



# The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

December/January 2009/10

## DECEMBER/JANUARY CALENDAR

Tue	Dec 15	7pm	Board Meeting, Brubakers'
Sun	Dec 20	7am	China Lake Christmas Bird Count (CBC)
Sat	Jan 2	tbd	South Fork Valley CBC
Sun	Jan 3	tbd	Kern River Valley CBC
Tue	Jan 19	6pm	Board Meeting, Thompsons'
Thu	Jan 21	7pm	General Meeting, Maturango Museum

## DECEMBER FIELD TRIPS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

The China Lake Christmas Bird Count will be held on Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup>. 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: [www.naturali.org](http://www.naturali.org).

On Saturday, January 2nd is the South Fork Valley, Kern County count: Compiler Denise LaBerteaux, Phone: (760) 378-4278, and on Sunday, January 3rd it will be the count of the Kern River Valley, Kern County: Compiler: Alison Sheehy, Phone: (760) 378-2029.

For information on scheduling and contacts for all of California's Christmas Bird Counts, visit [natureali.org](http://natureali.org).

**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.**

There is a fee of \$5 or official participation in these events. The fee covers the cost of publication and distribution of the report that synthesizes the events throughout the Americas.

If you are a beginning or intermediate birder who just wants to come along for the experience of seeing lots of birds with more experienced birders, call any Kerncrest board member (listed on page 4). We would be happy to line you up with someone for the day or any part of it!

## JANUARY GENERAL MEETING PROGRAM

### BOB STEELE, PHOTOGRAPHER

You will notice that the Valley Sightings for November cut off really early. That's because Bob and Susan Steele departed for a month-long trip to Antarctica and other points in South America and the southern oceans.

So January's program will be a *blockbuster* of new photos and entertaining stories!

Be sure to be there on Thursday, January 21, 7pm at the Maturango Museum.

By the way, if you have purchased the American Museum of Natural History **BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA** and have it with you, Bob will likely be happy to autograph it for you. There are 465 of his photographs in it.

(It is an excellent resource, with multiple photos of every species found in North America, and tons of textual information.)

## JANUARY FIELD TRIP MORRO BAY WINTER BIRD FEST

It's still not too late to register, and to sign up for some field trips and workshops. Registration deadline is December 31, but registration without T-shirt is even available at the door, and the vendors are great and the birding supreme even if most of the field trips are full (and there are always some available at the last minute.)

The dates are 15-19 January. To find out what's on the schedule, visit [www.morrobaybirdfestival.org](http://www.morrobaybirdfestival.org), or call (805) 772-4677. If you plan to go, call Brenda or Dan at 1-760-375-8634 to arrange things like meeting places and times.

## EMAIL REMINDERS

**Note** that unless something astounding happens, ***there will be no January issue of The Chat.*** If you wish to be reminded of things scheduled for January before they occur, ***do*** sign up for Noel Gravelle's automatic email reminders of things Kerncrest. Email him at [webmaster@kerncrestaudubon.org](mailto:webmaster@kerncrestaudubon.org) and ask that your email address be added to his reminder list.

***Happy Holidays!***



## Valley Sightings November 2009

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).

Note: this month's column only covers the first part of the month, but don't worry, next month's column will include the rest.

The big news this month is a new bird species for the valley. Number 362 was the **White-winged Scoter** at the ponds Nov 6 (SS).

A **Cackling Goose** was at the ponds Oct 29-30 (SS).

The **Surf Scoter** at the ponds Oct 29 was the first seen in two years (SS).

A **Merlin** was at the ponds Oct 30 (SS).

Here's an example of how one good bird leads to the finding of others. A **Red Phalarope** (last seen in the valley in 2006) was found at the ponds Nov 6 at daybreak (SS). The bird flew to several different spots on the pond and then flew into the adjoining pond. While I was looking for the phalarope in the new location, a **White-winged Scoter** (# 291 for the ponds) floated into view (SS). When I was trying to refind the scoter, a **Greater Scaup** was found (SS). A bit later, a second **Greater Scaup** was found (BB). Then, a **Peregrine Falcon** turned up (AS), and finally a **Surf Scoter** was found (SS).

Five **Common Moorhen** were at the ponds Oct 28 (BB). This species bred at the ponds this year, but wasn't seen from Aug 31-Oct 28. So, did it just hide, or did it leave for two months?

Six **Acorn Woodpeckers** and two **Hairy Woodpeckers** were in Grapevine Canyon Oct 30 (SS, SE). This current invasion of Acorn Woodpeckers was first noticed last Oct, and it will be interesting to see if they can become an established breeder.

Two **Williamson's Sapsuckers** were in Sand Canyon Nov 1 (SE).

An unkindness of **Common Ravens** had a bobcat corned on a telephone pole SW of Inyokern Oct 15 (LK). And where did unkindness come from you may ask, well check it out at: <http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/about/faqs/animals/names.htm>

The twenty-three **Marsh Wrens** at the ponds Nov 1 was more than expected (BB).

The **Golden-crowned Kinglet** SW of Inyokern Oct 20-22 was the first in the valley since 2007 (LK).

Three **Cedar Waxwings** were SW of Inyokern Oct 20 (LK).

A **Phainopepla** was SW of Inyokern Oct 18 (LK).

I spoke too soon about the last sightings for several species in last month's column. So, here's an update. The **Nashville Warbler** seen in SE Ridgecrest Oct 27 was the second latest date for the valley (LS). The last **Yellow and Wilson's Warblers** were from SW of Inyokern Oct 16 (LK). The last **Black-headed Gray Warbler** of the fall was seen in Grapevine Canyon Oct 30 (SS, SE). This ties our late sighting date.

A "Myrtle's" **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was at the ponds Nov 2 (SS).

The female **Western Tanager** with the missing tail in SW Inyokern, successfully re-grew the tail and flew off on Oct 20 (LK).

The "gray-headed" form of **Dark-eyed Junco** in Grapevine Canyon Oct 30 was last seen in the valley Oct 21, 2007 (SS, SE). "Slate-colored" **Dark-eyed Juncos** were at the college Nov 2 (SS).

It was been five years since a **Lapland Longspur** was seen in the valley. The drought was broken at the ponds Oct 30 (SS). Of our fifteen records of this species all but four have occurred between Oct 21 and Nov 3.

A **Pine Siskin** was SW of Inyokern Oct 22 (LK).

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes, Shelley Ellis, Louise Knecht, Alison Sheehey, Lee Sutton*

### REMINDER

#### KERNCREST MEMBERSHIP DUES

It is that time of year again to pay your membership dues. Your membership expires in January if your mailing label has this entry at the end of the last line: 1/1/10 (K). If it does, please send your check for \$15 for full membership or \$7 for just the Chat newsletter subscription to:

Kerncrest Audubon  
P.O.Box 984  
Ridgecrest, CA 93556-0984

## CONSERVATION CORNER

by Terri Middlemiss)

I recently read a very interesting book, "Birding Babylon" by Jonathan Trouern-Trend. He gathered his blogs from his deployment in Iraq in 2004 about his sightings of 122 birds to make the book.

Now, in the Dec./Jan. 2010 issue of "National Wildlife" I find that he is back in Iraq as an American Red Cross civilian with the Connecticut National Guard, working with "an informal network of soldiers who are helping scientists safeguard the country's wildlife." These "birding warriors" are helping the local group Nature Iraq, with their bird sightings from parts of Iraq that civilians can't access.

Tracking the distribution of various species has helped Nature Iraq persuade the government to sign an international treaty to protect the Huwaizeh Marshes which are in the Iraq/Iran border. These marshes at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers once covered 9,000 square mile – 4 times the Everglades National Park. They are amongst Europe and Asia's most important migratory bird wintering areas.

90 % were reduced to a parched expanse under Saddam Hussein's draining, poisoning and burning campaign. This changed migration routes for millions of birds and pushed some species to extinction. In 2008, after 5 years of breaking down dikes, 70% of the marshes are re-flooded. Droughts, however, are currently threatening this re-watering.

In order to maintain these marshes, the cooperation of Turkey concerning the use of the Tigris and Euphrates is necessary. Nature lovers, through international groups, will be the key to these negotiations.

Nature Iraq has published "Field Guide to the Birds of Iraq" in conjunction with BirdLife International. They also published a children's book that will be used in classrooms. In 2010, Nature Iraq hopes to take a small group of ecotourists through the marshes. These are all projects with very hopeful beginnings for the birds who use Iraq and for the Iraqi people.

## TRIP REPORT

### KERN RIVER VALLEY AND LAKE ISABELLA

The birding was exceptional. We saw and/or heard 55 species!

The weather looked grim from this side of the mountains, but turned into a pretty nice, sunny day

in the valley. Four birders from Ridgecrest were joined by three birders from the Kern River Valley and our excellent guide, Alison Sheehy of the Audubon Kern River Preserve.

Aside from the 192 California gulls on the shore of Lake Isabella enjoying our treats (read "chum") and the lovely mountain bluebirds in a field near the Preserve, the group Bird of the Day was the red-naped sapsucker found earlier at Tillie Creek campground and reported to us by John Schmidt. It was still there, and we all got good looks at that beautiful bird. (Re the gulls, there were also two ring-billed gulls and a Bonaparte's gull.)

Six species of raptors were seen, including osprey, red-shouldered hawk (several heard all day and one finally seen) red-tailed hawks (many) American kestrel, peregrine falcon, and northern harrier.

Other treats for us flatlanders were the purple finches at Tillie Creek, a common goldeneye on the lake, an early greater-white-fronted goose, the always-beautiful acorn woodpeckers, and oak titmouse. Oh yes, and at the Preserve, one of the usually-white-crowned sparrows under the feeder was a tan form of the white-throated sparrow!

## FROM BIRDWATCHERS' DIGEST: GYRFALCON NEST: MORE THAN 2,500 YEARS OLD

Gyrfalcons and many other raptors are known to return to the same nest sites over long periods and many generations, but until recently nobody knew how long this activity could persist. As part of a study of 13 gyrfalcon nests in Greenland, scientists have discovered a gyrfalcon nesting site that is at least 2,500 years old.

Researchers used radiocarbon dating of guano and nest debris to determine that one nest in Kangerlussuaq (in central-west Greenland) is surely more than 2,500 years old. Three other nests in the area are more than 1,000 years old.

There are lots of great articles in this magazine. You may subscribe to it at [www.birdwatchersdigest.com](http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com) or by calling 800-879-2473. If you mention you saw the reference in *The Chat*, Kerncrest Audubon Society gets a small stinend

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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(Includes subscription to *The Chat*)

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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

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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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