



# The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

February-earlyMarch

## February-earlyMarch Calendar

Thu	Feb 8	7pm	Board Meeting, Archibalds
Tue	Feb 20	tbd	Field Trip: Pixley
Tue	Mar 6	8:30am	Little Lake Work Party
Thu	Mar 8	7pm	Board Meeting, Burnetts'
Thu	Mar 15	7pm	General Meeting

## **FIELD TRIP**

### **San Joaquin Valley NWRs**

On Tuesday, February 20<sup>th</sup>, R/Ving members of Kerncrest Audubon will be making their annual trek to camp at Colonel Allensworth State Park east of Pixley on February 20<sup>th</sup>. It's not too far for a day trip, so non-campers are also welcome. We generally drive over in the morning, and bird the area around the campground in the afternoon. The next morning (Friday) we drive to Kern National Wildlife Refuge for a morning's birding, then picnic on the grounds. In the evening, we go to the Pixley refuge to watch the always-spectacular fly-in of thousands of Sandhill Cranes.

To join us for the whole event, or to come just for any part, call Lee Sutton at 375-1981 to arrange meeting time and place.

## **10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL**

### **GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT**

The National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology invite people of all ages and all levels of experience across the United States and Canada to count birds during the 16-19 February - help us set a new record for participation! You can take part wherever you are simply by counting the highest number of each species they see during an outing or a sitting. Simply enter your tally on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site where the fun really begins!

For more information, and to view previous results, go to <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>.

To watch a video of Rob Fergus from Audubon's Science team answering frequently asked questions, go to [audubon.org/gbbc/answers.shtml](http://audubon.org/gbbc/answers.shtml)

New to birding or need to brush up on your skills? Check out Birding Basics ([http://www.audubon.org/bird/at\\_home/bird\\_watching/in dex.shtml](http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/bird_watching/in dex.shtml)) for tips and resources to help prepare you for this event.

## **LITTLE LAKE WORK PARTY**

The much-delayed "party" to complete the construction of a wildlife overlook at Little Lake as been rescheduled once again (this time due to sub-workable temperatures). Just a little, easy work remains. Come join a joint work party, with Kerncrest Audubon members and guests, and Ridgecrest Bureau of Land Management personnel, to complete the work, watch the birds, and celebrate!

Depending upon weather and the availability of portable barbecue equipment, we may picnic on lunches we bring, or be treated to a barbecue. Call Shelley Ellis at 446-5012 or Lee Sutton at 375-1981 to find out, and to sign up.

Bring sunscreen, hat, gloves, and layered clothing. Tools will be provided.

Meet at the Inyokern Post Office at 8:30am.

(Non-working supervisors are also welcome.)

## **NOMINATION COMMITTEE**

Your Board of Directors has appointed a nomination committee for the semiannual election of officers to be held at our May general meeting. Kerncrest Audubon members are encouraged to assist them by offering suggestions or even volunteering to run for one of our officer positions of President, Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer. If you can help, please contact any member of the nominating committee prior to our March general meeting at which time, the committee's nominations will be announced. Of course, additional nominations will be accepted from members at the May meeting.

Nominating Committee members are:

Noel Gravelle 375-2325

Dan Burnett 375-8634

Charlotte Goodson 375-6449

## **MARCH GENERAL MEETING**

Our program for the March general meeting will be either the beautiful photography of local professional photographer and tour leader Ralph Paonessa, or a program on the natural wonders of Inyo County with Paul McFarland of the Friends of Inyo County. Save the date! Thursday, March 15, 7;m, Maturango Museum. There will be more information in a mid-March issue of The Chat.



## Valley Sightings –January 2007

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).

Early migrating **Turkey Vultures** were SW of Inyokern Dec 28 and at the cemetery Jan 28 (BB).

Creating a sudden rush of panic amongst the **Snow** and **Ross's Geese** at the ponds Jan 24 was a **Golden Eagle** that dove in and drove off **Common Ravens** from a dead **Mallard** (SS).

The four **Greater White-fronted Geese** were grazing with a few Snow Geese in the 100 block of Lilac Street the first week of Jan (LS). What are certainly the same birds were seen at the ponds Jan 24 (SS) and at the cemetery Jan 27 (BB).

A **Tundra Swan** was at the ponds Dec 27 (SS).

SW of Inyokern has been a predator intense area with three **Northern Harriers**, a **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, three **Cooper's Hawks**, three **Red-tailed Hawks**, a **Golden Eagle**, two **American Kestrels**, two **Prairie Falcons**, twenty **Long-eared Owls**, and a **Loggerhead Shrike** (LK).

The cold spell we had mid-month was more than just unpleasant for some of our birds with a **California Quail** and **Costa's Hummingbird** being reported as casualties (LK, LS).

The four **American Avocets** at the ponds Jan 19 were certainly spring migrants (SS).

The juvenile **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at the cemetery Jan 7 was the 7<sup>th</sup> valley record (BB).

A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was at the cemetery Dec 26 and Jan 7 (BB).

A **Ladder-backed Woodpecker** was creating a hole in the house eaves S of Inyokern Jan 15 (DL).

The **Ladder-backed Woodpecker** that was first seen SW of Inyokern Oct 1 remained through Jan 10 (LK).

A **Downy Woodpecker** was S of Inyokern Dec 29 (SS).

The **Stellar's Jay** S of Inyokern Dec 26-Jan1 was the 173<sup>rd</sup> species for that location (SS).

**Oak Titmouse** continue through Jan 28 at the cemetery (BB) and S of Inyokern (SS).

**Mountain Bluebirds** continue to be seen in large numbers with 72 noted at the golf course Jan 23 (SS), seven at the cemetery Jan 28 (BB), and one at La Mirage Jan 28 (CMcK).

The **Sage Thrashers** at the Inyokern ponds Dec 24 and in Cow Heaven Canyon Jan 3 were probably spring migrants (SS).

A 'Sooty' **Fox Sparrow** was SW of Inyokern Dec 16 and 31 (LK).

A 'Slate-colored' **Dark-eyed Junco** was SW of Inyokern Dec 16 (LK).

*Thanks to the following observers: Bob Barnes, Louise Knecht, Debra Lindstrom, Cindy McKay, Lee Sutton*

## INDIAN WELLS VALLEY 2006 BIG YEAR

by Susan Steele

Greetings all, the Indian Wells Valley 2006 Big Year is at an end. We came up with 265 species. Not too bad. I managed to see 260 of those species.

All those who ventured a guess for the final species count were a bit high. I chose 2004's 276 species as a baseline and figured it was an average year. Apparently it was a really good year.

Biggest misses: Red-shouldered Hawk, Brant, Stilt Sandpiper, Least Tern, Acorn Woodpecker, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Clark's Nutcracker, most of the eastern warblers, longspurs, Bobolink, Purple finch. The biggest disappoint from that list is the warblers. We spent a many hours looking with very few rewards.

### Best birds:

Yellow-footed Gull (1st Kern Co record)  
White-rumped Sandpiper (2nd Kern Co record -- ok and a heck of a good bird for CA)  
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (1st fully documented IWV record)  
Broad-tailed Hummingbird (1st fully documented IWV record and it stayed a month!)  
Sandhill Crane (3rd IWV record)  
Northern Pygmy-Owl (3rd IWV record)  
American Golden-Plover (5th IWV record)  
Ruff (5th IWV record)  
Hooded Warbler (5th IWV record)  
Cassin's Kingbird (5th IWV record)  
Blackpoll Warbler (5th IWV record)  
Plumbeous Vireo (6th IWV record)  
American Crow (6th valley record)  
Red Knot (6th Valley record)  
Northern Saw-whet Owl (7th IWV record)  
White-headed Woodpecker (7th IWV record)  
Williamson's Sapsucker (8th IWV record)  
Surf Scoter (8th IWV record)  
Northern Parula (8th IWV record)  
Purple Martin (10th IWV record and spring birds, very unusual)

Enclosed is the complete list. Of these I manage to miss American Crow, Purple Martin, Yellow-footed Gull, Hooded Warbler, and Plumbeous Vireo.

## CONSERVATION CORNER

by Terri Middlemiss

Finally, there is mainstream discussion of the need for different energy sources than petroleum (and the sideline need for energy conservation). This drives several different responses. One is to cling to fossil fuels and find new sources. Another is to require fewer emissions from our many vehicles. Another is to put up wind turbines. Solar is mentioned but not with much enthusiasm. And so it goes.

To an environmentalist/conservationist these all have heavy environmental costs, and not everyone is aware of the costs. For instance, I was at a Kern County Planning Commission hearing where Kerncrest was trying to put the brakes on a new wind farm being proposed where we felt there needed to be more studies on bird migration through the area. Even after all of our good comments, a representative from the NRDC stood at the speaker and gave their support to the project. I was stunned! They obviously had not been well educated about bird migration needs in deserts.

I recently have been formulating a letter to be sent to my elected officials from the county to the federal level calling for more attention to energy **conservation**. Lo, and behold, here in 2 separate magazines that I receive, was data I could use to give support to starting major conservation measures.

As a long-time member of the International Dark-Sky Association, I have been following their efforts as they pursued their goal of keeping the night skies free of light pollution. They have been quite successful at all levels, from cities to counties, to states, to countries around the world, as they help people like you and me to keep a neighbor's yard light from shining in our windows, all the way to helping governments enact light pollution controls.

Their newsletter #67 2006, has an article titled, "The Co\$t\$ of Light Pollution". Objections to night light pollution are not esoteric, but rather practical ones of seeing wasted energy zoom skyward and now finding out the negative effects on people's health and on nocturnal life forms. We know that birds and moths and baby sea turtles are badly affected, and now we also find so are plants, mammals, fish, other reptiles, and amphibians. (the article has a bibliography)

Why do we need billboards with all-night lighting, with their too many bright lights pointing upward? Why are stadium lights left on over empty sports fields? Why are unshielded "security" lights put up on rural lots and on

business buildings? Why are unshielded porch lights left on even during the day? Why are office buildings under construction lit up and then when they are finished, are they lit up floor after floor throughout the night?

Using Dept. of Energy statistics for the US only, finds us producing about 4.05 billion megawatt-hours (4.05 trillion kilowatt-hours, kWh) of electricity in 2005. The article uses the recent cost of electricity of 9.5 cents per kWh. So the total cost of all produced electricity in the US could be estimated at \$385 billion dollars. Specialists approximate that 9% of all electricity, or \$34.7 billion, is used for lighting.

The IDA estimates conservatively that as much as 30% of all lighting is wasted – commercial, industrial, transportation and residential. This waste is from lights on when they should be off, lighting directed into the sky, use of incandescent lighting when fluorescent could be used, and on.

So approximately 110 billion kWh worth \$10.4 billion dollars is wasted from ill-conceived, ineffective and inefficient lighting! This is just from the US. What can it be worldwide? More than 70% of that waste of energy and money contributes to global warming in power generating facilities that utilize coal (49.7%), natural gas (18.7%) and petroleum (3.0%)

We all need to do what we can to reduce this horrible waste, from individual efforts at home, to educating our representatives, to being aware of the death toll our beloved birds and other lives are taking. Next month, I will add to this.

For more information and ideas on what you can do to help, visit the Dark Sky web site at [www.darksky.org](http://www.darksky.org).