

ALL THINGS AVIAN

FARMERS, PROFESSIONALS LEARN MORE ABOUT THOSE 'GOOD BIRDS'

Some birds follow irrigation water to use as their 'lunch wagons'



HEATHER KEMP — DAILY DEMOCRAT

County Supervisor and farmer Duane Chamberlain spoke about birds that call his land home throughout the year at Tuesday's "All Things Avian" event.

By Heather Kemp

hkemp@dailydemocrat.com

Birds could be heard chirping and seen fluttering around, almost as if they had been hired to provide ambiance for the All Things Avian event at Chamberlain Farms.

Beneath them, about five dozen people gathered, perched on hay bales in a barn at Windmill Feed for a series of presentations focused on educating farmers, agricultural professionals and conservationists on

the benefits of birds and how to manage "pest birds."

Attendees registered in advance for the farmer-to-farmer field day — put on by Wild Farm Alliance — to hear speakers from a number of institutions including the Yolo Resource Conservation District, Audubon and Columbia University discuss topics including how birds can help with alfalfa production, how to co-exist with pest birds, barn owls and the economics of hedgerows.

County Supervisor and farmer Duane Chamberlain,

who says about 70 different kinds of birds live on his land during the summer, gave insight on his overall farming operation and spoke about his experiences with swallows, owls, hawks, egrets and herons.

An anecdote he shared about the latter two species, egrets and herons, amused the crowd.

"When we start irrigating and the water is making its way through the fields you can tell right away where it is because the birds are there too," Chamberlain said. "As the water

moves forward, especially water birds like herons and egrets, are basically right in the water. As it progresses down the field, whatever is underground like crickets, gophers and moles will come up for air and like little moving lunch wagon the birds just eat their way down the fields, which helps us too."

Presenter Sara Kross of Sacramento State and Columbia University provided a handout that covered "good" birds and "bad" birds.

EVENT » PAGE 2



HEATHER KEMP — DAILY DEMOCRAT

Sara Kross of Columbia University presents on the benefits of raptors and how to co-exist with “pest” birds.

Event

FROM PAGE 1

The “good” birds can help to protect crops by eliminating pests. Bluebirds for example can provide excellent insect control and will house in nest boxes as long as the entrance hole is the correct size while raptors are good for bird and rodent control and can be encouraged to hunt by the installment of artificial perches.

Ways to mitigate damage from “bad” birds include deterrents such as putting out scarecrows or reflective tape, bird netting, chemical repellents, falconry and wild raptors, according to the handout. Kross recommends performing a “thorough bird-damage assessment” as close to harvest as possible before any action is taken.

All Things Avian took place Tuesday and lasted about four hours. After a morning of sit-down lectures and a lunch, the oc-

casion concluded in the early afternoon with a trip to nearby Union School Slough for a conservation planting demonstration.

Jo Ann Baumgartner of Wild Farm Alliance said this was the first of eight events her organization is planning over the next two years. Upcoming Field Days can be seen on the group’s website.

Everyone left with a copy of the alliance’s “Supporting Beneficial Birds and Managing Pest Birds” booklet.