



The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

April/May 2011

APRIL/MAY CALENDAR

Wed	Apr 20	6:00 pm	Board Meeting, Robinsons'
Sat	Apr 23	All day	KRP Spring Nature Fest
Sat	Apr 30	All day	Birdathon
Sat	May 14	7:30 am	Field Trip: Tillie Creek CG
Wed	May 18	6:00 pm	Board Meeting, Brubakers'
Sat	May 21	7:00 am	Garage Sale
Thu	May 19	7:00 pm	Annual Meeting: Ralph Paonessa

AUDUBON KERN RIVER PRESERVE SPRING NATURE FESTIVAL

Friday, April 22nd 2011 is Earth Day. Timed to coordinate with this date, Saturday, April 23rd is the day to celebrate the annual Spring Nature Festival at the Audubon Kern River Preserve.

To find out more about this event, go to <http://kern.audubon.org/> and click on the left-hand column's link to Kern River Valley Spring Nature & Earth Day Festival. Of course, you could go directly to <http://kern.audubon.org/KRVSNF.htm>. But then you would miss seeing all the interesting information about what else is going on at the preserve, like the re-routing of the river and additions to the preserve.

MAY FIELD TRIP: TILLIE CREEK CAMPGROUND AND THE GREENHORNS

Birder, author, and artist extraordinaire John Schmitt will lead our field trip on Saturday, May 14. We will start at the Tillie Creek Campground. If the migration season is winding down there, and if the weather is warm, we will head on up the mountain above Wofford Heights in the expectation things will be coming to life there. Wherever, trips led by John are always phenomenal.

Indian Wells Valley trippers will meet at the Union 76 station in Inyokern at 7:30 am. Kern River Valley participants should plan to join us at the campground at 9:00 am. All should bring a lunch, and wear clothing appropriate to varied elevations and temperatures.

ANNUAL MEETING

HUMMINGBIRDS OF THE ANDES

Tired of the same old Hummingbirds at your feeder? Come see the spectacularly beautiful ones of the Andes in South America.

Ralph Paonessa, a Ridgecrest resident, will show a select few of his many thousands of Hummingbird photos at our annual meeting on May 19th. He has recently returned from leading photo workshops in Ecuador where he and his students concentrated on taking photos (really good photos) of the many, many hummingbird species that reside in that part of the world. You will hardly believe the variety and beauty of these little birds

Ralph is a renowned nature photographer and leader of photo workshop tours. When he isn't gallivanting around the world, he lives in Ridgecrest. He says on his website: "My photographs have been published in such magazines as **Outdoor Photographer**, **WildBird** (including several covers), **Birder's World**, **Birdwatcher's Digest**, **Nature and Wildlife**, **Martha Stewart Living**, and **Outdoor Traveler**. My work has been featured in calendars by **Audubon**, **Barnes and Noble**, **Birder's World**, **Sierra Club**, **World Wildlife Fund**, **At-A-Glance**, **Pet Prints**, and the **Himalayan Calendar**.

"**WildBird** magazine recently honored me by publishing a portfolio of some of my favorite hummingbird images. **Birder's World** included one of my photos in their selection of the very best photos from their twenty-year history, an honor accorded to only fourteen photographers."

It will be a beautiful program! Join us at 7:00 PM on Thursday, May 19 at the Maturango Museum.

Note this is Kerncrest Audubon Society's annual meeting, and a brief business meeting and election will be held before the presentation.

Garage Sale

Saturday, May 21, 7:00 am until finished. 735 W Sonja Ave, Ridgecrest. Bring items to the same address any day that week through Thursday. Come help price and sort on Thursday, May 20th at 8:00.



Valley Sightings Feb/Mar 2011

Please report unusual sightings to Susan Steele at 377-5220 (home) or 939-1722 (work), or by email at steele7@verizon.net.

February

The **Greater White-fronted Goose** remained at the golf course through at least Feb 24 (SLS).

The adult **Tundra Swan** continued at the ponds through at least Feb 3 (SLS).

A **Common Merganser** was at the ponds Feb 26 (RAB).

FOS for **American White Pelican** was from the ponds Feb 23 (SLS).

The **Merlin** in Ridgecrest Feb 3 was a new yard bird (RAB). The **Merlin** at the golf course was seen again on Feb 23 (SLS).

The **Greater Roadrunners** SW of Inyokern were sitting on their nest Feb 11 (LK).

FOS for **Rufous Hummingbird** was from SW of Inyokern Feb 26 (PW).

A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was at the college Feb 5 (RAB).

The three **Stellar's Jays** in Cow Heaven Canyon were the first seen in the valley since Mar 28, 2009 (SLS).

FOS for **Tree Swallows** was from the ponds Feb 24 (SLS).

FOS for **Violet-green Swallow** was from the college Feb 20 (L&SSu).

Red-breasted Nuthatch continue at the college (RAB).

Up to twenty-nine **Mountain Bluebirds** remained at the golf course through Feb 24 (RAB, SLS).

The **Townsend's Solitaire** continued on the base through at least Feb 8 (SLS).

The **LeConte's Thrashers** SW of Inyokern first nest of the season failed due to wind Feb 18 (LK).

The **Gray-headed Junco** subspecies of the Dark-eyed Junco at the college Feb 5 was only the 19th time this type has been seen in the valley (RAB). It remained through at least Feb 27 (RAB).

Cassin's Finches were in Freeman Canyon Feb 26 (SLS, SE).

The **Pine Siskin** S of Inyokern Feb 26 was the first seen since Nov 20 (SLS).

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes, Shelley Ellis,, Louise Knecht, Joyce Seibold, Alison Sheehey, Lee and Shirley Sutton, Peter Woodman*

March

The **Greater White-fronted Goose** continued through at least Mar 29 (SLS).

A large flock of **Snow/Ross's Geese** was heading north Mar 9 (SLS). While most of the geese were gone within a couple days of the 9th, a flock of forty was seen at the evaporation fields on Mar 22 (L&SSu) and ten remain at the golf course (SLS).

The adult **Tundra Swan** continued at the ponds through Mar 11 (SLS).

A pair of **Wood Duck** was at the ponds Mar 16 (RAB).

A pair of **Hooded Merganser** was at the ponds Mar 9 (SLS).

A male **Red-breasted Merganser** was at the ponds Mar 22 (SLS).

A **Great Egret** was in the desert SW of Inyokern Mar 21 (LK).

Five **Ospreys** were noted Mar 20, one was SW of Inyokern (LK), one was along Highway 395 at No Name Canyon (SLS), and three were by Pearsonville (JLD). Another **Osprey** was SW of Inyokern Mar 28 (LK).

A **Merlin** was at the ponds Mar 1 (RAB).

A **Peregrine Falcon** was at the ponds Mar 3 (SLS).

First of spring (FOS) for **Black-bellied Plover** was from the ponds Mar 7 (SLS).

FOS for **Least Sandpiper** and **Dunlin** was from the ponds Mar 22, and for **Whimbrel** was from the golf course Mar 23 (SLS).

FOS for **Cliff Swallows** was Mar 11, for **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** was Mar 3, for **Bank Swallow** was 23 Mar, which is earlier than expected all from the ponds (SLS).

FOS for **Western Kingbird** was from the base Mar 15 (BS).

FOS for **Warbling Vireo** was from the college Mar 30 (SLS).

Red-breasted Nuthatches continue at the college (JAS), in SE Ridgecrest (LS), and at the cemetery (SLS).

The first **House Wren** of the spring was from the college Mar 12 (JAS).

The **Townsend's Solitaire** remained at the base through at least Mar 29 (SLS).

FOS for **Blue-grey Gnatcatcher** was from SW of Inyokern Mar 29 (LK).

FOS for **Orange-crowned Warbler** was from S of Inyokern Mar 21 (SLS).

FOS for **Chipping** and **Brewer's Sparrow** was from the college Mar 29 (SLS).

A **Fox Sparrow** was in Sand Canyon Mar 5 (LS). A "Sooty" **Fox Sparrow** was S of Inyokern Mar 21 (SLS) and "Thick-billed" **Fox Sparrows** were in Indian Wells Canyon Mar 26 (SLS, SE).

The **Gray-headed Junco** subspecies of the Dark-eyed Junco remained at the college through at least Mar 8 (SLS).

FOS for **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was from the ponds Mar 25 (SLS).

FOS for **Hooded Oriole** was from Ridgecrest Mar 19 (CG).

Lawrence's Goldfinches are in the valley in big numbers this spring and it looks like they are trying to breed. Five **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were at the college Mar 12 and a female had nesting material (JAS). They were seen after that on most visits (L&SSu, SLS, RAB). The two **Lawrence's Goldfinches** SW of Inyokern Mar 13 and 28 were a new yard bird (LK). Other Lawrence's Goldfinches were at the cemetery and S of Inyokern (SLS).

Pine Siskins were S of Inyokern Mar 12 and 21 (SLS) and in SE Ridgecrest Mar 16-17 (LS).

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes, Jon Dunn, Shelley Ellis, Charlotte Goodson, Louise Knecht, Joyce Seibold, Bob Steele, Lee and Shirley Sutton*

BIRDATHON

The 22nd annual Kerncrest Audubon Society BIRDATHON will be held Saturday, April 30th. We need you to form a team – even if it's only a team of one -- and sign up sponsors to contribute in support of the Kern River Preserve and our education programs. If you'd like to join, be, or form, a team, phone Nancy Robinson at 760-375-2049. Teams can meet at any time or place they like, but it's best to let Nancy know where you plan to go, so that she can provide a "clearing house" to ensure maximum coverage of the area to maximize the number of species seen.

We'll bird all day (and all night, starting at sundown on the 6th, if you want to get owls) then meet at a to-be-designated pizza parlor to compare and consolidate lists, and to celebrate!

Proceeds are split between the Kern River Preserve and our own education programs. This past year's education funds were spent primarily on expenses for the Faller and Inyokern Elementary School Junior Audubon Clubs. We can't think of a better way to ensure these children retain their excitement about birds!

So sign up for a Birdathon Team, and sign up friends and acquaintances too. Collect pledges from friends wishing to sponsor by number of species seen, or contributions from those making lump sum contributions, and bring them to the Birdathon. E-mail Nancy Robinson at nepr918@gmail.com or call 760-375-2049 for pledge sheets, to sign up, or for information. If you can't participate, MAKE A CONTRIBUTION and mail it to Kerncrest Audubon Society, P.O. Box 984, Ridgecrest CA 93556. If you wish to contribute by species, please note the pledge by species and include your telephone number, so someone can call you after the event and let you know how many species were sighted.

NOTE: The dates, 29-30 April coincide with a national competition for the "Birdiest Inland County" – a competition Kern County usually wins. If you bird any time during these dates, whether with the birdathon or not, please report any unusual sightings to Bob Barnes, bbarnes@lightspeed.net.

CONSERVATION CORNER

by Terri Middlemiss

Yea Spring!! Greening trees, the sweet perfume of billions of wildflowers, yellow hillsides and desert flats (with more to come), bird migrants – birds and people looking for them, nest building, warmth for all, baby lizards, fruits and veggies growing....The birds are likely benefiting from the marvelous wildflower displays (as are we).

I want to mention building brush piles again. I hear from friends with yards in town, or small yards, that they can't do them. Well, 2 of my friends have and are reaping the benefits. Unsightliness is mentioned, but that doesn't have to be. Explain to worried neighbors what you are trying to accomplish – instant safety for birds avoiding predators. Planting flowers around a pile can "pretty" them up. Even small piles are useful to birds and lizards and other important small members of a working backyard ecosystem. There is no need for a carefully constructed brush pile, if you don't have the room or inclination. Sticking the odd branch out gives great perches.

Quail, Roadrunners, White-crowns, Finches, Warblers, Wrens, Towhees, Mockers and more will appreciate your efforts.

One of my haphazard brush piles has been home to Antelope ground squirrels for many years. I can't even imagine the invertebrate life that benefits. LeConte's Thrashers used it from top to bottom. Another open brush pile was made from downed trees. We faced the stem end to the wind and that structure has survived 60+mph winds year after year. So, have fun. (less trips to the dump!)

I would like to encourage you (again), if you haven't already, to become a member of 2 local and very important conservation groups. Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association and Audubon California Kern River Preserve. RRCIA has done such a wonderful job of educating visitors to the marvels of Red Rock Canyon, now at 27,000 acres! The wildflower displays, the geology, the fossils, the hiking, the dark sky wonders, the home to Golden Eagles, Great Horned Owls, Prairie Falcons, LeConte's Thrashers, numerous other birds, large and small. Visit them at www.RedRockRRCIA.org , RRCIA, PO Box 484, Ridgecrest CA 93556, 661.231.4389.

Our jewel of a Preserve that grows larger every year, Kern River Preserve, is world-class and visited by people from all over the world. Have you been there lately? The South Fork of the Kern River has changed course on the Preserve! We won't know the full extent of the changes until summer, but, Wow, the Power of Water! A new habitat is being constructed on the Sprague Ranch that we hope will lure a colony of endangered Tricolored Blackbirds to its location. It is not ready yet, but should be a hit with the Tricoloreds and other wetland birds. The Preserve welcomes visitors year-round daily as well as to festivals, butterfly and bird counts. Volunteers are most welcome to help with numerous projects. www.kern.audubon.org , PO Box 1662, Weldon CA 93283, 760.378.2029

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

National Audubon Society

Includes 1 year of Audubon magazine, Local chapter membership

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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____ New Member/Gift - \$20 (Renewal will be \$30)

____ Senior (62+) or full-time Student - \$15

Please enclose a check payable to National Audubon Society

Clip out and mail to: National Audubon Society
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C45 P.O. Box 51005
7XCH Boulder, CO 80323-1005

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Kerncrest Audubon Society

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

____ yr Kerncrest Audubon Society Membership @ \$15/year

(Includes subscription to *The Chat*)

____ yr Subscription to *The Chat* only @ \$7/year

____ Please request the National Audubon Society to exclude my name from promotional mailing lists.

Please enclose a check payable to Kerncrest Audubon Society.

Clip out and mail to: Kerncrest Audubon Society
P.O. Box 984
Ridgecrest CA 93556

Kerncrest Audubon Society

Sherry Brubaker	President	375-7245
Lee Sutton	Vice President	375-1981
Nancy Robinson	Secretary	375-2049
Dan Burnett	Treasurer	375-5677
Brenda Burnett	Publications	375-8634
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Nancy Robinson	Birdathon	375-2049
Newsletter Ed.	Brenda Burnett	375-8634
Webmaster	Noel Gravelle	375-2325
website:	www.kerncrestaudubon.org	

Explanation of membership categories:

National Audubon Society membership includes membership in the local chapter. It also includes a subscription to the Audubon magazine, and to the Kerncrest newsletter, *The Chat*. It also provides the right to vote in society elections, and inclusion on national society mailing lists for informational materials and solicitations for contributions. Membership in the Kerncrest Audubon Society includes a subscription to *The Chat*, (not to *Audubon* magazine) and provides the right to vote in local society elections. Inclusion on national mailing lists is optional. A subscription to *The Chat* only does not provide the right to vote in elections.

The Chat

Newsletter of the Kerncrest Audubon society
P.O. Box 984, Ridgecrest, CA 93556

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