



CHIRP—N—CHATTER

The Newsletter of the Wintu Audubon Society
Chapter of the National Audubon Society serving Shasta
and eastern portions of Trinity County, California

September / October 2009

Updates on Hatchet Ridge Wind Project and TANC from the Wintu Conservation Chair

As site work on the **Hatchet Ridge Wind Project** is set to begin, a charter for the operation of the Technical Advisory Committee, (TAC), was circulated among the potential members. Wintu provided input on the document, which will govern the operation of the TAC. The TAC is part of the required mitigation for the project; it's role being to assess the impacts of the project to birds and bats during construction and operation, and to provide adaptive management practices that will respond to these impacts.

It is expected that Wintu Audubon will be invited to sit on the TAC as a voting member, which will set a precedent as the first time an environmental group has been asked to participate in this process for wind facility in California. Your Conservation Chair, Claudia Lyons Yerion and Secretary Rosemary Powder, will serve as principle and alternate TAC members for Wintu. Thanks to Rose for stepping up to the challenge!

The TAC will be comprised of a representative from Shasta County Planning, California Dept. of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wintu Audubon and the project owner, Pattern Energy.

The planning and permitting process for the **TANC** powerline project was halted after several of the participating power companies withdrew as partners in the project and the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) removed the project from the Federal Register. This as a result of massive public outcry from

landowners and environmental groups.

The project, whose stated purpose was to improve power reliability and to connect to alternative power sources in northern California, was to be massive in scope and area, covering much of the north state from the S.F. Bay Area all the way to the northeast portion of the state. There were also fears that this project would connect to coal-fired power plants being constructed in neighboring states, supplying California consumers with 'dirty power'.

Audubon California Policy Director Dan Taylor was heavily involved in lobbying the power companies of TANC to construct the project in a way that would minimize impacts to birds and the environment; advocating for use of existing powerline corridors and towers. The project proposed all-new powerline corridors, with two corridors proposed for the northeastern portion of the state, which would pose electrocution dangers to birds such as the Sandhill Crane and large raptors, as well as fragmenting habitat and loss of carbon-sequestering forest area.

WINTU A.S. CHAPTER MEETINGS ARE ON THE SECOND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH AT 7:00 PM in the theatre of the Turtle Bay Exploration Park, 840 Auditorium Drive, Redding.

BOARD MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE FIRST TUESDAY OF THE MONTH AT 7:00 PM in the Turtle Bay Exploration Park classroom adjacent to the visitor center. All members are urged to attend to contribute information and new ideas.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

September 8, 2009: Randy Van Orden presents *A Birders' Walkabout of Australia*

October 13, 2009: Linda Aldrich discusses *Food and the Environment*

Wintu Audubon was able to assist Dan Taylor by providing our analysis of the impacts to our region which he incorporated into his written responses to the notice of preparation and his discussions with the power companies.

Wintu also submitted our own comprehensive 20-page written response to the Notice of Preparation for the project. (This document should be available soon for viewing on the Wintu website.)

- Claudia Lyons Yerion,
Wintu Conservation Chair

September Activities

Field Trips

Second Saturday Bird Walk---September 12 @ 8:00 am

This open-to-the-general-public outing will be at Shasta College. Meet in the north parking lot for this half day trip. The oak woodlands, wastewater treatment pond and fields support a wide variety of species. Connie Word will lead.

Local Weekday Bird Walk – Lema Ranch, Tuesday, September 15 @ 8:00 am

This year we are instituting a weekday outing for those who can get away and have over-subscribed weekends. Lema Ranch, an oasis of open space in Redding, is an excellent place for a late summer birding walk. The ponds, orchards, and fields of the McConnell Foundation Headquarters provide an abundance of birds. We will look for American Bittern, American Kestrel, Lewis's Woodpecker, American Pipit, and a variety of ducks. This will be a 2-3 hour walk. We will meet at the North Parking Lot, off of Hemingway Street. Hemingway Street is across from Mountain View School on Shasta View Drive. Linda Aldrich will be your leader. Lema Ranch has recently added fine public restrooms, and their paved trails make this a very pleasant and rewarding bird walk.

Shasta Valley State Wildlife Area—September 26 @ 7:30 am

We last visited this interesting area in 2002. Shasta Valley State Wildlife Area is near Montague in Siskiyou County. On past trips we saw Golden Eagles on the rocky hills, puzzled over fall warblers in the willow thickets, and enjoyed ducks and herons on the shallow lakes. We are privileged to be joined on this

visit by Ray Eckstrom, a renowned Siskiyou County birder, who will show us some birding spots that are not normally visited. The many small hills in Shasta Valley are interesting geologically. Experts now believe that they were formed by massive landslides from Mt. Shasta many thousands of years ago. Please bring water, lunch and sturdy shoes. We will meet at the Redding Convention Center parking lot at 7:30 am. George Horn will lead.



Viewing ducks at Bass Lake, Shasta Valley SWA on our 2002 outing. Photo by Bill Oliver

General Meeting

Tuesday, September 8 @ 7:00 pm

A Birder's Walkabout in Australia

We kick off the fall programs with an illustrated presentation by Wintu Audubon member and world traveler, Randy Van Orden. He will share his trek from Cairns in tropical northern Australia through such famous locations in the arid outback as Alice Springs and Koober Pedee to Tasmania, the island state in the temperate south. We'll see characteristic birds from these highly varied habitats, and probably visit some places missed by Bill Byson in his book, *The Sunburned Country*.

October Activities

Field Trips

Second Saturday Bird Walk---October 10 @ 8:00 am

We will return to Turtle Bay and Kutras Lake for the fall and winter seasons. We will assemble in the parking area behind the monolith at Turtle Bay. This walk with your Wintu Audubon leader, Linda Aldrich, is open to the public and all skill levels of birders. A great cross section of waders, raptors, waterfowl, gulls, and other birds can be seen close up with usually a surprise of two on this half day walk.

Black Butte Reservoir and western Tehama County—October 24 @ 7:30 am

We will travel the back roads of Tehama County to Black Butte Reservoir. Grassland winter residents are featured. At Black Butte Res. We should see the resident Rock Wren and wintering ducks. Please bring water and lunch. We should return by about 4:00 pm. Bill Oliver will be your leader. We will be joined by Bruce Deuel, renowned birder from Red Bluff who is well acquainted with the birds in that area.



Three intrepid Wintu members scoping a raft of ducks at Black Butte Reservoir last fall. Photo by Ken Bachman

Local Weekday Bird Walk – Anderson River Park, Tuesday, October 27 @ 8:00 am

This, our second weekday local walk will feature the Anderson River Park. This gem of riparian habitat has many groomed trails and will be led by a local Wintu-er with a wealth of experience in the Park, Ken Bachman. We will assemble at the amphitheater in the Park at 8:00 am for this half-day outing.

Please Note: Wintu Audubon Society assumes no responsibility for injuries, personal or otherwise, incurred while attending society-sponsored activities and will not be held liable for accidents. You attend at your own risk. A responsible adult must accompany minors on all outings. Rain cancels all activities.

General Meeting

Tuesday, October 13 @ 7:00 pm

Food and the Environment

Linda Aldrich, longtime vegetarian and board member of Wintu Audubon Society, will trace connections between what we eat and the

environmental issues of global warming, resource depletion and some types of pollution.

Trip Reports

Burney Falls/Pit River Field Trip—May 30

Eight birders spent a beautiful day in the Burney Falls/ Pit River area. Thirty-nine species were seen. Probably the best birds were:

- Black Swifts at Burney Falls, including one on a very damp nest behind the falls.
- Purple Martins near Lake Britton where the Pit River flows into it.
- White-throated Swifts at the overlook on Hwy. 299.
- Both Bald and Golden Eagles near the Pit River.

Camp-out at Lassen Volcanic National Park—Saturday & Sunday, June 27-28.

The combined campout at Lassen Volcanic National Park with the Wintu, Redwood Region, and Altacal Audubon Societies was a great success. Chet Ogan was the only representative from the Redwood Region A.S. but 6 joined us from the Altacal A.S. The weather was great! The valley broiled but the nights were comfortably warm at 5600 ft. elevation. The total count of species was at least 56 (I may have missed some and additional species may have been spotted after we disbanded on Sunday afternoon.

The target bird for most participants was the Black-backed Woodpecker. Only Larry Jordan actually saw one because he arose early on Saturday morning and stumbled out over all the downed logs to find it in the old burn behind the Lost Creek Group Camp. Incidentally, that burn is at least 10 years old and the snags may be too old to attract Black-backs, but the smoke from the campfires at Craggs and Lost Creek Campgrounds may have attracted them. To paraphrase the old Camel cigarette ads, *Black-backs will fly over a mile for a smoke.*

Last year a Pileated Woodpecker family nested in the campground. This year we found one gorgeous male but we had to walk down an access road near the campground to see it.

Other notable sightings were an Acorn Woodpecker near the campground (surprising to all to see this species at so high an elevation without a hardwood tree within miles. On our way out the South side of the Park we drew in, thanks to Larry Jordan's iPod, a couple of Green-tailed Towhees. Further along

George Horn suggested that we walk a ways up the Brokeoff Mt. Trail to try for a Sooty Grouse---a suggestion that landed with a dull thud with our tired crew. Then miraculously a few yards down the road here was a mother Sooty with 5 chicks in the road. All in our car got good looks at them.

Volunteers Needed

We have two vacant committee chairs—Membership and Publicity. If you have a computer and just a bit of extra time, you could fill a critically important function for Wintu Audubon. Please see your President, George Horn or Newsletter Editor, Bill Oliver for details.

List of Accomplishments for Our April 2008 to March 2009 Fiscal Year

As a Chapter in good standing with the National Audubon Society, we are required to submit a description of our accomplishments for the fiscal Year. Here is a summary:

- We led or coordinated 16 field trips throughout northern California
- We led 10 local bird walks for beginning and intermediate birders
- We continued our collaborative arrangement with Turtle Bay Exploration Park
- We are a contributing member of Shasta Land Trust and led two bird walks on the Fenwood Ranch, one of their conservation easements
- We continue to support and improve our website, www.wintuadubon.org, making it one of the most informative in the State
- We continue active involvement in all phases of the planning process for the Hatchet Ridge Windfarm to reduce bird and bat mortality. (See the May/June 2009 Chirp-N-Chatter for a list of our president-setting compensatory mitigations)
- We sponsored three Christmas Bird Counts
- We were so successful in promoting The Great Backyard Bird Count that Redding had the most submissions of any California municipality regardless of size for the second straight year
- We staffed educational booths at the following environmental events:
 - Shasta County Watershed Festival
 - California Native Plant Society Garden Tour

- Wildflower Show in Yreka
- Mt. Shasta Mall Fall Festival
- Return of the Salmon Festival at the Coleman Fish Hatchery
- We led nine bird walks for grammar school students, university students and church groups
- We presented three illustrated bird talks at grammar schools and assisted living facilities
- We are members of three local watershed groups and have conducted bird surveys for the Bear Creek Watershed Group
- We were instrumental in saving a Great Blue Heron Rookery threatened by a tree thinning operation
- We installed Western Bluebird houses in a newly-created park in Palo Cedro
- We assisted in a survey of Bank Swallows for the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Dept. of Fish and Game

Events by Others

Cleanup Day at Whiskeytown Lake, September 26

Join The Friends of Whiskeytown to help cleanup the beaches and campgrounds. Meet at the far end of the parking lot at the Visitors Center at 8:00 am. We'll take the trash and recyclables to a dumpster at the Brandy Ck. Marina at noon, turn in your data sheets and join up for a BBQ

Return of the Salmon Festival at the Coleman Fish Hatchery, October 17

View salmon spawning operations, "salmon aquarium", natural resource information booths and much more. Wintu Audubon will staff a booth. Contact Bea Currie Ph: 243-3955 for details for lending a hand.

13th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium, Stockton CA., Nov. 19-22.

This has been one of the finest birding symposiums in the country, year after year. Attend workshops with raptor expert Bill Clark, birding pros Jon Dunn and Joe Morlan. Many field trips and programs for beginners. For info. visit www.cvbs.org.

Announcing Lassen Co. Yahoo Group
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/lassencounty_birds

Successful Prosecution Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act for Bird Electrocutions

We have been actively promoting mitigation measures to reduce bird mortality from windfarms. But other power developments are a threat to birds, as well. Here is an encouraging development brought to us by our Conservation Chair.

PacificCorp utility pled guilty recently to 34 violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and agreed to pay more than \$10 million in penalties. As part of the settlement, the Portland Oregon-based utility will spend at least \$9.1 million to equip utility poles with features designed to reduce the risk to birds, especially large avian predators. The utility has admitted to killing 232 eagles since the beginning of 2007. Most deaths occurred in open areas where utility poles were the tallest perches for raptors to spot prey.

Comings & Goings

Birds to look for and places to find them in September and October

By Bob Yutzky

Bob is on vacation so your newsletter editor has taken the liberty to revise and update Bob's contribution from the fall of 2008.

September brings us the full swing of the migration of landbirds and shorebirds and this continues through early October. Later in the month of September through early October is the best time to find vagrants. The coast and wetlands like the Yolo Basin Wildlife Area (YBWA) just south of I80 between Davis and Sacramento are reporting exciting finds. Breeding Least Bitterns with young were seen recently at TBWA, as have Pectoral, Semi-palmated and Baird's Sandpipers. This might be our best chance to see these unusual species, now that the Redding Waste Water Treatment ponds are closed.

Later in October we should see our first winter hawks and the bulk of waterfowl. Look for them on the Millville Plains and in the Fall River Valley. As usual, Kutrass Lake will have early water birds, gulls and possibly a few shorebirds passing through. Look now for Tundra Swans heading south. Several flocks have been reported on the coast and in the Central Valley. It's at least two months early to see this migration.

The two new rice ponds on Rat Farm Road in Macarthur should be checked out. When they had

exposed mud flats last year record numbers of phalaropes and Baird's Sandpipers stopped by.

2009-2010 OFFICERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRS & DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE

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MEMBERSHIP--*Vacant*
PUBLICITY--*Vacant*

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE

Ken Bachman, John Coon, Laurie Damoth, Mike Damoth,
Connie Word, Bob Yutzky

Here is a Quiz for Old-Timers

Do you know the current common name of these common Shasta County Birds?

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| 1.Linnet | 9.Hell Diver |
| 2.Baldpate | 10.Sprig |
| 3.Shite Poke | 11.Mud -hen |
| 4.Carolina Rail | 12.Pigeon Hawk |
| 5.Red-bellied Hawk | 13.Butter-Ball |
| 6.Crested Jay. | 14.Speckle Belly |
| 7.California Woodpecker | |
| 8.Chinese Checker-neck | |

The answer to these and other birding questions can be found on our website:

www.wintuadubon.org

MISSION

Our mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.