



# The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

April 2012

## APRIL CALENDAR

Wed	Apr 18	6:00 pm	Board Meeting at Robinsons'
Sat	Apr 21	7:00 am	Field Trip to Surprise Canyon
Sat	Apr 21	all day	Spring Festival, Kern River Preserve
Sun	Apr 22	all day	EARTH DAY
Sat	Apr 28	all day	BIRDATHON

### Field Trip

#### SURPRISE CANYON

Shelley Ellis will lead this trip on April 21 to Surprise Canyon, above Ballarat in the Panamint Range.

Like last month's trip, this one has varied intensity. Likely most of us will walk as far as the first waterfall, then stop in the shade of a cottonwood tree for a leisurely picnic. The hearty may hike on further up the canyon.

This is an easy stroll to the falls, though there are possibilities of getting your feet wet. Bring a picnic to enjoy along the way, and plenty of water. Weather should still be mild in April. Show up by 8:00 AM at the Park-and-Ride on the north side of highway 178 at the last signal heading east toward Trona. We'll car pool from there. Those who drive will want to have high-clearance vehicles.

For a wish list of birds we might see, go to page 3 of this publication.

Call Bob Parker at 760-446-2001 to sign up.

Louise Knecht, a Kerncrest member who lives south of Inyokern, submitted this link to youtube through Susan Steele. Filmed of thrashers in Louise's yard and labeled Knecht Ranch Wildlife Part 4, it is amazing!

According to Louise, Le Conte's Thrashers, when disturbed by the potentially threatening presence of a snake, exhibit a unique "Snake Alarm" behavior and vocalization. To see the video go to:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gothoE2XRE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gothoE2XRE)

## 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Audubon Kern River Preserve Spring Nature Festival

If you're looking for something to do in the Kern River Valley on April 21, do plan to attend this festival. There will be field trips led by famous Kern County birders, workshops and events to attend at the Preserve. We have not received a calendar, but you may be sure to find a pleasant venue and a fun variety of events.

### March Trip Report

#### Indian Joe Canyon to Somewhere

We had a very pleasant hike up Indian Joe Canyon, reaching the upper spring after seeing Inyo towhees, canyon wrens, yellow-rumped warblers, Le Conte's thrasher (Susan), Ruby-crowned kinglets, black-throated and sage sparrows. We had a nice snack at the spring, watching a pair of red-tailed hawks and ravens above the ridge and other species using the riparian area. After following two very cute burros (and their trail) down into a canyon (leading back up to Bainter Spring), we hiked out the wash to a dirt road and circled around to the road to Great Falls Basin. We deviated a bit from our intended path but had a great time.

Note from Brenda: I also saw a Peregrine Falcon while waiting for the others at the Falls. It apparently stooped on a Common raven, and came down about 10 yards from me with a great Whoosh. Then it quickly gained altitude and headed toward the China Lake "ponds".

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## Valley Sightings Feb and March 2012

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

### A Greater White-fronted

**Goose** was in Ridgecrest Feb 22-24 and at the evaporation fields Mar 10 (LS) and at the ponds Mar 12 (SLS).

An apparent **Mallard x Gadwall** hybrid was at the ponds Mar 21 (SLS).

The **Bald Eagle** near Trona Mar 14 was struggling against the wind (SSu, EG).

An **Osprey** was SW of Inyokern Mar 14 (LK).

A **Peregrine Falcon** was at the ponds Feb 13 (SLS).

The **Merlin** in Sand Canyon Mar 23 was the first sighting of this species in any of the local canyons and the 150<sup>th</sup> species for that location.

The first **Black-bellied Plover** was at the golf course Mar 13 (SLS).

The **Snowy Plover** at the ponds Mar 8 was earlier than expected (TL).

FOS for **Lesser Yellowlegs** and **Short-billed Dowitchers** were from the ponds Mar 27 (SLS)

FOS (first of spring) for **Whimbrel** was from the ponds Mar 13 (SLS).

FOS for **Long-billed Curlew** was from the golf course Mar 29 (SLS).

FOS for **Western Sandpiper** was from the ponds Mar 19 (TL).

The first **Bonaparte's Gull** of the spring was at the ponds Mar 19 (SLS, TL).

The sixty **Ring-billed Gulls** at the old Von's parking lot Mar 21 were at an unusual location (BBu).

A **Herring Gull** was at the ponds Mar 1-4 (BB).

The valley's 3<sup>rd</sup> record of **Thayer's Gull** was at the ponds Mar 22 (SLS).

The **Caspian Tern** at the ponds Mar 27 was our earliest spring record by three days (SLS).

The first report this spring of **Rufous**

**Hummingbird** was from SW of Inyokern Feb 10 (LK).

The **Red-breasted Sapsucker** on base continued through Mar 19 (SLS).

The first **Western Kingbird** was at the ponds Mar 22 (SLS).

FOS for **Tree Swallow** was from the ponds Feb 11 (AS), **Cliff Swallow** was from the golf course Mar 13 (SLS), **Violet-green Swallow** from the old sewage ponds Feb 19 (LS), **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** from the ponds Mar 3 (DVB).and **Barn Swallow** was from the old sewage ponds Feb 19 (LS).

**Western Bluebirds** were in Indian Wells Canyon Mar 3 (SE), and Mar 11 (SE, SLS).

**Mountain Bluebirds** continued on the golf course through Mar 20 (SLS).

A **Townsend's Solitaire** was at the college Feb 20 (LS) and another was on the base Mar 20-22 (SLS).

It has been a great spring for **Sage Thrashers** with reports for 15 days in March. The first report was from SW of Inyokern Feb 20 (SM). An amazing high count of thirty-nine was recorded in Indian Wells Canyon on Mar 11 (SE, SLS).

A **Phainopepla** was in Ridgecrest Mar 10-11 (T&DR).

'Sooty' **Fox Sparrows** were in Indian Wells Canyon Mar 11 (SE, SLS) and at the ponds Mar 15 (SLS).

Yard bird #153 in SE Ridgecrest was a **Savannah Sparrow** on Mar 20 (LS).

FOS for **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was from the ponds Mar 29 (SLS).

The first reports of **Bullock's Oriole** was Mar 18 and **Hooded Oriole** was Mar 14 both from Ridgecrest (SE).

The first report of **Scott's Oriole** was from SW of Inyokern Mar 26 (LK).

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes, David Blue, Brenda Burnett, Ellene Gravelle, Louise Knecht, Tim Ludwick, Susan Moore Bob Parker, Tom and Dianne Rindt, Alison Sheehey, Bob Steele, Lee Sutton, Shirley Sutton*

## CONSERVATION CORNER

by Terri Middlemiss

If you build it, can you hook up? Apparently not. The Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center installed solar panels last summer. This will be a great help in reducing energy costs for the Inyo National Forest at a time when key staff and services have been cut. However, Southern California Edison has refused to connect the panels to the grid because of an impasse in contract negotiations. It has to do with the Forest Service being a federal agency and unable to assume future financial liability. Other utilities have been able to enter into contracts with the Forest Service and National Park Service, but not SCE. SCE has held off 24 other solar arrays in national parks and forests. At last it seems that public pressure is forcing SCE to come to an agreement with the Forest Service. The public spotlight is needed more and more.

From the Editor: I have heard that SCE also cannot connect the power to be generated on the Naval Weapons Station. The problem might be transmission capability. This will be an interesting issue to follow.

## BIRDS SEEN IN SURPRISE CANYON

Northern Pintail  
Chukar  
Gambel's quail  
Mountain quail  
California quail  
Sharp-shinned hawk  
Cooper's hawk  
Red-tailed hawk  
Golden eagle  
American kestrel  
Prairie falcon  
Spotted sandpiper  
Wilson's snipe  
Band-tailed pigeon  
Mourning dove  
Greater roadrunner  
Great horned owl  
Common poorwill  
Vaux's swift  
White-throated swift  
Black-chinned hummingbird  
Anna's hummingbird  
Costa's hummingbird  
Calliope hummingbird  
Lewis's woodpecker  
Acorn woodpecker  
Red-naped sapsucker  
Northern flicker  
Ladder-backed woodpecker  
Olive-sided flycatcher  
Western wood-pewee  
Willow flycatcher  
Hammond's flycatcher  
Dusky flycatcher  
Pacific slope flycatcher  
Black phoebe  
Say's phoebe  
Ash-throated flycatcher  
Brown-crested flycatcher  
Western kingbird  
Loggerhead shrike  
Least Bell's vireo  
Plumbeous vireo  
Cassin's vireo  
Warbling vireo  
Steller's jay  
Western scrub-jay  
Pinyon jay  
Common raven  
Tree swallow  
Violet-green swallow  
Mountain chickadee  
Juniper Titmouse  
Verdin  
Bushtit  
Red-breasted nuthatch

White-breasted nuthatch  
Rock wren  
Canyon wren  
House wren  
Winter wren  
Bewick's wren  
American dipper  
Golden-crowned kinglet  
Ruby-crowned kinglet  
Blue-gray gnatcatcher  
Western bluebird  
Townsend's solitaire  
Swainson's thrush  
Hermit thrush  
American robin  
Varied thrush  
Northern mockingbird  
Le Conte's thrasher  
European starling  
American pipit  
Cedar waxwing  
Phainopepla  
Tennessee warbler  
Orange-crowned warbler  
Nashville warbler  
Yellow warbler  
Black-throated blue warbler  
Yellow-rumped warbler  
Black-throated gray warbler  
Townsend's warbler  
Blackpoll warbler  
Black-and-white warbler  
Ovenbird  
MacGillivray's warbler  
Common yellowthroat  
Hooded warbler  
Wilson's warbler  
Yellow-breasted chat  
Summer tanager  
Western tanager  
Green-tailed towhee  
Inyo California Towhee  
Spotted towhee  
Chipping sparrow  
Brewer's sparrow  
Black-chinned sparrow  
Lark sparrow  
Black-throated sparrow  
Savanna sparrow  
Fox sparrow  
Song sparrow  
White-crowned sparrow  
Golden-crowned sparrow  
Dark-eyed junco  
Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
Black-headed grosbeak  
Blue grosbeak  
Lazuli bunting  
Indigo bunting  
Red-winged blackbird

Western meadowlark  
Brown-headed cowbird  
Bullocks oriole  
Baltimore oriole  
Purple finch  
Cassin's finch  
House finch  
Pine siskin  
Lesser goldfinch  
American goldfinch  
House sparrow

This species list is a composite list including bird species observed during the 2002 AMEC reconnaissance surveys, the Horton and England 1978 Study, the Cunningham 2001 Least Bell's Vireo Survey, the Emerico 2001 Baseline Bird Surveys, the 2001 Threlhoff and Sappington Comprehensive Database of Birds of Death Valley National Park, the NPS Species Database, and the USKI BLM 1982 Management Plan.

### BIRDATHON

Do not forget: It's Saturday, April 28. Pledges have already begun coming in. Add yours!  
Send pledges and contributions to PO Box 984, Ridgecrest CA 93556.  
At least two teams have been formed, the all-female Bushtits and the Wandering Albatrosses. Challenge them!  
Form a team, and call Nancy Robinson at 760-375-2049 to sign up. Come join the fun!!

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Or go to our website at [www.kerncrestaudubon.org](http://www.kerncrestaudubon.org), click on "Membership" in the right-hand column of the page, then click on the Audubon logo with the flying egret. When filling in the form, select the chapter C45 KERNCREST AUDUBON SOCIETY from the pull-down menu to have your first year's dues credited directly to our chapter, please.  
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National Audubon Society membership includes membership in the local chapter, a subscription to the Audubon magazine and 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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