



# 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

May / June 2009

## Conservation Chair Addresses Audubon California Assembly on Wintu A.S. efforts to mitigate bird losses at the Hatchet Ridge Windfarm.

Recently I had the honor of representing Wintu Audubon at this year's Audubon Assembly, held March 15th -17th at Asilomar in Pacific Grove, California. The theme of this year's Assembly was *The Future of Conservation.* I had been asked by Audubon California's Policy Director, Dan Taylor, to participate in the *Wind and Wildlife, Chapters on the Front Line* workshop as one of 4 panelists who spoke about their efforts on behalf of birds impacted by windfarms in several locations throughout California.

As most of you are aware, Wintu has actively been involved in advocating for and helping to achieve precedent-setting mitigations for the Hatchet Wind project to be constructed near Burney in Shasta County. We were fortunate to have been able to work closely with our local Fish and Game officials and to have had Dan Taylor by our side in the often difficult negotiations process with the developer. Speaking about our experiences before representatives of other chapters was a great opportunity to share some of our knowledge so that they may be better prepared in dealing with similar projects in their regions.

Part of my message was to let others know that a lot can be achieved by regular citizens like us. My presentation was well received and I very much enjoyed meeting the other panelists and chatting with others about what we had learned. Redbud Region asked if I, along with the other Wind panelists, would be willing to give my presentation to their chapter at

one of their meetings, to which I agreed, of course.

I also had the opportunity to attend some of the other workshops and presentations at the Assembly. Gary Langham of Audubon California discussed their groundbreaking work on modeling the effects of Climate Change on California's bird populations and Sean Saville spoke about his work promoting

Audubon's policies regarding climate change with lawmakers in our nation's capital. Dan Taylor filled us in on Audubon California's policy work at our State's capital as well.

Also of great interest to me was "The Future of Conservation: Working with Private Landowners to Protect California's Great Landscapes" workshop. Ed Pandolfino of Sierra Foothills Chapter gave a compelling presentation on his work partnering with ranchers to conserve essential grasslands bird habitat present on rangelands and cattle ranches in California.

The setting at Asilomar was beautiful with the ocean right next door and we were able to grab a bit of

**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

May 12, 2009: Bill Oliver discusses "Common Backyard Birds of Central Chile"

June 9, 2009: Annual Year-end Picnic

birding here and there as time allowed. It was a great opportunity to network with others working for the conservation of birds and wildlife and to make some new friends and I look forward to the next Assembly.

Claudia Lyons Yerion, Conservation Chair

## May Activities

### Field Trips

#### **Lower Clear Creek---Saturday, May 2 @8:00 am**

On this 1/2 day outing we will visit several sites within the Lower Clear Creek Restoration Project. The willows and cottonwoods have developed sufficiently to attract many riparian nesters. Meet the leader, Bill Oliver, in the parking lot on the south side of the Redding Convention Center at 8:00 am.

#### **Second Saturday Bird Walk---May 9 @ 8:00 am**

This open-to-the-general-public outing will be at Shasta College. Meet in the north parking lot for this 1/2 day trip. The oak woodlands, wastewater treatment pond and fields support a wide variety of species. Connie Word will lead.

#### **Owl Prowl---Thursday, May 21 @ 9:00 pm**

We are planning a night search for owls in the Burney Springs area above Hat Creek Valley. Please contact Red Modeen (222-4938), prowl leader, or Bill Oliver (941-7741) for details.

#### **Burney Falls & Lake Britton---Saturday, May 30 @ 7:30 am**

McArthur/Burney Falls State Park is a real standout in the CA State Park system and is a nesting site for the rare and elusive Black Swift. Purple Martins are nesting in a large snag on the eastern side of Lake Britton. We will search for these and other mountain specialties such as White-headed Woodpeckers and Hermit Warblers. Bring a lunch. We should return to Redding by mid-afternoon. Meet at the Redding Convention Center at 7:30 am. Eastern Shasta County folks will meet up with us at the Safeway Market in Burney at 8:30 am. Our President, George Horn, will lead.

### General Meeting

#### **Tuesday, May 12 @ 7:00 pm**

#### **Common Backyard Birds of Central Chile**

After some brief business, our presenter will answer the question: What if you didn't join one of those expensive birding tours but birded on your own or

were in Chile for some other reason and birded when and where you could fit it in? Well, Bill Oliver did just that this past September and will share his experiences with easily seen birds in a country surprisingly like California.

## June Activities

#### **Annual Picnic--- Tuesday, June 9 @ 6:00 pm**

As is our custom, the last general meeting before our summer meeting hiatus will be a bring-your-own picnic at the Camden House (Tower House) at Whiskeytown Natl. Recreation Area. We will enjoy good birding and good fellowship in this lovely setting. The parking lot for the Camden House is on the left side of Hwy. 299W just before the turn off to French Gulch. Some members may wish to carpool or to ride with others who have a season pass for Whiskeytown by assembling in the parking lot of the Sunset Market on Eureka Way in Redding at 6:00 pm.

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

We enjoyed the birding and camping at the Lost Creek Group Campground last year so much that we are planning a repeat. This time we have invited the Altacal Audubon Society as well as the Redwood Region Audubon Society to join us. Folks can either camp at Lost Creek or drive up for either or both days. Campers and day trippers will meet at the Redding Convention Center at 7:30 Saturday morning. We will bird Manzanita Lake and vicinity, meeting the Altacal and Redwood Region folks at noon at the Lost Creek Group Camp. Last year a Pileated Woodpecker shared our campsite and Black-backed Woodpeckers were close by. Lost Creek has primitive facilities---pit toilets and no electricity, but potable water is available. Day trippers for Sunday, June 28, will meet at the campground at 8:30 am. Bill Oliver will lead.

**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.

## Trip Reports

### Millville Plains and Parkville Road – March 21

Sixteen folk braved the light rain to tally 58 species. Not bad considering that there was little evidence of any migration going on except for the swallows. Many thanks to Sandy Dubose for graciously allowing us to visit her historic ranch house during the field trip. Bob & Carol Yutzy



I can't believe the colors on that Lewis Woodpecker at the Parkville Cemetery

### Anderson River Park – March 28

Today 9 birders enjoyed some good birding and being out in perfect weather. We had 55 species, with the best birds being a Townsend's Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and two California Thrashers. The Thrashers were found in one small tree, and one of which favored us with a few notes of its unique song. We were able to see Bald Eagles at their nest---one on the nest itself, and the other perched not far away. Also, curiously enough, there was an immature Bald Eagle perched very close to the nest. In addition, we saw a Belted Kingfisher emerging from its nest that is located amid a Bank Swallow's nesting area. Ken Bachman

### Dye Creek Preserve – April 4

Ten Wintu A.S. birders traveled to The Nature Conservancy's Dye Creek Preserve on a beautiful day although the wind had a bite to it in the morning. We stopped first at Cone Grove Park, always a birdy spot, then at several places along Foothill Road before reaching the Preserve. Hiking up spectacular Dye Creek Canyon we identified probably the best bird of the day--a Golden Eagle soaring high overhead. Total species count was 61 species. The only spring

migrants were Western Kingbirds and maybe a couple of the Orange-crowned Warblers.

Bill Oliver



The trekkers at The Nature Conservancy's Dye Creek Office



Lunch stop in Dye Creek Canyon with Campo Seco in background

**Can you identify the bird Ralph Hoffman is describing in his book *Birds of the Pacific States*?**

“Can even a bird-lover become enthusiastic over a ...a plain brown bird that hops stolidly in and out of brush heaps about farm buildings, with no bright colors, no attractive song and no tricks or manners of special interest? The bird is a rustic with the stolidity of the peasant, and like a rustic it apparently lives its entire life near the spot where it was born.”

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

[www.wintuaudubon.org](http://www.wintuaudubon.org)

## COMINGS AND GOINGS

Where to watch birds in May and June  
by Bob and Carol Yutzzy

Have you had the delight of hearing a harbinger of the breeding season yet? Of course, I am talking about the melodious and variable songs of our local breeding birds. May and June are **the** time of territorial defense and singing, nest building, egg production and fledging of young. Even in April many of our locals are already in and doing their thing. Ash-throated Flycatchers are busy doing their “brüidip” calls, sounding something like Western Tanagers in the pine forests. The monotonous “Zu-weep” calls of the Hutton’s Vireo echo from the hillsides in many foothill areas. I hope you have heard the ping-pong ball dropping song of our wonderful and secretive Wren-tit. Or maybe you have been serenaded by the long variable warbles of the Black-headed Grosbeak, sounding like a Robin that actually knows how to sing (while Robins just seem to practice singing.) One of my favorites sounds is the chack-chack-da-shack and whistling of the Bullock’s Oriole. If you listen carefully you might even hear the whisper-like chattering of goldfinches all around the valley. The persistent, lightly whistled, long songs of House Finches, sometimes seem to go on and on. The super melodious Mockingbird is already in full voice but have you noticed the double note songs of the Thrasher - that sound a lot like a Mocker.

Northward migration continues for a few species at an accelerated pace through the end of May and mountain breeders will still be coming in through early June. Any patch of vegetation can be a migrant trap in May and early June, good bets are Anderson River Park, Lake McCumber, Parkview Park, the Tower House, Turtle Bay, Lema Ranch, Fall River Lake, Trinity Mountain and, of course, Lassen Park. Our magnificent local national park should be open soon and it offers great mountain birding with little disturbance from others! Western mountain specialty birds located here are Hermit, Nashville, MacGillivray’s, Black-throated Gray and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Western Tanager, Cassin’s and Warbling Vireos, Hermit Thrush, Gray Jay, Common Poorwill, Common Nighthawk, Calliope Hummingbird, Williamson’s Sapsucker, White-headed and Black-backed Woodpeckers, Cassin’s Finch, Hammond’s and Dusky Flycatcher, Fox and Lincoln’s Sparrow and the very striking Green-tailed Towhee. We always hope to spy the “mountain blues” – the

electric Mountain Bluebird and the Dusky (Blue) Grouse near the highest areas of the park.

The diminutive, short tailed, Calliope Hummingbird, visits lowland feeders prior to moving to their high mountain haunts in late May and June. We need to find new places for Blue Grosbeaks other than the still-closed Redding wastewater treatment ponds. Sometimes they can be found just south of the Knighten Road I-5 exit on the frontage road by the river. Don’t forget to look for the breeding antics of our small population of Great-tailed Grackles at Lema Ranch near the dam and headquarters. Purple Martins can sometimes be found at Lake Britton and are in many seldom visited sections of Shasta Lake. Burney Falls calls to us to look for Black Swifts and the “cigar with wings” or Vaux’s Swift. The park is also a good area to search for mountain breeders.

The Fall River Mills population of Bank Swallows has moved out of town somewhere, but they still are regularly seen in the area, often at Fall River Lake. Stop at the Fall River Vista Point and search the cliff side for the rarely reported pair or two of White-throated Swifts that breed there. Rat Farm Road in McArthur sometimes has a few pairs of Wilson’s Phalarope, Long-billed Curlew, Black Tern, Redhead, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Brewer’s and Vesper Sparrow and possibly Blue-winged Teal.

Yellow-breasted Chats are easily heard in wet lowlands all around the county – and they are truly delightful to watch. Swainson’s Hawk is our rarest local hawk, and it breeds somewhere in the McArthur area, but exactly where is not known. Look and listen for breeding Willets, Wilson’s Snipe and the fantastic Sandhill Cranes, which also grace this area in very small numbers. And have you heard the liquid and ethereal Hermit Thrush singing in the darkest mountain forests? What a thrill that is! The beautiful whistled song of the mountain breeding Fox Sparrow belies its somewhat drab plumage.

I encourage you to go out with eyes and ears wide open, and see what’s out there. While the internet is a great resource, the great Ludlow Griscom would tell you that nothing replaces time in the field - by yourself or with others! Please tell your fellow birders of your sightings (or lack of them – that information is also helpful) at Shasta Birders Yahoo group.

## Precedent-setting Mitigations Achieved for the Hatchet Ridge Windfarm

Here are the precedent-setting mitigations that we were able to help achieve:

>Up front compensatory mitigation for acquisition of breeding habitat in the region for Greater Sandhill Crane, a state fully-protected status species that winters in the area and passes over Hatchet Ridge during migration. This is the first-ever mitigation of its kind.

>Up front compensatory mitigation in the form of a fund of \$100,000 to be used for Bald Eagle conservation.

>A secondary mitigation fund of \$100,000 for any additional mortality beyond thresholds set for bald Eagle, Sandhill Crane, raptors, yellow warblers or owls, or for population-level impacts to non-special status species.

>California Department of Fish and game was also able to get a commitment on record that the developer would also fully fund any additional monitoring or studies deemed necessary to assess the impacts if unanticipated levels of mortality occur.

>The formation of a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to monitor mortality and apply adaptive management measures as issues arise during operations. The TAC for the first time will include an organization devoted to avian conservation - that's us if we behave ourselves!

>Three years of avian mortality monitoring, which is right up there with other projects which have much predicted mortality such as a couple in the Suisun Marsh area.

>Permission shall be arranged with the landowner to provide access to outside organizations for additional scientific studies subject to the approval of the TAC.

>Submitting of mortality and population data collected to state BIOS and CNDDDB biological databases to be used in scientific research to promote better understanding of impacts of wind development on birds.

*It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change.*  
*Charles Darwin*

*Only when the last tree has died and the last river has been poisoned and the last fish has been caught will we realize that we can't eat money.*  
*Cree proverb*

*Magpie, N. A bird whose thievish disposition suggested to some one that it might be taught to speak.*  
*Ambrose Bierce. The Devil's Dictionary*

*If people insist on living as if there's not tomorrow, there really won't be one.*  
*Kurt Vonnegut*

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has.*  
*Margaret Mead*

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VICE-PRESIDENT  
Esther Cox 474-4379  
TREASURER  
Nola Wade 547-5627  
RECORDING SECRETARY  
Rose Powder (562) 221-2641  
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### 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.