder was born in California and moved to New England with his parents, who made him shovel snow for fourteen years while they stayed inside by the fire. He loved to draw Snow Buntings and Common Redpolls that he saw during his time in the ice, as well as the Blackburnian Warblers and Scarlet Tanagers he found every spring. What he REALLY wanted, though, was to move back to California after his long sentence in the cold, muggy and oppressive Northeast. Matthew brought his parents back with him to Palo Alto. He began teaching Advanced Birding at Palo Alto Adult School in 1999, where he also met his future wife "Cricket."



They have since had many birding experiences together, including when Matthew got dangerously close to a Southern Cassowary in Australia. Matthew has served on the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society Board of Directors for five years

and became executive director in 2019.

He also loves to draw birds with colored pencils. His art blog is [neornithes.wordpress.com](http://neornithes.wordpress.com). Matthew will discuss his evolution from an untrained bird scribbler to something more refined, but still essentially a self-taught illustrator. His drawings began as crude field sketches in ballpoint pen and eventually became more detailed and thoughtful, through trial and error, and the discovery of the pencil and its eraser. He advocates drawing birds as a means to improve one's observation skills and visual memory—challenging everyone to give it a try. He will show how he begins with a sketch and ends up with a fully rendered colored drawing.

### EBIRD BASICS, TIPS AND SHORTCUTS FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 2021 7:00 P.M.

Jim Rowoth grew up in small-town north central Missouri in the 1960s. He took note of birds around him even as a child, but did not take up bird watching until the mid-1980s, when he moved to Stockton. Jim got his BA in Spanish & Political Science at Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, spent a year in Spain, four years in Washington D.C. and two years in Illinois. He also has one M.A. in Spanish and another in Teaching English as a Second Language. He retired from the

Stockton Social Security Office in 2014. Jim has been an active member of San Joaquin Audubon Society since the 1980s, having served on the Board of Directors in a variety of positions, including president. He has been Stockton Christmas Bird Count compiler for decades. He has led field trips for S.J.A.S., the Lodi Crane Festival, and Central Valley Birding Symposium. He has also taught beginning birding at Delta College, volunteered with San Joaquin Office of Education's outdoor education program at Durham Ferry, and traveled & birded worldwide—until this pandemic.



Jim is also the eBird reviewer for San Joaquin County. His program will give us a survey of eBird, both as an introduction for some and a review for others. He will show participants how to create an eBird post, manage checklists, register for bird alerts, and more. Even if you are a long-time user, upgrades and improvements continue, so there is always something new to learn with this popular database.

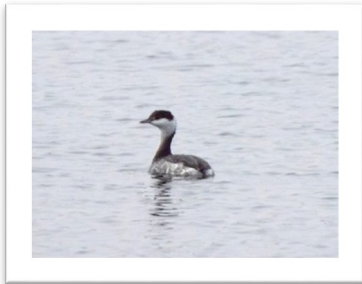
## Stanislaus Audubon Society

### Recent Sightings of **Rare** or Uncommon Birds

\*S.B.R.C. Review

#### STANISLAUS COUNTY

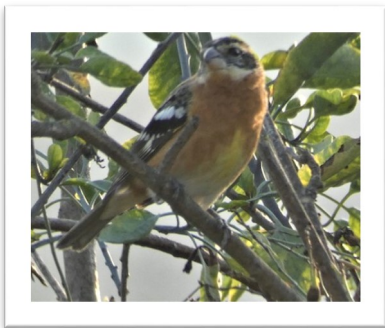
Jim Gain had a **HORNED GREBE** on December 23 at the San Joaquin River N.W.R. NOTE: Every winter, a few Neotropical migrants do not fly south to Mexico and Central America, but instead they overwinter in this area.



HORNED GREBE

© Jim Gain

Harold Reeve had a **WESTERN TANAGER** at Dry Creek Regional Park on January 9. Garry Hayes had a **BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK** at Tuolumne River Parkway Trail on January 11. Surprisingly, Garry also had a



BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK

© Garry Hayes

male *and* female **HOODED ORIOLE** at his feeder in Waterford on January 25. Harold and

Sharon Reeve had a **HORNED GREBE** at Dawson Lake on February 6.



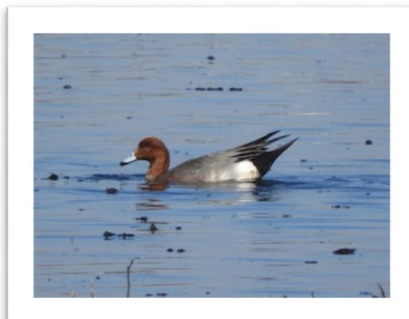
HOODED ORIOLE

© Garry Hayes

John Harris had three **WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS** in the same flock at Orange Blossom Recreation Area on February 11. Jody Hallstrom found a female **CASSIN'S FINCH\*** at her backyard feeder in Oakdale on February 14.

#### MERCED COUNTY

Dale Swanberg had a male **EURASIAN WIGEON** at San Luis National Wildlife Refuge on January 16, and another

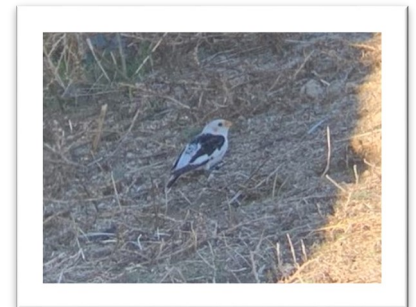


EURASIAN WIGEON

© Dale Swanberg

male **EURASIAN WIGEON** at the Merced N.W.R. on January 19.

Dale also saw two **CASSIN'S KINGBIRDS** at the Gustine Water Treatment Plant on January 21. Justin Tortosa found and photographed a **SNOW BUNTING** beneath an array of solar

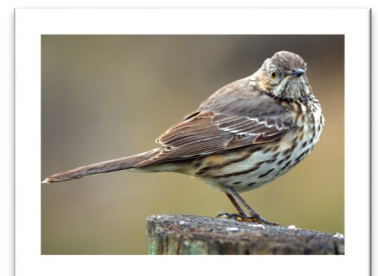


SNOW BUNTING

© Justin Tortosa

panels, in a restricted area southwest of I-5 and Highway 152, on February 3.

This sighting is the first of this species for Merced County. Pete Dunten had a **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** at the San Luis Reservoir S.R.A. on February 4. Bob Dunn found a **SAGE THRASHER** at the Merced N.W.R on February 8.



SAGE THRASHER

© Richard Brown



## Local Treasure: Caswell State Park

By Elaine Gorman

One of the San Joaquin Valley's remaining stretches of old-growth riparian forest is found in Caswell Memorial State Park. This 258-acre riverside park is located west of Ripon in San Joaquin county, and a mere 25-minute drive from Modesto.

We decided to visit Caswell SP on New Year's day. As we entered the park, orchards and subdivisions gave way to towering valley oaks, cottonwoods, and sycamores. Wild California grape vines hung down, sometimes covering the trees.

The day use fee is \$10 or use your State Park Pass. Just past the kiosk, the campground is on the left, the day use areas are straight ahead. After parking at the large, shaded picnic area, we walked over to check out "the Stan" at Willow Beach. Nuts from native California Black Walnut and acorns covered the trails. The water was shallow and slow. Animal tracks were seen in the sand and

mud. Sunning turkey vultures spread their wings on their high perches in the giant trees.

A short walk took us to another small picnic area and a plaque dedicated to Estanislao, Yokuts chief. In the early 1800s, Estanislao led an uprising against the Mexican army. Caswell SP is part of Yokuts ancestral land. The Stanislaus River and Stanislaus county are named for this Yokuts hero.

We headed out on the River Bend trail, and the forest closed in with elderberries, grape, and wild rose, abundant food for the forest birds and other critters. Binoculars in hand, we located spotted towhees and golden-crowned sparrows, scratching in the dirt. When the trail reached the river, we were able to locate Great Blue Herons fishing in the Stan. We looked for pond turtles, but early morning was probably too cold for them to be out sunbathing. We kept to the trails that hugged the river. Watch out for side trails, as many will lead to the edge of the riverbank, with steep and unstable banks.

In a tall oak covered with wild grape, a large flock of cedar wax-

wings feasted on fruits. It was fun to watch them fly between the trees. Periodically, we would hear honks of geese and squeaks of sandhill cranes flying overhead, on their way to nearby San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge.

We reached the main Majestic Oaks Trail, then turned left on to Hidden Lake Trail. This part of the park is so dense with vegetation (including stinging nettle!) that we could not locate the well-named lake. We came upon the intersection with the Fenceline Trail, which completed our 3-mile loop back to the picnic areas.

Near the picnic benches that overlook the Stan, there are several magnificent sycamore trees, with massive trunks and branches, which are irresistible to tree huggers.

This park is named for the local Caswell family, who donated 134 acres of their ranch to the State of Calif. Caswell SP is one of the last areas that provides suitable habitat for the endangered riparian brush rabbit and riparian woodrat. We thank the Caswells for their foresight in preserving this remnant of the San Joaquin Valley's ancient riparian woodland.

## Mother Lode Chapter Grant:

### ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN TOBACCO CONTROL PROJECT

The Sierra Club's Sacramento-based Mother Lode Chapter, of which the Yokuts Group is a part, obtained the Environmental Justice in Tobacco Control Project grant, along with the Chapters in the San Francisco Bay, San Diego and Los Angeles regions. The grant was procured by the Rising Alliance for a Tobacco-Free California with a grant term of 2020-2025.

The grant work focuses on reducing exposure to secondhand smoke, tobacco smoke residue, tobacco waste, other tobacco products and limiting tobacco promoting influences. The work will also focus on reducing tobacco litter in parks, playgrounds, beaches and water systems.

Over the life of the grant, its primary objective is to reduce or end the

presence of tobacco waste products within the jurisdictions of these Chapters. Policy options may include sales restrictions on single use plastics in tobacco products, designating tobacco product waste as a nuisance, requiring the tobacco industry to pay for a disposal and environmental mitigation program, or establishing local disposal and environmental mitigation programs that are paid for at the time of purchase of tobacco products.

Other objectives include developing and disseminating educational materials and work products, as well as provide technical assistance, to local tobacco control coalitions, environmental groups, the Sierra Club chapters and non-traditional partners, in order to build capacity to implement innovative tobacco product waste strategies throughout California. Also, to create a statewide movement of young advocates by re-

cruiting and maintaining young adults representing Sierra Club chapters in California to be members of the Environmental Justice in Tobacco Control Young Adult Advisory board. Members will be trained and engaged to participate in annual tobacco control advocacy events to support tobacco product waste initiatives.

The Sierra Club has the following open grant positions. Please open these links for more information on the job descriptions and how to apply.

#### Part-Time Policy Analyst:

<https://phf.tbe.taleo.net/phf01/ats/careers/v2/viewRequisition?org=SIERRACLUB&cws=42&rid=1692>

#### Full-Time Project Director:

<https://phf.tbe.taleo.net/phf01/ats/careers/v2/viewRequisition?org=SIERRACLUB&cws=42&rid=1700>

## Global Warming and Climate Change needs to be understood by all of us

Today's society is very complex, yet as individuals we know very little about anything other than our own specialty. That requires us to use experts in all the different fields to get good answers. We all need to be open minded, which is truly a lifetime challenge.

Below is information and the link to a climate system presentation given at MJC on 1-22-2021. Please view and share it with everyone you can. The program is 50 minutes in duration, the question and answer portion at the end can be skipped, however it does provide good information.

I have studied and researched climate change for over 10 years and this is the best information I have seen presented on the

earth's climate system. I have viewed it over 4 times now, and every time I hear something that is new to me I go online and fully research it. What Jeff presents in his program as far I have found is the truth. He also gave me a good overall understanding of what Geoengineering of our planet might entail.

Below is the link to the climate system presentation titled, "What The COVID-19 pandemic taught us about the climate system." by Jeff Mirocha, Ph.D

Jeff Mirocha is an atmospheric scientist in the Atmosphere, Earth and Energy Division at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, where for over 15 years he has contributed to numerous projects involving geophysical fluid dynamics, atmospheric dispersion, and renewable energy. Jeff also teaches within the Meteorology

and Climate Science department at San Jose State University. Jeff holds B.S. and B. A. degrees in Geography and Mathematics from Arizona State University, and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Astrophysical, Planetary and Atmospheric Sciences from the University of Colorado at Boulder, where his dissertation research focused on climate change processes in the Arctic.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6w3eKp7lFeA>

Milt Trieweiler

Conservation and Sustainability Chair

## The Environmental President

In his first days of office, President Biden has shown that he is serious about changing course on the biggest social and environmental issues of our time. He named the climate crisis as one of four overlapping crises facing the nation. The executive orders he signed reverse Trump's polluter-friendly policies and combat climate change by:

- Rejoining the Paris Agreement, upholding our nation's commitment to addressing climate change.
- Canceling the Keystone XL pipeline
- Reversing Trump's effort to expand and deregulate offshore drilling and close the Arctic Ocean and Atlantic canyons to drilling.

Biden moved to clean U.S. waters by reviewing Trump's attacks on:

- The 2015 Clean Water Rule, placing key U.S. waters under federal protection.

- Coal ash disposal regulations

The new administration is calling for a review of Trump-era rollbacks on chemical safety. Biden's orders are a step toward:

- Strengthening the Toxic Substances Control Act, which regulates the use and disposal of potentially harmful chemicals.
- Restoring the ban on chlorpyrifos, a toxic pesticide known to harm children and adults
- Bolstering the Lead and Copper Rule, enabling U.S. households have access to safe drinking water.

The fourth area identified is preservation of American wilderness. Biden ordered a review of the Trump administration's gutting of wild places and wildlife, including:

- The Endangered Species Act
- The Roadless Area Rule, which prevents logging in places such as Alaska's Tongass National Forest, a

massive carbon trapping system that serves as one of our most natural shields against climate change

Particularly exciting was the new administration's announcement that a Civilian Conservation Corps will be established. Young people will be employed to do the work of making our natural world part of the climate solution, supporting themselves while working to conserve and restore public lands, waters and forests.

What a contrast after four years of the Trump administration, which not only stymied needed environmental action, but went backwards. At the White House ceremony, President Biden said, "It's not time for small measures. We need to be bold."

Kent Mitchell

Political Chair

## Stanislaus Audubon Society Board of Directors, 2020-2021

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**Christmas Bird Counts:** Harold Reeve **Online Newsletter:** Jodi Smith

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**Social Media Volunteers:** CeCe Hurst, Siera Nystrom

Visit our website at [stanislausbirds.org](http://stanislausbirds.org). Like us on Stanislaus Audubon Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

Membership Information (Chapter Code C36): New or renewing members, \$20. Use renewal forms from National Audubon Society, <http://www.audubon.org/renew>. Renewal date is on the newsletter label.

### Yokuts Chair's Corner cont.

We also hope to have a gangbusters garage sale in the fall, so keep an eye out for that announcement.

We are offering a \$1000 scholarship to an MJC or Stanislaus State student. Applications are now being accepted with a submission deadline of April 15<sup>th</sup>. See our Facebook Page and Instagram for details.

Please follow our Yokuts Group on our Facebook Page and Instagram where you will get the most up-to-date information on our local activities and important information

about our Mother Lode Chapter in Sacramento and Sierra Club National.

Please enjoy the outdoors and our many trails locally and in the Sierra. Do so safely and stay healthy in mind and body. Also take the time to hug a beautiful tree. It will make you feel good and the tree will most assuredly thank you.

### Welcoming Sara Averett, Yokuts Group Secretary

Sara Averett was born and raised in Northern California in the East Bay, and has settled into the Central Valley for 28 years. She is a community volunteer, a hard worker with a servant's heart.

"I'm always finding ways to be helpful and supportive. I respect environmental advocacy. I'm happiest exploring nature in our own backyard. I enjoy organic gardening, food and flavor. Also moderate hikes, reading and art; especially on the topic of plants, travel and technology."

## Yokuts Group of the Sierra Club

### Management Committee

**Chair:** Jeff Olson \*

[rayjeff49@gmail.com](mailto:rayjeff49@gmail.com)

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[vevado@yahoo.com](mailto:vevado@yahoo.com)

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[kaugustine@csustan.edu](mailto:kaugustine@csustan.edu)

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**\* Executive Committee Member**

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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.

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