

**For Immediate Release**

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**Celebrating the Winter Waterfowl Migration at the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Snow Goose Festival in Chico, January 28 – 31, 2010**

The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Snow Goose Festival in Chico, January 28 – 31, 2010, will again celebrate the spectacular winter waterfowl migration in the North Sacramento Valley. Millions of geese, ducks, swans and other birds arrive here from as far away as the Arctic regions of Alaska, Canada, and Siberia, making the Sacramento Valley the most important wintering area along the great Pacific Flyway. The Festival tells the story in live action with over 50 field trips and workshops that range out into six counties. The field trips spread out from the Chico Masonic Family Center in Chico into the rice fields, wildlife refuges and river walks where mild winter weather, abundant food and lots of water draw the avian arrivals.

This waterfowl story is an old one. Geese, swans, ducks and sandhill cranes have been spending their winters in the Sacramento Valley for thousands of years. Waterfowl and shorebirds migrate south on all the U.S. flyways, but on other routes cold weather keeps them on the move. Here in the Sacramento Valley mild winters allow the birds to stay in one area, creating a viewing opportunity nowhere else available.

And the Snow Goose Festival is the perfect way to explore this natural wonder. Many local wildlife naturalists will be leading field trips to educate participants about our winter neighbors. In rice fields and on refuges, birding experts will explain how to pick out a swan from a goose from a duck. Other field trip leaders will track sand hill cranes, the largest of our waterfowl visitors who are famous for their territorial dance. Some trips are scheduled around fly-offs when thousands of snow geese take off in unison as they move to a new feeding. Observers are thrilled to the overhead sounds of a million honking ducks and geese. Festival trip leaders have scouted out the very best sites to see all the action.

The Festival also takes this opportunity to build a complete picture of the rich diversity of plant and animal life in the North Sacramento Valley. There are an amazing variety of programs on wildlife and habitats in addition to rice fields and refuges. Festival field trips also go to vernal pools, the seasonal home of rare plants and animals, a grassland savannah searching for raptors, a nature preserve to band saw-whet owls and even the scenic Sutter Buttes to hike in search of resident wildlife. Some of the new Field trips offered this year include “Kayaking on the Thermalito Afterbay”, Digiscoping”, “Cranes, Swans and Egrets” and Beginning Birding By Ear.”

The Snow Goose Spectacle may be the Festival drawing card but the depth and breadth of nature experiences provide a rich and diverse program. Workshops teach about nature photography,

beginning birding, birds of your backyard, watchable wildlife, wood ducks, decoy duck carving and much more. There are many free nature activities for children, and armchair adventures for the less hardy. Free wildlife art exhibits and fascinating nature displays offer something for everyone.

Other highlights of the Festival include a Friday night Wildlife Art Exhibit and Uptown/Downtown Reception with free trolley ride between the two hosting galleries. The “Gathering of Wings Banquet” on Saturday night will feature keynote speaker Stephen Shunk – well-know birder and woodpecker specialist, talking on “Birding Through the Veil of Winter.” All Festival events are affordably priced and for out-of-towners, local hotels are offering special rates.

For more detailed information, a schedule or to make reservations call 530 345-1865 or visit the Festival’s website at [www.snowgoosefestival.org](http://www.snowgoosefestival.org).