



SNOWY EGRET

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The Valley Habitat

July/August 2024

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

Walking the Green Path

One of my history professors once said "The older the book, the better." A few months ago I read "Waste Makers" by Vance Packard. I was inspired to after noting that it was Annie Leonard's (author of "The Story of Stuff") favorite book. The copyright date is 1960. You are given a clear view of the inception of 20th century consumerism and marketing. This includes the use of novelty, style, and obsolescence. As we know these strategies are used for cars, appliances, and clothing. Our excessive and unnecessary use of resources and our "materialistic culture" are discussed.

Cont. on page 3

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

River Walk in Flood Plain

By Karen and Kent Mitchell

We have many concerns about the proposed River Walk development. These issues pertain to the environmental, social, and infrastructural impacts of this development to the community. Within the environmental sphere, there are four important features that strongly argue for its preservation. First, the land has been rated as prime farmland; second, the land has been designated as "flood plain"; third, it sits atop an aquifer and is a water recharge area; fourth, it contains riparian habitat and is bordered by the Stanislaus River. This article will address specifically the flood plain issue.

There is no mention in the Designated Environmental Impact Report about what climate scientists are saying about climate change. There is general agreement that while annual rainfall in any one area remains unpredictable, more intense precipitation events will very probably occur everywhere. This is because a warmer atmosphere can hold more water. As our atmosphere continues to warm, precipitation events will increase in intensity and this of course means a greater likelihood of more frequent and intense flooding. MID has been tracking daily rainfall since 1887. Their website lists the ten highest single day rain amounts. Among the top six

are three that occurred in the last 10 years.

More intense precipitation will likely damage earthen levees, which is the kind that will remain with the River Walk development. These type of levees, while protective to a certain degree, are subject to erosion.

Another area of concern is the up-river dams. The New York Times Magazine featured a report on the condition of California's dams and their preparedness for extreme weather events. In the article, Dale Cox, former project manager at the U.S. Geological Survey, said California's dams are unprepared for extreme weather because state water authorities have a false sense of how bad flooding can get. "Already", he states, "we are seeing several 100 year floods every 10 years."

In January of this year, people living in several "low lying" areas along the Stanislaus River were warned of potential flooding. Many homeowners in the planned new development may find it very difficult or even impossible to purchase flood insurance as companies take climate change more into account in their policy decisions.

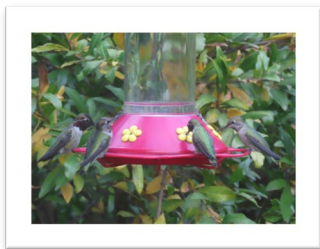
The River Walk development project is one that will introduce an unacceptable level of unnecessary risk to human lives and property.

How Many Hummingbirds?

By John Harris

Anyone who has maintained hummingbird feeders has no doubt wondered how many hummingbirds are actually out there? A feeder can present a confusing and seemingly chaotic scene as hummingbirds feed, display, and chase one another.

At my home near Oakdale I've kept several feeders going, altering the number of feeders depending the season, and reporting hummingbird numbers in eBird. I've used a common method for reporting numbers: the maximum number of a species seen at one time. This method is conservative, as there could be, and probably are, more hummingbirds out there.



ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD

In the last week of May and first week of June, northbound migrant hummingbirds have already passed through, so the hummingbirds coming to my feeders are those that breed in my neighborhood: Anna's Hummingbird and Black-chinned Hummingbird. I'm maintaining three feeders at this time. Using the method of counting the maximum seen at one time I have averaged about 6 Black-chinned and 12 Anna's Hummingbirds daily during this period. That includes birds at the feeder or visible perching nearby.

In addition to counting hummingbirds, I kept track of how much hummingbird food was used daily. I use a standard mix of 1 part sugar to four parts water. The average daily consumption of hummingbird food was 8 cups per day! Could 18 hummingbirds consume that much food? Certainly not! In some years Bullock's and Hooded Orioles have visited our feeders. These birds are far larger than hummingbirds. But this year we did not have any visits during the last week of May and first week of June.

Last fall I read an article in Bird Watcher's Digest by noted bird author Julie Zickefoose (BWD July/August 2023 pages 54-58). Julie has been an active wildlife rehabilitator and has a good deal of experience with hummingbirds. She lives in Ohio, where the Ruby-throated Hummingbird is the only breeding species. While working with rehabilitating injured or orphaned hummingbirds, she found that on average they consumed 1.5 Tablespoons of food per day. In the wild, hummingbirds also feed on insects, especially when feeding nestlings, so a consumption of 1.5 T per day might be more than most wild hummingbirds would use. Since there are 16 tablespoons per cup, 8 cups of hummingbird food consumed per day equates to an astounding 128 hummingbirds!

Another "rule of thumb" one could use would be based on banding. Experienced banders Nancy Newfield and Bob and Martha Sargent (as reported by Julie Zickefoose) found that the number of birds estimated to be in the area of banding was about six times the number of birds observed at one time at the feeders. In my case, that would be 18 X 6, or 108 hummingbirds. That is similar to the number calculated based on consumption of food.

This leads to more questions, such as how far will hummingbirds go in search of food? One study found that male Anna's hummingbirds would travel up to 2 km outside of their territories in order to feed. So it is likely that a yard with feeders and native plants that serve as food sources could be attracting hummingbirds from a fairly large area.

I should conclude by urging anyone interested in feeding hummingbirds to be sure to keep feeders clean. When activity is at its peak, my feeders are being rinsed and refilled at least once daily, but at other times of year I monitor them carefully for any sign of molds, cloudy water, or other evidence of contamination. Remember the 4:1 water/sugar ratio. Food coloring is not necessary. A lower-maintenance way to attract hummingbirds is to plant native plants such as Salvias and Penstemons that will attract hummingbirds to your yard.

Each May, I spend a week in Yosemite Valley, volunteering for the Sierra Club at the Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center. <https://www.sierraclub.org/yosemite-conservation-heritage-center>

One day, I walked along the Merced River near Upper Pines Campground, and thought about the boulders along the edge of the river.

Granite

I am conceived near center earth.
Growing to high-rising cliffs
forming Yosemite Valley.
Water, ice, gravity
work to loosen my grip
Bump, bounce, skid
To rest along the Merced.
Eons of seasons pass.

My granite toes in river's
froth and foam.
Pick-up sticks of
cedar and pine
drifting down river
from Little Yosemite Valley
pile against me.
Sand at my feet captures
passing coyote, deer, lizard.
Mica and quartz
twinkle in moonlight.

Douglas-fir cone falls
rolls into crack.
Steller's Jay perches,
grass seed on foot drops
into crevice.
After rain, it swells and sprouts.
Ants scurry, find bits of life
build more ants.

Patchwork cloak of lichen —
grays and greens of every hue—
catches her eye.
Soft lips, thighs press
upon unyielding surface.
Cheekbone accepts hard rock.
Gentle hand sweeps
through moss and rests in peace.

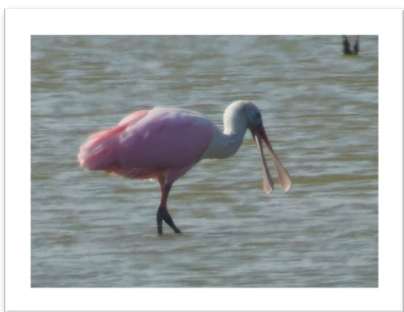
-Elaine Gorman

RECENT SIGHTINGS OF **RARE OR UNCOMMON BIRDS**

*Review Species

STANISLAUS COUNTY

John Harris had a **CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD** at his home feeder near Oakdale on April 17. Jim Gain had a **CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD** at Hughson on April 21. Jodi Smith had a remarkable find of a **ROSEATE SPOONBILL*** at the San Joaquin River N.W.R. on April 27.



ROSEATE SPOONBILL

© Mark Elness

The spoonbill was the first record of this species for Stanislaus County, and many birders flocked to the area to see the wading bird, which stayed through April 28. Garry Hayes had two **COMMON LOONS** at Dawson Lake on May 4.

MERCED COUNTY

Pete Dunten had a **MARBLED GODWIT** at the Merced N.W.R. on April 9. Bruce Mast had a **PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER** and **SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** at Merced N.W.R. on April 14. Pete Dunten had a **CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD** and **DUSKY FLYCATCHER** at Dinosaur Point on April 19. Lucas Corneliusen and Connor Cochrane had a busy day on April 20: **BAND-TAILED PIGEON** at Dinosaur Point, **LEAST BITTERN** at Santa Fe Grade Road, **MARBLED GODWIT** and former **PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER** at Merced N.W.R., and **OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER** at Del Puerto Canyon (STA CO). Logan Kahle had five **CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRDS** at Dinosaur Point on April 23, three **MARBLED GODWITS** and a **SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** at Merced N.W.R. on April 24, and a **BANK SWALLOW** at that refuge on April 29. Garry Hayes had a **RED CROSSBILL** at the Bear Creek Unit of San Luis N.W.R. on May 5. This is a rare sighting for the San Joaquin Valley. Gary Woods had a **STILT SANDPIPER** at Merced N.W.R. on May 6. John Fulton had a **DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER** at San Luis N.W.R. on May 7.

Walking the Green Path cont.

The maxim "business must grow or die" is presented. It seems that sustainability will probably be a necessity for more in the U.S. as well as "useful innovation". Social and spiritual values are discussed as well as humility and idealism. Value from personal possessions is questioned as well as standards for success and failure. Quotes prior to the 20th century are noted.

This is a good wake-up for us consumers.

I made a trip to Modesto Junk Co. with my E-bike panniers full of various scrap metal. I have no idea what will be acceptable to them. They just had me put it all in a box for sorting. All inquiries and offerings of info. are welcome.
Steve Tomlinson

stomlinson015@gmail.com

STANISLAUS AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS**VASCHE LIBRARY
STANISLAUS STATE**

Leader: Sal Salerno
TUESDAY, JULY 16
9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

This is a recurring indoors "field trip" to the Vasche Library to view the masterwork of A.J. Grayson, "Birds of the Pacific Slope." This pioneer and artist was one of the founders of the town of Grayson in Stanislaus County, and in his time he was often referred to as the "Audubon of the West." The 156 prints of his watercolors will be viewed in the Special Collections Department on the third floor and discussed by Sal Salerno. 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, please RVSP at bees2@sbcglobal.net no later than Saturday, July 13. Questions about parking and the library may be directed to Mary Wepler-Diver at mwepler@csustan.edu.

**MOSS LANDING AND
MONTEREY AREA**

1500 I Street, Modesto, CA
Leaders: John Fulton, John Harris, Xavier Sandoval
SATURDAY, AUGUST 17
6:30 a.m. – ALL DAY

This all-day field trip provides an opportunity to see shorebirds, waterbirds and passerines along the Monterey Bay coastline. We'll start at Moss Landing State Beach and harbor, then visit other nearby sites depending on pre-trip reports and scouting. Some potential additional sites include Elkhorn Slough, Zmudowski State Beach, and Laguna Grande Regional Park. We will also look for any rarities reported nearby. Bring a lunch, water, and be prepared for variable conditions including wind and fog. We will finish in time for an early dinner in the Moss Landing area before driving back to Modesto.

Meet at the Stanislaus County Library parking lot (1500 I Street) at 6:30 a.m. Carpooling is encouraged. RSVP suggested to John Harris at jhh.birdier@gmail.com

STANISLAUS AUDUBON SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2024-25

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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 newsletter label.*
 Memberships are \$20 yearly.

Audubon Zoom Programs

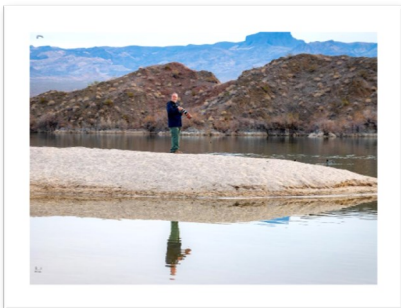
RAPTOR QUEST

Scott Harris

Friday, July 12, 2024

7:00 p.m.

In 2020, Scott Harris and his wife Randi retired from California to South Carolina, where their children and grandson live. That was also when he started birding—a hobby he had never imagined participating in, but now one he can't imagine living without. While in California, Scott had a syndicated newspaper column and two weekly radio shows. Scott sat on many Boards of Directors, including Boys & Girls Club, United Way, The Sheriff's Foundation, Pepperdine University, Moorpark College, and California State University Northridge.



SCOTT HARRIS

Scott's interests and hobbies include owning the largest collection of John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley* in the world, playing harmonica in a blues band for five years, and writing almost

fifty books during the past six years. *RaptorQuest: Chasing America's Raptors* is his first entrée into the world of birding and birds.

Scott Harris spent 17 months chasing 53 Raptors across 34 states. His book *RaptorQuest* is about his adventures, misadventures, successes, and failures. His version of a Raptor Big Year took him from days that ranged from -36 to over 100 degrees, and from getting on the bird just in time to the frustrations of missing one by minutes. His book and this Zoom program are about the birds, of course, but they are also about the people he met, the things he learned, and why he is already working on his next adventure. To register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZludOmrpj4sGdxITLbb-NXf9zZWlPamBii>

EMERALD FORESTS, CHARCOAL TREES

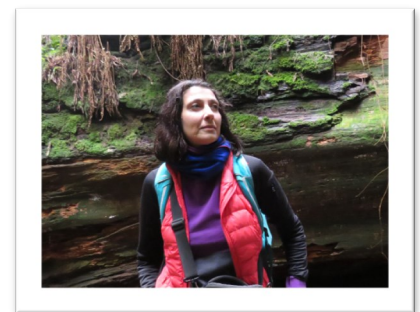
Maya Khosla

Friday, August 9, 2024

7:00 p.m.

Maya Khosla is a biologist and author. As [Sonoma County Poet Laureate \(2018-2020\)](#), she brought Sonoma's communities together to heal through gatherings, field walks, and shared writing after their recent wildfires. Her books include "All the Fires of Wind and Light" (Sixteen Rivers Press) and "Keel Bone" (Bear Star Press). Her recent awards in-

clude the [2023 Fund for Wild Nature Grassroots Activist Award](#), 2020 Environmentalist of the Year Award (Sonoma County Conservation Council), and the [2020 PEN Oakland/Josephine Miles Literary Award](#)). Her work has been featured in [For the Wild](#) and in the film [Elemental: Reimagine Wildfire](#). She also wrote for award-winning documentary films, including "[Village of Dust, City of Water](#)," about water crises in rural India.



MAYA KHOSLA

Maya will read from some of her poems that were informed by several years of field walks and work in forests that have made a comeback after wildfires. Maya will open with a slide show of the forests and continue her presentation with poems and personal accounts. To register: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwtceqtqDopEtygFA6Na_0-124BorAFQvqWdW

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

Yokuts website:

Sierraclub.org/mother-lode/yokuts



[@YokutsSierraClub](https://www.instagram.com/YokutsSierraClub)



[Yokuts Group Sierra Club](https://www.facebook.com/YokutsGroupSierraClub)



Sierra Club membership enrollment form

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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 (though Sierra Club does not officially organize carpools) which can be located nearby or several hours away. We also have fun off the trail with social events such as dinners, movie nights, Christmas Parties, and potlucks.