



The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

December-January 2007/8

DECEMBER/JANUARY CALENDAR

Thu	Dec 13	6pm	Board Meeting, Suttons"
Sun	Dec 16	7am	China Lake CBC
Thu	Dec 20	7pm	Program: Bob Steele
Sun	Dec 30	6:30am	Kern River Valley CBC
Sat	Jan 5	6:30am	South Fork CBC
Thu	Jan 10	6pm	Board Meeting, Burnetts' refreshments by Terri M.
Sat	Jan 19	7:30am	Field Trip, Tillie Creek Campground

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Started in 1900, nearly 2000 Christmas Bird Counts are now held across the US and Canada each holiday season. For many, CBCs highlight the birding year. Teams with experienced leaders cover specific territories. Potluck dinner and count compilation follow at day's end.

Sunday, December 16 – China Lake (Ridgecrest) Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The China Lake CBC covers Ridgecrest and much of the rest of the Indian Wells Valley. Meet at Leroy Jackson Park at 7am. Bring lunch to picnic at the park. Pot luck and pizza dinner at day's end. Contact: Peter Woodman, Email: Kivabio@aol.com, Phone: 377-3466.

Sunday, December 30, 2007 – Kern River Valley Christmas Bird Count. This CBC covers the western portion of the Kern River Valley including the Greenhorn Mountains, Lake Isabella, and the South Fork Wildlife Area. The western end of Audubon's Kern River Preserve is covered as well. Bring food and water to last until dinner. Private home catered dinner and count compilation follow. Contact: Alison Sheehy, Email: natureali@lightspeed.net, Phone: 378-2029.

Saturday, January 5, 2008 – South Fork Valley Christmas Bird Count. This CBC covers the eastern portion of the Kern River Valley including the California Department of Fish & Game's Canebrake Ecological Reserve, Audubon's Kern River Preserve, Onyx, and Weldon. Bring food and water to last until dinner. Potluck dinner and count compilation follow at the end of the day. Contact: Dense LaBerteaux, Email: EREMICO@aol.com, Phone: 378-4278.

JANUARY FIELD TRIP

Tillie Creek Campground with John Schmitt. Go birding with internationally known wildlife artist, feather expert, and birder John Schmitt as he shares with you the birds of Tillie Creek Campground in his home community of Wofford Heights. Routinely seen here are Red-shouldered Hawk, Band-tailed Pigeon, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Oak Titmouse, Wrentit, California Thrasher, Phainopepla, and Purple Finch. Adjacent Lake Isabella often holds Common Merganser (100s), loons, Western Grebe, Clark's Grebe, and Bald Eagle. Leave **7:30am** from the Inyokern Post Office parking lot. Kern River Valley and west participants meet John at the Wofford Heights Post Office at **8:45am** to make the short drive to the campground. Bring snacks, water, and picnic lunch. Contact: Bob Barnes, Email: bbarnes@lightspeed.net, Phone: 760-382-1260.

GENERAL MEETING & PROGRAM BOB STEELE'S BIRDS OF AUSTRALIA

Last year, Bob and Susan Steele spent 6 weeks in northwestern Australia. They saw over 300 species of birds, and photographed nearly 200. On January 17th, Bob will share his pictures and stories with us at our general meeting at 7pm at the Maturango Museum.

Said Lee Sutton, "Bob has pictures of birds more beautiful than any I thought possible in Australia."

I visited Bob's website for updates on his list of credits. They are impressive. They include:

Photo Researcher and major contributor for National Geographic "[Birding Essentials](#)"

Cover image for [National Geographic Field Guide to Birds: Colorado](#)

Cover photos for Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology [Bird Songs of California](#) and [Birds of the Pacific Northwest](#) .

Other publication credits include: [Birding](#), [Birder's World Magazine](#), [North American Birds](#), [Audubon Watch List](#), [New York Times](#), [WildBird Magazine](#), [National Geographic Books](#), [Western Birds](#), and many others.

Come see the birds on a big screen, and hear Bob's entertaining commentary.



Valley Sightings –November 2007

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

A **Snow Goose** with neck collar A-PR appeared at the ponds for the 4th consecutive year on Nov 23 (SS). The other first appearance dates are Nov 17, Dec 5, and Nov 2.

Tundra Swans were at the ponds Nov 20-21 (SS).

Eleven is a new high count for **Common Goldeneye**. They were at the ponds Nov 21 with two remaining the next day (SS).

The 9th valley record of **Surf Scoter** was at the ponds Nov 3-5 (KL).

A **Red-breasted Merganser** was at the ponds Nov 8 (SS).

Common Loon and **American Goldfinch** at Lark Seep Nov 9 brought the total there to 123 species (SS).

The first “Harlans” **Red-tailed Hawk** seen in the valley since 1999 was at the ponds Nov 11 (SS).

What can only be described as a weird sighting is an **American Coot** that was found dead in a Ridgecrest neighborhood far from any water on Nov 23 (BB).

The **Lesser Yellowlegs** at the ponds Nov 8-10 was later than expected (SS).

The 3rd valley record of **Thayer’s Gull** was at the ponds Nov 23 and a **Herring Gull** was seen Nov 28 (SS).

Common Poorwills are rarely encountered on the valley floor, so having a pair in SW Inyokern from Oct 20-Nov 10 is a sweet yard bird (LK).

Red-breasted and **Red-naped Sapsuckers** continue at the college (SS).

A Lewis's Woodpecker was in Ridgecrest Nov 11 (LLy).

The **White-headed Woodpecker** in Sand Canyon Nov 17 is only the 7th valley record (SE).

Three intergrade **Northern Flickers** were in SE Ridgecrest from mid-Oct through mid-November (LS).

The **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** at the college Oct 21 was later than expected (BS).

The **Tree** and **Barn Swallows** at the ponds Nov 23 were later than expected (SS).

For the second year a small flock of interior form **Bushtits** has shown up at the ponds (SS). Last year they showed up on Nov 15 and stayed through Dec 16. This year they arrived on Nov 21.

Red-breasted Nuthatches are present in good numbers with two continuing in SE Ridgecrest (LS), six at the college (SS, SE, BS), and four at the cemetery (SS, SE). Others were noted in Ridgecrest Nov 22 for a new yard bird and two in different locations on Nov 24 (BB).

A **Brown Creeper** was seen in SE Ridgecrest Oct 25 and Nov 3 (LS).

Mountain Bluebirds were first seen in the valley this fall at the evaporative fields on Nov 10 (SE, SS).

The **Cactus Wren** W of Inyokern Nov 23 was an unusual species on the valley floor (PG).

The most beautiful of the thrushes, **Varied Thrush**, hopped around in the shade under the pines up at the college Nov 12 (SS).

A **Cedar Waxwing** was W of Inyokern Oct 27 (PG) and eight were at the college Nov 22 (AS).

Phainopeplas were SW Inyokern Oct 16, 22, and Nov 8 (LK).

A female Black-throated Blue Warbler was at the college Nov 2-4 (RMcN).

A “Sooty” **Fox Sparrow** was SW of Inyokern Oct 20-28 (LK).

A “Slate-colored” **Fox Sparrow** and a **Golden-crowned Sparrow** were at the college Nov 22 (SS, AS).

The 7th valley record of **Harris Sparrow** and the first seen since Dec 28, 2004, was N of Inyokern Nov 27 and 28 (TM).

The **Chestnut-collared Longspur** at the ponds Nov 10 was the first seen since Oct 19, 2004 (TW).

Red Crossbills were first heard at the cemetery Nov 10 and remained through the month (SS, SE) with a high of ten on Nov 26 (LS). A flock of eight Red Crossbills were at the college Nov 22 (SS, AS) and at least nineteen were seen there Nov 24 (SS, BS).

Pine Siskins were SW of Inyokern Oct 18-19 and Nov 4 (LK), N of Inyokern Nov 8 (TM), and S of Inyokern Nov 11 (SS).

Thanks to the following observers: Bob Barnes, Patrice Glasco, Louise Knecht, Kelli Levinson, Linda Lyman, Robert McNab Terri Middlemiss, Alison Sheehey, Bob Steele, Lee Sutton, Tom Wurster

CONSERVATION CORNER

by Terri Middlemiss

This tidbit may not be “new” news to some of you, but it is to me and I wanted to share it. Most of us have wondered how birds with plumages the same in both sexes can tell who is who. It seems that birds can see a greater variety of colors than we can and they also see in the ultraviolet (UV) spectrum. Also, their feathers reflect UV light. So, they see each other very differently than we do and it is easy for males and females to pick each other out. (Project Feederwatch Winter Bird Highlights 2006-07)

We can read about the high mortality of American Crows due to West Nile Virus, and maybe casually wave our hands and say, “Well, there were too many of them anyway.”

But when we read about the families that were “ripped apart”, and see pictures of individuals who were known and then found dead, we might not be so casual. Further reading shows us that American Crows have a complex society and the massive numbers who died in 2002 and 2003 really disrupted it. If the die-offs had continued for more years, (and the threat is still here) these birds who live in large, complex societies could possibly cease to be. In California, where the virus spread to 95% of the state in 2004 and 2005, American Crows, Jays and Magpies experienced declines. Interestingly, Common Ravens were hardly affected at all, even though they are in the corvid family.

(Birdscope, Autumn 2007)

The November program presented by Eastern Sierra Audubon member, Mike Prather, was very interesting and very important to us here in the receiving end of Owens Lake dust, but also to the birds we love to watch. For them it is an important feeding stopover point. As the Lake and the Lower Owens River become re-watered, they re-create historic and important habitat for migrating and nesting birds. Mike is also a huge part of the Owens Valley Committee who has helped to hold the LADWP accountable to carrying out court ordered projects.

The OVC Goals are;

1. “Watchdog” the 1991 Long-Term Water Agreement between Inyo County and L.A.
2. Oversee the implementation and management of the Lower Owens River Project (LORP).
3. Educate the public and promote its involvement with water issues.
4. Seek a dual use designation for dust control water at Owens Lake for wildlife as well as dust.

The water on Owens Lake is used by wildlife, but it was not put there for that reason. It can be replaced by gravel or vegetation. If you would like it to stay there for use as mentioned in #4, consider joining OVC. This is in our own backyard! It is very exciting to see the thousands of shorebirds like American Avocets, Western Sandpipers, Eared Grebes, and on and on.

For as little as \$25, you can become a member.
OVC, Drawer D, Lone Pine CA 93545
www.ovcweb.org.

FALLER SCHOOL JUNIOR AUDUBON CLUB FIELD TRIP

On a chilly but clear and windless day in mid-November, some 30 odd 3rd, 4th and 5th graders from Faller School ventured to the NAWS wastewater treatment plant settling ponds to see wintering birds. Snow Geese had arrived in numbers, which was great fun for the children. We also saw many Shoveler ducks, some Eared Grebes, and many other species. We heard, but never saw, a very talkative Marsh Wren up close.

Our thanks to the many parent volunteers who drove, and to our own volunteer drivers, Dan and Brenda Burnett, Noel Gravelle, and Lee Sutton, who also brought along his "scope" to get the children a closer view of distant waterfowl.

REMINDERS

You may still sign up for email reminders of Kerncrest Audubon events.

If you would like to receive these notices please send an email to webmaster@kerncrestaudubon.org requesting that your email address be added to the list.

The **MORRO BAY WINTER BIRD FESTIVAL** is happening, Friday January 18 – Monday January 21. You can register there any evening starting at 6pm. For field trip and program schedules, check their web site: www.morrobaybirdfestival.org.

SAVE THE DATE: The First Ever OWENS LAKE BIG DAY is taking place April 19-20, 2008. 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.

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.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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Includes 1 year of Audubon magazine, Local chapter membership

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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____ 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.

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P.O. Box 984

Ridgecrest CA 93556

Kerncrest Audubon Society

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Membership

Lynne Thompson Member at large 375-5677

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

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage

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Permit No. 75
Ridgecrest, CA

December, 2007

January 2008

