



The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

April 2008

APRIL Calendar

| | | | |
|-----|--------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| Thu | Apr 10 | 6pm | Board Meeting, Thompsons' |
| Sat | Apr 19 | ?am | Owens Lake BIG DAY |
| Sat | Apr 26 | ? | BIRDATHON |
| Wed | Apr 30 | ? | Spring Festival Field Trips Begin |

KERN RIVER VALLEY SPRING NATURE FESTIVAL

This is the 14th year of the Kern River Valley Spring Nature Festival! It will be held from April 30 - May 6, 2008, at Audubon's Kern River Preserve in Weldon and Circle Park in Kernville. The festival celebrates the biodiversity of the Kern River Valley and Southern Sierra Nevada; home to over 200 nesting species of birds, over 100 species of mammals, over 130 species of butterflies, and over 2000 species of plants. This great diversity is a result of the area being at the intersection of three of North America's 10 Floristic Provinces (Great Basin Desert Province, Mojave Desert sub-province of the Sonoran Desert Province, and Californian Province).

Our festival artist, John Schmitt, has designed a new t-shirt featuring "Spring Warblers of the Kern River Valley and Southern Sierra Nevada." Returning to fill the air with beautiful music at Circle Park, will be a feature performance by "Mama's Mid-Life Crisis" and at the Kern River Preserve, performances are scheduled by "Out of the Blue," Archie Logsdon, "Carrion Luggage," and others.

We look forward to this year's two exciting keynote speakers. Friday night, Bob Steele [www.bobsteelephoto.com] will give a themed presentation titled "Warblers: nesting, migrant, and vagrant of the Kern River Valley and Southern Sierra Nevada, plus bonus regional specialty birds." Saturday night, John Muir Laws [www.johnmuirlaws.com] will present "An Evening Exploring the Natural World of the Sierra Nevada."

There will be weekend workshops on many different aspects of natural history as well as demonstrations on bird banding, pond turtles and falconry. Over 30 different field trips featuring birding, wildflowers, geology, natural history and butterflies are being offered this year. Of the field trip options, many of the destinations are offered all seven days. There are numerous half-day field trips offered Saturday and Sunday. In addition to our traditional field trips, many new destinations should satisfy even the most seasoned festival veterans. Field trip sign-ups are in full swing and several sections for specific days have already sold out. We will also be continuing our Spring Nature Festival photo contest for the second year.

Find full descriptions and the latest additions to the schedule on our website and view an abbreviated version on page 7. In order to save paper and keep costs down; printed information is not available but there is a printable schedule available on our website.

[<http://kern.audubon.org/KRVSNF.htm>]

And don't forget that Kerncrest Audubon Society volunteers have a booth on Saturday, May 3rd in Circle Park, where we will be selling Festival t-shirts. Also, Lee Sutton leads beginning bird walks at the Preserve both days, and Charlotte Goodson conducts children's activities at the Preserve. Help in all these areas is always welcome! §

BIRDATHON

The 19th annual Kerncrest Audubon Society BIRDATHON will be held Saturday, April 26th. We need you 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 Lee Sutton at 375-1981. Teams may meet at any time or place they like, but it's best to let Lee know where you plan to go, so that he may 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 21st, 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 Elementary School Junior Audubon Club, including buying personal bird books to be presented as "graduation" gifts to all regularly-attending fifth graders. 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 species seen, or contributions from those making lump sum contributions, and bring them to the Birdathon. E-mail Lee Sutton at 2roadrunner@ or call 375-1981 to sign up and for information.

If you can't participate, MAKE A CONTRIBUTION and mail it to Kerncrest Audubon Society, PO Box 984, Ridgecrest CA 93556. If you wish to contribute by species, include your telephone number, so someone can call you after the event and let you know how many species were sighted.

Reports of species and numbers seen will be mailed to all contributors.



Valley Sightings for March 2008

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

Two male hybrid ducks were at the ponds Mar 20 (SS). The first was a Brewer's Duck, which is a Mallard x Gadwall, and the other was a Blue-winged x Cinnamon Teal.

Greater Scaup are extremely rare in the valley with just three previous records, the last being on Jan 5, 1994. This month two more were observed, both males; the first on Mar 5 and the other Mar 18-19 (SS).

Common Goldeneyes were at the ponds Mar 11, and 19-20 (SS).

A **Common Merganser** was at the ponds Mar 27 (SS).

The flock of 250 **American White Pelicans** at the ponds Feb 28 was an exceptional number for the date (SS).

Turkey Vultures are winging their way north. Sixty were in Ridgecrest Mar 24 (LL).

The 4th valley record for **Sandhill Crane** was a bird at the ponds Mar 27 (SS).

Yard bird #147 in SE Ridgecrest was an adult **Golden Eagle** soaring over (LS).

A **Peregrine Falcon** was seen at the ponds Mar 2 and 18 (SS).

The 100th species for Freeman Canyon was a **White-faced Ibis** seen April 2007 and the 101st a **California Gull**, seen last June. Both were nicely documented with photos (JB).

The **Red-naped Sapsucker** in SE Ridgecrest Feb 28 was yard bird #146 (LS).

A **Red-breasted Sapsucker** was N of Inyokern Mar 22 (TM).

A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was in SE Ridgecrest Mar 18 (LS) and another was in Ridgecrest Mar 24 (BBu).

Winter Wren on Feb 29 and **Marsh Wren** on Mar 7 were life birds (LB). Both birds were seen N of Inyokern. The Winter Wren is an extremely rare bird for the valley.

A Myrtle's form of the **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was in SE Ridgecrest Mar 21 (LS).

A Slate-colored **Dark-eyed Junco** was seen sporadically Mar 8-20 (LS).

Our **Cassin's Finch** invasion continues. Eight birds linger S of Inyokern (SS), five SW of Inyokern (LK), six W of Inyokern (PG), and two SE Ridgecrest (LS).

The **Hooded Oriole** in Short Canyon was a new species, # 180, for any of the canyons, and the 81st species for Short Canyon (AS, SS).

Two pairs of **Red Crossbills** were in SE Ridgecrest Mar 18 (LS).

Pine Siskins were noted N of Inyokern and in Grapevine Canyon on Mar 22 (TM, AS, SS).

FOS reports include: **Yellow-headed Blackbird** at the ponds Mar 11 (SS), **Rufous Hummingbird** N of Inyokern Feb 23 (LB), **Lark Sparrow** SW of Inyokern Mar 6 (LK), **Hooded Oriole** W of Inyokern and SW of Inyokern Mar 20 (PG, LK), and **Bullock's Oriole** Ridgecrest, **Scott's Oriole** Freeman Canyon Mar 14 (JB), and S of Inyokern Mar 26 (BW, SS).

LOS reports include: **Ross' Goose** from the ponds Mar 25 (SS)

Thanks to the following observers: Linda Bates, Jack Bitzer, Brenda Burnett, Patrice Glasco, Louise Knecht, Terri Middlemiss, Alison Sheehey, Lee Sutton, Barb Walls

The First Ever **OWENS LAKE BIG DAY** is taking place April 19-20, 2008. Join us in conducting an unprecedented survey of birds at Owens Lake. Come and help this Important Bird Area and the thousands of birds that have returned because of the Los Angeles Owens Lake dust control project. This is a science, social and historical main event. The Big Day is Saturday with plenty of time to chase 'rare ones' and to explore the area.

A potluck and tally is planned for Saturday night.

Campsites, motels and RV spots are all available.

Bring your binocs, scope, camera and cell phone (for rare bird alerts while on the lake) – you and your group will get your own 'slice of the lake'.

An historic group photo will be taken of our 'Joseph Grinnell Bird Group'

To sign up contact Mike Prather, Eastern Sierra Audubon, email mprather@lonepinetv.com, or phone 760-876-5807 or write Drawer D, Lone Pine, CA 93545.

March Field Trip

Mojave Narrows Regional Park

The March outing to the Mojave Narrows Regional Park in Victorville continued our string of really good field trips. Luck continued to favor us as the weather turned out to be just about perfect for birding. The Park has a nice campground so three couples took their RVs down on Friday. Another carload of birders drove down on Saturday morning.

The Victorville area has a local bird club known as the Mojave Desert Bird Club. One of its most active members, Stephen Meyers, leads birding walks through the park on a regular basis. He agreed to join us for our

walk and with his help, we had a very successful morning.

Western Bluebirds, Song Sparrows, and Yellow-rumped Warblers were in abundance. Virginia Rails and Marsh Wrens called from the reeds. Ducks of many varieties were gathered in the wetlands, the American Wigeon being the most numerous. Several raptors were seen, the Ferruginous Hawk being the most notable. (Steve had to identify it for us, as it was at some distance and was quite ratty looking.) In spite of the promise in the March issue of The Chat of "several" swallow species, the only one we saw was the Northern Rough-winged Swallow. Shirley Sutton located the Great Horned Owl on her nest. And we all enjoyed watching the Great Blue Herons on their nest at the top of two large trees.

But Stephen had a surprise for us. He birds the park regularly and knew the location of an eastern rarity, an Eastern Phoebe. Sure enough, in the specified location, Ellene Gravelle spotted the bird. We all got good looks at the Phoebe, which was a life bird for our President, Sherry Brubaker. Unfortunately, another rarity visiting the Park this winter left about three weeks ago. It was a **Crested Caracara**, a first ever for San Bernardino County.

While I did not record the number of species seen during the actual birding walk, my list for the weekend topped out at 56 species.

Submitted by Lee Sutton

CRESTED CARACARA

Since the time of our field trip to Victorville, a **Crested Caracara**, presumably the same individual, has been spotted in the Kern River Valley. First seen March 24 on the Kern River Preserve, the bird has been identified by John Schmitt as a first-summer sub-adult – darker than a juvenile, not as black as an adult. It has been seen by several people, and has been photographed by Alison Sheehey and the photos posted on the Kern River Preserve web site, <http://kern.audubon.org/>. Since March 24, the bird has been re-spotted along Fay Ranch Road and Kelso Creek Road on March 26th, 27th, and 28th. (It may linger longer. This newsletter is going to press on the 29th.)

This is a first for Kern County, a very rare occurrence for California, and a beautiful bird!

AUDUBON COFFEE

Just a reminder that great coffee, certified free-trade, organic, and rainforest-friendly, is available at www.auduboncoffeecub.com/shop/home.php. A full 2-lb bag is just \$17.49 in whole beans, \$1 more if ground. For orders of \$25 or more, shipping is free. If you don't want to place an order yourself, call Brenda Burnett at 375-8634 to share an order.

CONSERVATION CORNER

by Terri Middlemiss

With the recent assertion of Spring weather - warmer temperatures and budding plants- I have traded daily filling of niger seed socks for the Finches - Lesser, American and Cassin, for daily filling of 4 hummer/oriole feeders as the first of the Orioles come back. (Just bought first-of-the-season 25# bag of sugar) The first male Hooded Oriole was right on the button, date-wise, and I expect more of them and then the Bullock's to follow, along with more hummers. Seed intake has lessened considerably, but demand for more mealworms by the LeConte's Thrashers is happening as they are nesting and will soon have more hungry mouths to feed (as well as themselves). Thank goodness the drought has been partially neutralized and there is native food to eat.

The spring ritual of traveling bird-watchers has started and seeing Thrashers on my property has become more certain. I hope that you are seeing signs of spring bursting forth, also. The Turkey Vultures are everywhere as they hurry through the valley.

I am sorry that I am temporarily unable to continue the nuclear energy discussion from last month. I hope to resume in May.

This year, as I contemplate my advancing years and discover a new peace and contentment, I have relaxed and enjoyed the Spring unfolding. Rather than mourning the loss of winter and its resting state, and groaning over how close the smothering heat of summer is, I am following the words from a poem titled "Advice from a Tree" by Ilan Shamir. ".....Remember your place among all living beings, Embrace with joy the changing seasons, For each yields its own abundance, The Energy and Birth of Spring, The Growth and Contentment of Summer, The Wisdom to let go like leaves in the Fall, The Rest and Quiet Renewal of Winter....."

The following article is from *BirdWatcher's Digest*.

Help Wanted: Spotting Wing-Tagged Turkey Vultures

Biologists at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Pennsylvania, together with colleagues in Venezuela, recently placed color wing tags on more than 100 turkey vultures over-wintering in northwestern Venezuela to study their long-distance migration. The birds bear either red wing tags with white numbers or light blue wing tags with black numbers.

If you see one, note the wing that is tagged (left or right), the color of the tag, and the number on the tag, if possible. Also note the location, time of day, and date of your sighting. Please send this information to Keith Bildstein at bildstein@hawkmtn.org.

(Wouldn't it be fun if we found that some TuVus that migrate through here overwinter in Venequela?)-Ed.

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Ridgecrest CA 93556

Kerncrest Audubon Society

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Membership

Lynne Thompson Member at large 375-5677

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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

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage

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Permit No. 75
Ridgecrest, CA

April, 2008

