



The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

December 2008

DECEMBER/JANUARY CALENDAR

Thu	Dec 11	6pm	Board Meeting, Burnetts'
Sun	Dec 14		Christmas Bird Count
Sat	Jan 3		South Fork Valley CBC
Sun	Jan 4		Kern River Valley CBC
Thu	Jan 18	7pm	General Meeting
Thu	Jan 31	7:30	Field Trip

JANUARY GENERAL MEETING AND PROGRAM

WIND WOLVES PRESERVE

Have you ever said to yourself as you drive to Bakersfield, "I wonder what is in those hills at the south end of the San Joaquin Valley"? Well, one of the most interesting things there is the Wind Wolves Preserve.

At 97,000 acres, Wind Wolves is the largest nonprofit preserve on the West Coast. And it is not that far from Ridgecrest/Kernville area. The preserve is in an ecologically unique region where the Transverse Ranges, The Coast Ranges, the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the western Mojave Desert and the San Joaquin Valley converge. Due to this singular geographic location and an elevation range from 640 to 6000 feet, the preserve has an impressive array of landforms and habitats that, of course, leads to a broad array of flora and fauna.

The Program: Sherryl Clendenen, their outdoor education director, will tell us all about the Wind Wolves Preserve at our January 2009 Program at the Maturango Museum on Thursday the 15th of January at 7:00 PM. Her illustrated program will also inform us about the organization that owns the Preserve, The Wildlands Conservancy. The Conservancy owns additional preserves in Southern California. They also do a lot of outdoor education and were instrumental in the preservation of open space in and around Joshua Tree National Park and the Mojave National Preserve.

The Field Trip: Sherryl has invited Kerncrest Audubon members to tour the Wind Wolves Preserve on Saturday, January 31st. Shirley, my wife, and I were fortunate to get a short tour of the Preserve in December '07. It has some very nice grasslands and a wonderful canyon with good riparian habitat. We should see resident birds and those migrants who've decided that the hills at the south end of the San Joaquin Valley were

about as far as they want to go for the winter. Bring lunch, warm cloths, binoculars, etc.

Sherryl says: "Due to possible bad weather and muddy roads we may not be able to drive outside the main canyon, but we could certainly do a short drive, nice hike and picnic lunch."

Indian Wells Valley residents will meet at the Union 76 station in Inyokern for car-pooling. We'll depart Inyokern at 7:30 AM and travel via Tehachapi, Arvin, and Old River Road, south to Hwy. 166 towards Maricopa till we see the sign for the preserve. That should put us at the preserve around 9:45 or 10:00 AM. Kern River Valley residents can meet at the Park and Ride lot near the Isabella Motel on Highway 155 at 8:00 for car-pooling from there.

Lee Sutton
Programs Chair
760-375-1981

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

The China Lake Christmas Bird Count will be held on Sunday, December 14th. The Compiler will again be Peter Woodman, who can be reached at 760-377-3466. Pizza dinner and compilation after the count will be at the home of Lee and Shirley Sutton.

For those of you west of Walker Pass who want to go west, the Bakersfield count is the same day. The compiler is John Wilson, and there is a link to his web site at the naturali site below.

On Saturday, January 3rd is the South Fork Valley, Kern County count: Compiler Denise LaBerteaux, Phone: (760) 378-4278, and on Sunday, January 4th it will be the count of the Kern River Valley, Kern County: Compiler: Alison Sheehey, Phone: (760) 378-2029.

For information on scheduling and contacts for all of California's Christmas Bird Counts, visit natureali.org/cbcs.htm.

Note that I have not mentioned gathering places or times for any of these counts. The people compiling them really need to know if you plan to participate, so that they can organize teams and assign count areas!

Please call them and tell them of your plans. They will tell you when and where to meet.



Valley Sightings October 2008

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

A **Tundra Swan** was at the ponds Nov 17 (SS).

The **Wood Duck** at the ponds Oct 27-29 was in the middle of their expected fall migration period (SS).

Five opportunistic **Mallards** took advantage of the food sources available at the westernmost of two small ponds formed by rainfall at Pearson Park. Two remained on Nov 4 (BB).

A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was at the ponds Nov 24 (SS).

The **Barn Swallow** at the ponds Nov 17 was later than expected (SS).

Red-breasted Nuthatches continue in SE Ridgecrest (LS) and at the college Nov 14 (SS).

The **Brown Creeper** at the college Nov 14 fits nicely in the expected fall migration window of Oct 13 – Nov 14 (SS).

New yard birds for a resident N of Inyokern included **Spotted Towhee** on Nov 4, **Loggerhead Shrike** on Nov 6, and **Cedar Waxwings** on Nov 10 (LB).

The **Varied Thrush** in Freeman Canyon Nov 4 was species #102 for the canyon and a life bird to boot (KL). Another male **Varied Thrush** was in Ridgecrest Nov 9 (LA).

The **White-throated Sparrow** N of Inyokern stayed Oct 28 through Nov 2 (LB).

Yard bird #148 and the eighth valley record for **Harris's Sparrow** was on Nov 5 in SE Ridgecrest (LS).

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes, Linda Bates, Linda Anderson, Karen Luhn, Lee Sutton*

13th annual MORRO BAY WINTER BIRD FESTIVAL

January 16-19, 2009. All-day and half-day tours and workshops throughout the festival, and outstanding evening speakers on Saturday and Sunday.. You may view the schedule, sign up for trips and register for the festival at their web site, www.morrobaybirdfestival.org.

Or call me (Brenda) at 375-8634 to arrange to borrow my paper copy of the schedule and registration form.

CONSERVATION CORNER

by Terri Middlemiss

As you might know, the summer fire in Big Sur rampaged through the California Condor habitat... The Coast Guard was called in to do an emergency evacuation of the young Condors and their adult mentor in the holding pen at the Ventana Wildlife Society's site. They were able to rescue them just in time. The holding pen is where the youngsters are mentored in proper condor behavior by their adult companion, Hoi. They learn to respect their elders, avoid landing on electric lines, feed in groups, learn social skills and receive visits from local adult Condors. The Condors raised here are released in the Big Sur area and in Pinnacles National monument. This important pen was destroyed by the fire and VWS is seeking monetary help in rebuilding it. Contact them at www.ventanaws.org, or 831.455.9514.

I was so excited to see 2 Condors in the fall of 2007 when I was on a day trip down the Big Sur coast. Incredible coastal scenery wonderfully augmented by the appearance of those huge masters of the wind.

I recently had a call from a woman living in the Indian Wells Valley who found two dead House Finches who each had a huge swollen eye lesion. I have yet to see this in my finch population this year. This is House Finch eye disease, *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*. It is a bacterial infection that largely affects the respiratory system. Sterilizing feeders and spreading out the bird congregations in your yard help to stop the spread. If you want to take part in Cornell Lab of Ornithology's House Finch Disease Survey, contact them at 607.254.2469, housefinch@cornell.edu or birds.cornell.edu/hofi.

16 Bar-tailed Godwits have now been satellite tagged, and one tag kept on "ticking and ticking" so long that one bird was followed on her staggering epic yearly journey. Traveling in the spring from New Zealand to China to Alaska, nesting, and then traveling in one non-stop, eight day effort of 7,300 miles back down the Pacific to New Zealand! The author of the article in the Dec/Jan 2009 issue of "National Wildlife" tells us to imagine that when the Godwit takes off on a Sunday night in early fall when you go to bed, that when you go to bed the following Sunday night, that Godwit is still flying!! Breathtaking! The researchers have found that the birds gorge so much before flight, their epidermis bulges with the most fat content ever recorded in birds. They also shrivel some of their internal organs, so that at take-off time, they are little more than brains, fat and flight muscle. I find it hard to contemplate this feat of flight and of changing your internal organs.

Also, in that same magazine issue is an article titled "Put a Songbird On Your Shopping List." The author discusses buying fruits and vegetables grown in Latin America where they are sprayed heavily with dangerous

chemicals – Class I toxins, many banned in the U.S. Spraying kills Neotropical Migratory Songbirds outright as well as ones exposed to over-spray. Also, there is the issue of land clearing and transportation to consider. Bananas carry the highest pesticide load of any tropical crop - 40 pounds of active pesticide ingredients per acre versus 4 pounds per acre for most U.S. grown fruits and vegetables. The author suggests buying only organic bananas, and shade-grown fair-traded coffee from those countries.

"Silence of the Songbirds" by Bridget Stutchbury.

WHAT IS A CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT?

The following was taken from the Wikipedia web site:

"The **Christmas Bird Count** (CBC) is a census of birds in the Western Hemisphere, performed annually in the early Northern-hemisphere winter by volunteer birders. The purpose is to provide population data for use in science, especially conservation biology, though many people participate for recreation.

"Up through the 19th century, many North Americans participated in the tradition of Christmas "side hunts", in which they competed at how many birds they could kill, regardless of whether they had any use for the carcasses and of whether the birds were beneficial, beautiful, or rare. At the end of that century the U.S. ornithologist Frank Chapman, an officer in the recently formed National Audubon Society, proposed counting birds on Christmas instead of killing them.

"In 1900, 27 observers took part in the first count in 25 places in the United States and Canada, 15 of them in the northeastern U.S. from Massachusetts to Philadelphia. Since then the counts have been held every winter, usually with increasing numbers of observers. For instance, the 101st count, in the winter of 2000–2001, involved 52,471 people in 1,823 places in 17 countries (but mostly in the U.S. and Canada). The Audubon Society now partners with Bird Studies Canada, the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory of Texas (responsible for CBCs in Mexico), and the Red Nacional de Observadores de Aves (RNOA, National Network of Bird Observers) and the Instituto Alexander von Humboldt of Colombia.

"The greatest number of bird species ever reported by any U.S. location in a single count is 250, observed on December 19, 2005 in the Matagorda County-Mad Island Marsh count circle around Matagorda and Palacios, Texas.[1]

"Each individual count is performed in a 'count circle' with a diameter of 15 miles or 24 kilometres. At least ten volunteers, including a compiler to manage things, count in each circle. They break up into small parties and follow assigned routes, which change little

from year to year, counting every bird they see. In most count circles, some people also watch feeders instead of following routes.

"The results are by no means as accurate as a human census. Not all the area even in the count circles is covered, and not every bird along the routes is seen or identified. Big flocks can't be counted precisely. Also, telling whether a bird has been counted twice can be difficult. The rules address this problem by prohibiting counting birds when retracing one's route, except for species that the party hasn't seen before. Also, when a large roost of some species occurs in a count circle, an expert estimates the number for that species during the morning or evening and usually no individuals are counted at other times. Observers can attempt to keep track of flocks of mobile birds such as crows, and can use their judgement, even sometimes recognizing an individual bird or at least that two birds of the same species are different individuals.

"The results, providing data on winter ranges of birds, are complementary to those of the Breeding Bird Surveys.

"Participation is open to all. Observers pay a \$5 fee. The fee supports compilation and publication of the data. U.S. participants who pay or who are 18 or under receive a copy of the issue of *American Birds* that summarizes the results and includes articles on trends and regions."

Obviously, the article needs editing, especially the paragraph about how to count large flocks. And it would be nice if it mentioned the important data base that's fed and historical records maintained. But I thought it interesting to see what Wikipedia is saying about us. --Ed.

KERNCREST AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIPS AND CHAT SUBSCRIPTIONS RENEWALS ARE DUE

This is a reminder that local Kerncrest Audubon Society memberships and subscriptions to The Chat are on a calendar year basis.

Your membership is due if the mailing label on your Chat has "1/1/09(K)" highlighted. To renew please send your check for \$15.00 (or \$7.00 for Chat subscription only) to: Membership, Kerncrest Audubon Society, PO Box 984, Ridgecrest, CA 93556-0984.

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Includes 1 year of Audubon magazine, Local chapter membership

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P.O. Box 984

Ridgecrest CA 93556

Kerncrest Audubon Society

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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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Permit No. 75
Ridgecrest, CA

December, 2008

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January, 2009