



Programs

March 10, 2009: Madhusudan Katti, Fresno Bird Count.

The Fresno Bird Count is a citizen science project of the Reconciliation Ecology Lab at California State University, Fresno. Madhusudan Katti, assistant professor of biology at California State University, Fresno, will report on the results of the 2008 Count, and let us know how we can participate in the 2009 Count.

May 12, 2009: Don Roberson, Bird Identification.

Meetings are held in the Calaveras Room on the first floor of the UC Center at 7:30 PM (550 E. Shaw Ave).

A Legend Among Condors

*by Louis Sahagun - LA Times
submitted by Frank Gibson*

He was found dazed in a mountain bush in 1967, hanging upside down with an injured wing and smelling like rotten fish -- a rare male California condor, a fledgling member of a nearly extinct species.

He was a wreck, and the ornithologists who found him in a canyon north of Ojai speculated that he was also emotionally troubled. Yet Topatopa, named for the mountain range where he was found, was whisked away to the Los Angeles Zoo in the hope that his species, whose numbers had dwindled to a mere 22, could find survival in captivity.

Topa, as he is known for short, lived alone in a cage for the next 20 years, devoid of the socialization needed to learn the basics of condor life. As a teenager, he courted tree stumps and tufts of grass and tried to mate with sticks and rocks. His first encounter with a female was disastrous. He didn't know what to do. She beat him to a pulp.

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Fieldtrip Schedule

WEEKEND FIELD TRIPS

- March 14: Panoche Valley with Bev Brock, 787-9550.
- March 21: Mariposa County with Len McKenzie & Yosemite Area Audubon.
- April 18: Tulare County shorebirds with Gary Woods & Tulare County Audubon, 567-6005.
- April 25: Wind Wolves Preserve with Gary Potter.
- May 16: Woodlake, Dry Creek, & Drum Valley with Tulare County Audubon.
- June 20: Sierra Nevada meadows.
- July 18: Grant Grove with Tulare County Audubon.

WEDNESDAY WALKS

- March 11: Mendota Wildlife, Margaret Houck, 252-8548 & Frank Gibson, 299-8452.
- March 25: Panoche, Bev Brock, 787-9550.
- April 7 (Tues): Parkfield, Ken & Betty, 439-2267.
- April 14, 15, & 16: Morongo, Kay Barnes, 787-2985.
- April 22: Watts Valley, Kay Barnes, 787-2985.
- April 29 & 30: Kern River Valley, Ken and Betty.
- May 6: Squaw Valley, Jim Warner, 905-9563.
- May 20: Shaver Lake, Frank Gibson, 299-8452.
- June 3: Beasore Rd., Lynn Hemink, 434-0850.

The Fresno Audubon website (<http://fresnoaudubon.org>) has been completely redesigned. The layout and graphics have been improved, Gary Woods has provided several of his excellent bird photographs for us to use, and a few new features have been added. We hope to use this new design as a platform from which to add more new features in the near future.

Inside:	Freedom	3	March 28		
	March 14 & 21		Rank Island	4	January's Field
	Fieldtrips	4	April 18 & 25		Trip Recap
			Fieldtrips	4	5

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The mission of Fresno Audubon Society is to promote the enjoyment, understanding and preservation of birds and other wildlife in Fresno and Madera Counties through birding, education, science, advocacy and fellowship.



*White-faced Ibis -
by Jill Rucker
Kern Nat'l
Wildlife Refuge,
Feb. 12th, 2009*

FRESNO-MADERA BIRDS

by Jeff Davis

Including reports for the period of January 16 to February 15, 2009

Greater White-fronted Geese are rare on the east side of the Valley, so two at a ponding basin along Herndon Ave near the Clovis Community Hospital January 19 (PF) provided an unusual record. Noteworthy anywhere, a male **Blue-winged Teal** was at the MWTP February 12 (LH). Likewise, a pair of **Barrow's Goldeneyes** was at Bass Lake January 17-19+ (ph. PF, LH; ph. GW). The female had extensive white in the forewing, suggesting possible hybridization with Common Goldeneye. A **Red-breasted Merganser** at the MWTP (PF, m.ob.) January 18-February 2+ provided just the 3rd record for Madera County. A **Common Loon** at the MWTP January 16 (ph. GW, CH) presumably was the same bird reported there January 13.

A **Swainson's Hawk** near the American Avenue Landfill February 1 (ph. GW, JS, LH) probably was a wintering bird rather than an early migrant. Two dark morph "**Harlan's**" **Red-tailed Hawks** were near Ave 6 and Rd 23 February 13 (ph. GW), representing the 3rd record for Madera County. That two of these rare visitors to California were at the same place and time is exceptional and perhaps unprecedented. A "**Black**" **Merlin** in a table grape vineyard in Kerman January 26 (ph. GW) provided the third record for Fresno County; a darker bird was at a ranch southwest of Madera January 29 (ph. GW), for Madera County's first record. A **Lesser Yellowlegs**, very rare in winter in our area, was at Mendota Wildlife Area January 21 (GW). A **Mew Gull** was at the FWTP January 24 (KER, et al.), where now pretty much expected. A first-cycle **Glaucous-winged Gull** was in an irrigated field just south of the American Avenue Landfill January 20 (LH); two others were at the FWTP January 22 (GW), another was at the FWTP January 31 (PS), and approximately 20 were at the American Avenue Landfill February 1 (ph. GW, JS, LH). There were just four prior records of this species in Fresno County, which combined totaled fewer than 10 individuals. This is clearly an unusual winter, one in which this species is being detected in higher than normal numbers throughout much of the state.

A putative **Allen's Hummingbird** visited feeders in Squaw Valley February 2-8 (ph. JW), providing a long awaited first documented record of this cryptic species in Fresno County. The photograph shows an all-green backed adult male *Seiophorus* hummingbird, which itself does not eliminate Rufous Hummingbird, as up to 2% of those show all-green backs. However, the all-green back coupled with the date, which is three weeks earlier than Rufous Hummingbirds normally arrive in our area, is strong circumstantial evidence in favor of Allen's, which moves north earlier than Rufous. Unfortunately, the photograph did not show the tail in enough detail to see the definitive morphological characters that distinguish these two species. However, the available evidence is sufficient to support the identification for purposes of the county record files. **Costa's Hummingbirds** were at the same Squaw Valley feeders (ph. JW), with 2 adult males and one female there February 10 (ph. GW). Another adult male was along the San Joaquin River near Palm and Nees avenues February 12 (JS). The young **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** found on the 2008 Christmas Bird Count was still at Lost Lake Park January 19 (JS); another, a male, was at Dryad Ranch January 24 (B&MR). About 23 **Red Crossbills** were at Shaver Lake February 3, and 20 were at nearby Musick Meadow February 4 (JT).

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A Legend . . . continued

All that changed when he was paired with Malibu, a mature and aggressive female California condor hatched in captivity at San Diego Wild Animal Park. Malibu was determined to make a man out of him. When Topa started strutting his stuff to inanimate objects, Malibu scooted underneath the tail feathers of his 3-foot-tall frame. Over time, Topa got the hang of it.

Now he is a legend among condors -- virile and strong, the father of a new generation. This year, the condor who has spent his entire life shielded from the public and highly protected behind chain-link fences celebrates his 43rd birthday. Like Seabiscuit -- the pot-bellied, bow-legged racehorse who overcame his weaknesses to become a champion and a stud -- Topa embodies the underdog myth for raptor specialists and condor enthusiasts.

His stud book has become legendary: 21 chicks sired since 1993. "He came in as a fledgling and went from 1967 to 1982 without seeing a female of his species -- you know what that could do to a human male," mused Noel Snyder, retired field biologist and former head of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's condor recovery team. "He was terribly screwed up behaviorally."

Topa's improbable story continues to lift the spirits of his keepers at the zoo, where he and Malibu share serene digs furnished with perches and nesting boxes and bristling with closed-circuit surveillance cameras.

Topa and Malibu, along with 17 other California condors housed in separate enclosures at the zoo, "are pampered, have great medical plans and enjoy meals of rats, rabbits and horse meat served up the way they like them, fresh," said Susie Kasielke, curator of birds.

In his 43rd year, Topa has aroused renewed interest among people who have crossed paths with the strange spectacle from the Pleistocene Age of a million years past -- a 25-pounder with a bald, pinkish head, red-ringed amber eyes, rich brown-black plumage set off by a snow-white lining on the underside of his 9 1/2-foot wingspan and a razor-sharp beak for tearing flesh. A few people have the scars to prove it.

Today, Topa is one of 81 California condors in the state and 322 on the planet. Some of his offspring soar over the Grand Canyon, Ventura County and Baja California. Others are in captive breeding programs.

Condor recovery programs, however, have made the majestic scavengers reliant on humans for food free of contamination from lead ammunition. Condors born and bred in captivity and released into the wild must frequently be trapped, then tested and treated for lead poisoning.

John C. Borneman, 78, who was the National Audubon Society's California condor warden when he and fellow raptor expert Fred Sibley captured Topa and took him to the zoo, could not be prouder of the bird's accomplishments.

All it took was a little romance, he said. As for Topa's wicked temper, he added: "When you get old, you get a little crotchety. But he still has an eye for the chicks."

Freedom the Eagle

by Jeff Guidry, submitted by Rose Rowe



Freedom and I have been together for more than 10 years. She came in as a baby in 1998 with two broken wings. Her left wing did not open all the way even after surgery, it was broken in 4 places. She's my baby.

When Freedom came in she could not stand and both wings were broken. She was emaci-

ated and covered in lice. We wanted to give her a chance at life, so I took her to the veterinarian's office. From then on, I was always around her. We had her in a huge dog carrier with the top off, and it was loaded with shredded newspaper for her to lie on. I would sit and talk to her, urging her to live, to fight; and she would lay there looking at me with those big brown eyes.

We tube-fed her for 4-6 weeks, and by then she still couldn't stand. We made the agonizing decision that if she couldn't stand in a week, we would euthanize her. You don't want to cross the line between torture and rehab, and it looked like death was winning. She was going to be put down that Friday, and I was supposed to come in on that Thursday afternoon. I didn't want to go to the center that Thursday, because I couldn't bear the thought of her being euthanized; but I went anyway, and when I walked in everyone was grinning from ear to ear. I went immediately back to her cage; and there she was, standing on her own, a big beautiful eagle. She was ready to live. I was just about in tears by then. That was a very good day.

We knew she could never fly, so the director asked me to glove train her. I got her acclimated to the glove and we started doing education programs for schools in western Washington. We were featured in newspapers, on the radio, and TV. Miracle Pets even did a show about us.

In the spring of 2000, I was diagnosed with non-hodgkins lymphoma. I had stage 3, which is not good, and I endured 8 months of chemo. I lost my hair and missed a lot of work. When I felt good enough, I would go to Sarvey and take Freedom out for walks. Freedom would also come to me in my dreams and help me fight the cancer. This happened time and time again.

In November 2000, the day after Thanksgiving, I went in for my last checkup. I was told that if the cancer was not all gone after 8 rounds of chemo, then my last option was a stem cell transplant. They did the tests; and I had to come back Monday for the results. I went in Monday, and I was told that all the cancer was gone.

So the first thing I did was get up to Sarvey and take the big

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THIRD MONTH--TWO TRIPS! Panoche & Mariposa County in March

by Frank Gibson

This month we will take two field trips to notable areas outside the Valley with two outstanding birders. On Saturday morning, March 14th, Bev Brock, who has seen more birds in Fresno County than almost anyone, will lead us east across the Valley and up and over the Panoche Hills into the Panoche Valley. We will probably pause at the Little Panoche Wildlife Area to scope the small reservoir for Canvasbacks and Tricolored Blackbirds. The hills have provided us in the past with Golden Eagles, Prairie Falcons, Chukar, roadrunners and Mountain Bluebirds. A stop near Mercey Hot Springs often gives us looks at surprising numbers of Long-eared Owls. Into San Benito County to the plain around the little settlement of Panoche we will go in search of Mountain Plovers. If the weather and migration gods are kind to us, we may have the chance to catch sight of an early Cassin's Kingbird near the Panoche Inn. Even if we don't, it's a friendly place to get a sandwich! We will meet for this trip, rain or shine, at the old Fresno Ag parking lot on the corner of Gettysburg and Blackstone. After carpooling we will leave by 7:00 A.M. Lots of driving, very little walking, pretty much all day! For info call Frank Gibson at 299-8452/593-2217 or Bev Brock at 787-9550/977-7204.

One week later, on Saturday morning, March 21st, **WE WILL MEET ONE-HALF HOUR EARLIER** at old Fresno Ag. Again we will carpool, and **LEAVE BY 6:30 A.M.** for Mariposa County. At the County Fairgrounds in Mormon Bar, we will meet up with Len McKenzie and other members of the Yosemite Area Audubon Society. Len is a retired Head Naturalist at Yosemite N.P. Besides being an excellent birder, he probably knows more about the natural history of Mariposa County than anyone else. He will be leading our combined groups down White Rock Road through foothill oak savannah, chaparral and valley grassland. Will we see an early Poor-Will, Ash-throated Flycatcher or Warbling Vireo? Rufous Hummingbirds should be migrating through. We'll be watching for returning swallows and Bullock's Orioles as well. Remember to bring your bird book, lunch, hat, sunscreen, binoculars and friends EARLY to Blackstone and Gettysburg! We will leave **BRIGHT AND EARLY AT 6:30!**

Questions? Call Frank Gibson at 299-8452/593-2217 or Len McKenzie at (209)742-5579/(209)769-0566.

The Quotable Environment: a new feature by Frank Gibson

"No one knows for certain how long it takes a forest to reestablish itself. Large areas of forest around Angkor Wat in Cambodia that were cleared six hundred years ago and left undisturbed ever since are still distinguishable from the surrounding primary forest." Norman Myers, *The Sinking Ark*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1979, pp. 118-119.

GOING SOUTH FOR BIRDS Shorebirds and Ground-Doves

by Frank Gibson

Next month we will again have another bonus field trip! First, Gary Woods, one of Fresno Audubon's shorebird experts, will take us into Tulare County Audubon's territory on Saturday, April 18th to meet one of their shorebird experts, John Lockhart. John will then show us around several wetlands on the west side of the Valley. We'll be looking for ducks, Peregrine Falcons, Merlins, rails and bitterns, ibises and pelicans, Short-eared Owls and Burrowing Owls. Plus of course, shorebirds including Mountain Plovers and Marbled Godwits. This will be a great opportunity to study shorebirds and ducks with two experts!

Then, one week later on April 25th, one-time field trip chair Gary Potter will take us down to the tail end of the Valley and the foot of the Tehachapi Mountains. We will visit the Wind Wolves Preserve and adjacent orange groves in search of Common Ground-Doves, Rufous-crowned Sparrows and migrating hummingbirds. Wind Wolves is one of the largest preserves in California, and gives a pretty good idea of what our State looked like before it was a State. If time allows, Gary plans a double bonus: a stop in Bakersfield to look at Rose-ringed Parakeets!

Rank Island Fieldtrip March 28th

by Fred Peterson

The Rank Island Preserve field trip on the San Joaquin River is scheduled for Saturday, March 28th, at 6:30 AM. We will meet at the Hallowell River Center on Old Friant Rd and go by canoes with Parkway Trust guides to explore Rank Island and see the heron-egret rookery, among other things. Nesting & courting is already in progress and some young ones may have hatched by then.

John Buada and Nikoll Brown (biologists in charge of the Preserve) will accompany us. This will be a 3-4 hour trip, returning to the River Center by noon or so. We have a limit of 15 people for this trip, so please sign up early to reserve a place. The fee is \$15.00 per person. This covers the canoe guide and use of Parkway Trust equipment & facilities. Payment can be made to me at my home address: Fred Peterson, 4123 Arden Drive North, Fresno, 93703-2507. Please call me at (559) 233-2021 to reserve a space. Leave a message on my phone recorder or email me at fgp@fpu.edu. Parkway Trust offers trips to the public to Rank Island, but this is the first time we have had a birders-only trip where we can take the time to observe birds, plants, and the other features of this habitat. Don't miss this great opportunity! See you on March 28th! This field trip does not conflict with any existing date already in our Winter/Spring Saturday schedule. For directions, see map on page 5. The parkway trust has waterproof bags for your scopes, binoculars, and other optics.

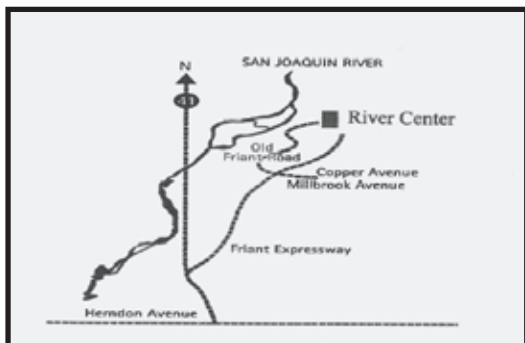
Fresno-Madera Birds - cont.

Addendum: A Common Loon was photographed at Quail Lake in early January (~January 10; fide Rodney Olsen). *Cited Observers:* Kevin Enns-Rempel, Pete Fahey, Lynn Hemink, Bill & Megan Ralph, Jeff Seay, Penny Stewart, Jim Tietz, Jim Warner, Gary Woods. FWTP = Fresno Wastewater Treatment Plant, m.ob. = many observers, MWTP = Madera Wastewater Treatment Plant, ph. = photographed by. Please submit interesting observations! We are especially interested in birds listed as rare on the Fresno Audubon checklist and those found out of season or out of normal habitat. Please submit reports to Jeff Davis (246-3272, jndavis@ucsc.edu) or to the Fresno County Birders "FCB" e-mail list.

Rank Island Fieldtrip Directions

Directions to the River Center, 11605 Old Friant Road:

- Take Friant Expressway North from Highway 41
- Travel past Woodward Park
- Continue to the intersection of Old Friant Road on your left, and Millbrook and Copper on your right
- Turn left onto Old Friant Road (Vulcan Sign is your landmark)
- Continue for about 1 1/2 miles - on your left you will see the rows of palm trees that line the drive way of the River Center



Freedom . . . continued

girl out for a walk to the top of the hill. I hadn't said a word to Freedom, but somehow she knew. She looked at me and wrapped both her wings around me to where I could feel them pressing in on my back (I was engulfed in eagle wings), and she touched my nose with her beak and stared into my eyes, and we just stood there like that for a long time. That was a magic moment. We have been soul mates from the moment I first saw her. She is a very special bird. www.snopes.com/photos/animals/freedom.asp

LOVELY WEATHER FOR DUCKS

January's Field Trip: A Summary

by Frank Gibson

Eight reasonably intrepid Auduboners braved the elements on January 24th to tour the Fresno wastewater plant and Kearney Park. Actually, the weather was surprisingly cooperative; a 50% chance of rain meant that it quit as we arrived at the plant and began again as we finished lunch at the park.

The resident pair of Peregrine Falcons was perched on their favorite pylon when we got to the settling ponds. Somewhat later the female gave us nice fore-and-aft looks as she sat in a field. Just after we left her, the male came tearing by and scared off the flock of Black-bellied Plovers we were scoping. We lost them, but gained a large gaggle of Canada Geese that he apparently also scared up. Sharp-eyed Lynn Heminck spotted the two Greater White-fronted Geese among them, and we also pulled a handful of Cackling Geese out of the flock.

Our most numerous shorebirds were those disappearing plovers, but we also had small flocks of Least Sandpipers, a few Dunlin and Long-billed Dowitchers, and a couple of Wilson's Snipe and Greater Yellowlegs. Pete Fahey spotted our fly-over Long-billed Curlews for the day. Our usual Black-necked Stilts were joined in one pond by American Avocets. Many of the avocets were beginning to show the lovely peachy-rust breasts of summer. That pond also held most of our day's gulls. Among the usual suspects we were able to tease out a couple of Herring Gulls and even a Mew Gull.

We were not able to turn any of the numerous Eared Grebes we saw into Horned Grebes, but we did a little better with the ducks. Among the scads of Northern Shovelers and Ruddy Ducks we found a fair number of Canvasbacks, American Wigeons, Gadwalls and Buffleheads, as well as a few Green-winged Teal, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Ducks, a Common Goldeneye or two, and one Cinnamon Teal. Rounding out the sixty-odd species at the wastewater plant were a fairly cooperative Green Heron by a pond and a flock of Cattle Egrets lurking on a roof.

Kearney Park was disgustingly quiet. We heard flickers and saw Western Scrub-Jays and some miserable-looking Turkey Vultures. We scared up only one mixed flock of juncos and White-crowned Sparrows. The wintering "Slate-colored" Junco hid from us, no Varied Thrushes appeared, and even the resident Red-shouldered Hawks weren't talking. Many thanks from all to Kevin Enns-Rempel, who gallantly filled in as Fearless Leader at the last minute.

Quotable Environment - by Frank Gibson: "There are mountains in Attica which can now keep nothing but bees, but which were clothed not so long ago with fine trees, producing timber suitable for roofing the largest buildings; the roofs hewn from this timber are still in existence. The annual supply of rainfall was not then lost, as it is at present, through being allowed to flow over a denuded surface to the sea. It was received by the country in all its abundance, stored in impervious potter's earth, and so was able to discharge the drainage of the hills into the hollows in the form of springs or rivers with an abundant volume and wide distribution. The shrines that survive to the present day on the extinct water supplies are evidence for the correctness of my hypothesis." Sounds like a critic of Alaskan clearcutting or rainforest destruction, doesn't it? Actually, that was Plato, writing in *Critias* about 2400 years ago.

Use this form if you want to join National Audubon Society and Fresno Audubon Society. One fee gives you membership in both:

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY Membership Application
 Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of my local chapter at the special introductory rate of only \$20.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

My check for \$20 is enclosed. Bill me, please.

Please make check out to: National Audubon Society and mail to:
 Fresno Audubon Society, P.O. Box 9324, Fresno, CA 93791-9324.

C19
7XCH

Use this form if you wish to join Fresno Audubon Society only, but not National Audubon:

Fresno Audubon Society Membership Application. You might prefer to belong to Fresno Audubon Society only, without joining the National Audubon Society. Your dues will stay in the community. You will receive *The Yellowbill*, but not *Audubon* magazine.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____ Date _____

___ \$15 Individual ___ \$50 Contributing ___ \$500 Patron
 ___ \$25 Family ___ \$100 Sustaining ___ \$1000 Life

Please check one: Renewing Member New Member

Please make check payable to **Fresno Audubon Society** and send to Fresno Audubon Society, P.O. Box 9324, Fresno, CA 93791-9324.

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FAS Website: www.fresnoaudubon.org

FAS email: fresnoaudubon@gmail.com

Fresno County Birders Email Group:
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fresno_county_birders/

Fresno Audubon Society 222-2473
Fresno Wildlife Rehabilitation 298-3276
(all area code 559)

Audubon Legislative Actionline (800) 659-2622
To report banded birds: (800) 327-BAND
or BBL@nbs.gov



Costa's Hummingbird - Gary Woods



Great Blue Heron - BJ Franz