



The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

February/March 2011

DECEMBER/JANUARY CALENDAR

Wed	Feb 16	6:00 pm	Board Meeting, Suttons'
Wed	Mar 16	6:00 pm	Board Meeting, Burnetts'
Thu	Mar 17	7:00 pm	General Meeting: Mike Prather
Sat	Mar 26	8:00 am	Field Trip, Little Lake WWA

General Meeting Owens Lake

A Globally Significant Shorebird IBA in the Making

An enormous wildlife resource has returned to Owens Lake, once a migration stopover for tens of thousands of shorebirds and waterfowl that was lost nearly 100 years ago. The lake was dried as a result of water gathering by the City of Los Angeles, but now is receiving careful application of water by LADWP to control the regional dust storms born with the lake's death. Roughly 40 square miles of the Owens Lake playa are covered with shallow ponds or sheet flooding resulting in thousands of acres of rich feeding habitat for sandpipers, snowy plovers, ducks and geese.

In 2001 Bird Life International designated Owens Lake a nationally significant Important Bird Area. Creation of a collaborative lake-wide conservation action plan was begun by Eastern Sierra Audubon and Audubon-CA in partnership with Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Department for Fish and Game and the State Lands Commission. This process has grown into a larger effort to design an Owens Lake 'Master Plan' that would seek to save water for the City of Los Angeles in return for large tracts of designated habitat for shorebirds and waterfowl.

Today birders and wildlife watchers are visiting the lake on guided field trips to see this amazing migratory spectacle. Snowy plovers (the largest inland nesting site in California), large flocks of least and western sandpipers, thousands of American avocets, peregrine falcon, white-faced ibis and more are all observed on tours of the lake. Now the challenge is to determine how much of the rare resource can be protected in perpetuity. Can a balance be found between this need for water

by Los Angeles and need to protect wildlife for the citizens of California?

MIKE PRATHER has been residing in Inyo County since 1972 when he and wife Nancy moved to Death Valley to teach in a one room school house. Mike has actively been working on land and water issues in the Owens Valley since 1980 with the Owens Valley Committee (past president), Eastern Sierra Audubon (past president) and Sierra Club (past chapter chair). The re-watering of 62 miles of the Lower Owens River and the massive wildlife return to Owens Lake as a result of the Los Angeles Owens Lake Dust Control Project have been the center of Mike's conservation focus since the early 1980's. The enhancement and protection of the Owens River and Owens Lake Important Bird Areas attracts most of his current efforts and he invites everyone to join in the fun.

Maturango Museum, 7 PM on Thursday, March 17th.

Field Trip Little Lake Overlook

A few years ago, several Kerncrest volunteers combined with work parties from the local BLM office and a corps of student workers to construct a watchable wildlife area on the lava shelf above Little Lake. On Saturday, February 26, we will go check on the state of that lovely viewing area, led by Shelley Ellis and Carrie Woods, two biologists at the Ridgecrest office of the Bureau.

In the past, Prairie Falcons have nested near the viewing platform. Migration of swallows and swifts is also in full swing by then, and because the area is along a line of wind lift, migrating warblers also often zip by.

We have asked for and may have permission also to bird the shores of Little Lake. If not, we may drive on up to Owens Lake to see what we can see.

Meet at 8:00 am at the Union 76 station in Inyokern to form car pools. Bring a picnic or buy something at the mini-market there, and bring the usual sunscreen, water, and layered clothing.

Please call Brenda Burnett at 760-382-4935 if you plan to go. We'll try to have an alternate date in case of really bad weather.



Valley Sightings Dec/Jan 2010/11

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

December 2010

The **Common Loon** at the ponds Dec 11 was only our second for December (BB).

Tundra Swans were seen at the ponds Dec 1 and Dec 27-30 (BB, SLS).

The immature **Greater White-fronted Goose** that appeared on 3 Oct (BB) appears to be wintering in the valley and put in an appearance for the CBC (SLS).

The 2nd valley record of **White-winged Scoter** was a stunning male at the ponds Dec 11-12 (DVB).

Cinnamon Teal lingered at the ponds for the CBC and beyond, and three **Blue-winged Teal** appeared on Dec 17 and stayed for the CBC (SLS).

Common Mergansers were at the ponds Dec 2 and 6 (SLS).

A **Common Goldeneye** was at the ponds Dec 1 - 27 (SLS).

A **Bald Eagle** was at the ponds Dec 12 (JLD) and another was seen over Lark Seep and the ponds Dec 30 (SLS).

The Inyokern Jr Audubon trip to the ponds Dec 14 was treated to a courting pair of **Golden Eagles** (BBu).

The immature **Red-shouldered Hawk** remained through at least Dec 13 (SLS).

A **Ferruginous Hawk** was at the evaporation fields Dec 23-30 (SLS) and another one was at the ponds Dec 25 (AS).

The **Merlin** continues to be seen at the golf course through Dec 25 (SLS).

American Avocets remained at the ponds through Dec 16, and were seen again the 24th-25th and 30th, **Long-billed Dowitcher** through Dec 30, and **Dunlin** through Dec 9 (SLS, BB). A **Western Sandpiper** put in a one day appearance on Dec 8 (BB) and a **Greater Yellowlegs** was seen Dec 6, 19, and 23-30 (SLS).

A **Bonaparte's Gull** was at the ponds Dec 7 (BB), and two were found on the CBC and continued through Dec 21, with a third appearing on Dec 23 (SLS).

Four Owl species were found on this year's CBC: **Barn** and **Long-eared Owl** at the cemetery and college (BB), **Great Horned** (BBu) and **Burrowing Owls** in Ridgecrest (L&SSu).

The **Red-naped Sapsucker** continued at the college through Dec 4 (BB) and another one was at the cemetery Dec 25 (SLS).

A **Red-breasted Sapsucker** was at the cemetery Dec 23-27 (SLS).

Red-breasted Nuthatch continue to be seen in the valley in good numbers. They've been noted in SE Ridgecrest (LS), at the college and cemetery (BB), N of Inyokern (TM), and S of Inyokern (SLS).

A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was SW of Inyokern Dec 8 (PW).

Mountain Bluebirds were seen at the golf course starting Dec 3 (SLS) with thirty –eight on the CBC (PW), and were in Indian Wells Canyon Dec 4 (SLS, SE).

The **Townsend's Solitaire** discovered on the base Dec 1 (SE, SLS) remained through at least the 25th (SLS).

A pair of **Phainopepla** was at the college Dec 3 (SLS).

The **White-throated Sparrow** S of Inyokern Dec 3 – 29 was the first one seen since Nov 2, 2008 (SLS).

The 6th valley record of **Swamp Sparrow** was found at the ponds on the CBC (SLS). The last record was 4 Mar 2008. The bird was seen again Dec 25 (AS).

Slate-colored **Dark-eyed Juncos** were well represented with three in Ridgecrest (BBu), two S of Inyokern (SLS), and two at the cemetery (AS).

A female **Common Yellowthroat** was seen at the golf course Dec 9 (BB).

Red Crossbills were at the college Dec 3 - 4 (SLS).

The Evening Grosbeak SW of Inyokern Dec 30 was the first one seen in the valley since 13 Oct 2007 (LK).

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes, Dave Blue, Brenda Burnett, Jon Dunn, Shelley Ellis, Louise Knecht, Joyce Seibold, Alison Sheehy, Lee and Shirley Sutton, Peter Woodman*

January 2011

The adult **Tundra Swan** continued at the ponds through at least Jan 31 (SLS).

The **Greater White-fronted Goose** continued at the ponds through at least Jan 11 (SLS).

The **Merlin** at the golf course continued through at least Jan 10 (SLS).

Long-billed Dowitcher were seen at the ponds throughout the month (BB, SLS).

Red-breasted Sapsuckers were at the college and cemetery Jan 2 (AS).

A single **White-throated Swift** was in Indian Wells Canyon Jan 9 (SE).

The **Plumbeous Vireo** in Ridgecrest Jan 25 has certainly been wintering in the area as migrants are unexpected until the April/May time frame (JAS).

Red-breasted Nuthatch continue at the cemetery (SLS).

Mountain Bluebirds continued at the golf course through at least Jan 8 (BB).

The **Townsend's Solitaire** continued on the base through at least Jan 28 (SLS).

Our first **Sage Thrasher** report of the spring was from SW of Inyokern Jan 29 (LK).

The **Swamp Sparrow** at the ponds was last reported Jan 2 (SLS).

The **White-throated Sparrow** was last seen S of Inyokern Jan 2 (SLS).

A **Golden-crowned Sparrow** was N of Inyokern Jan 3 (AJ).

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes, Shelley Ellis, Annie Jorgensen, Louise Knecht, Joyce Seibold, Alison Sheehey,*

Audubon Assembly

It's not too late to sign up for the San Diego Bird Festival and/or the Audubon Assembly in San Diego beginning March 3rd. Go to ca.audubon.org/assembly.php, check out the events, and REGISTER!

Nominating Committee Report

Nominations for Kerncrest Audubon Society officers for the 2011-2012 are:

President: Brenda Burnett
Vice President: Lee Sutton (incumbent)
Treasurer: Dan Burnett
Secretary: Nancy Robinson (incumbent)

Note the work is concentrated in one family.

Nominations for alternative candidates are MORE than welcome from the floor.

Voting will be at the Annual meeting in May, 2011.

Time to Renew Your Membership

A few folks still haven't renewed local memberships. If you are a local chapter member or a subscriber to the Chat and you haven't already, it is time to renew. You can tell if you need to renew by looking at the date on your mailing label. If the date is "1/1/11 (K)" you need to renew. To renew just send a check for \$15 for membership (including the Chat) or \$7.00 for just the Chat to, "Membership, Kerncrest Audubon Society, PO Box 984, Ridgecrest, CA 93556-0984.

Birdathon Returns to Last Weekend in April

After wandering all over the calendar to avoid conflict with the Kern River Preserve Bioregions / Spring Festival (which keeps changing not only its date but its name!) the Kerncrest Audubon Society annual KRP and Education fundraiser is returning to its original place in time.

Save the date, Saturday, April 30th, 2011, and start thinking about putting together a team. A more complete article and a pledge form will be published in April.

Conservation Corner

by Terri Middlemiss

"Winter Water for Birds" (BirdWatcher's digest Nov/Dec '06)

Yes, we still have winter. As I type this, winter storm warnings of local snow are forecast!

Do you provide water during the winter? Does it freeze over? Do the birds use it?

Birds need accessible water all winter, (as other seasons), to drink and to bathe in.

I have found that most of the time, having running water in my bird waterers prevents freezing, but since I live down slope of a canyon, we get colder air than our neighbors and freezes happen often.

I use a variety of water containers, all shallow. They have some sort of perching rocks, or an edge, for birds to use. 12-18" plant saucers are excellent. I like clay best. I have not had a problem with it cracking until it is several years old. Hard black plastic won't crack for a long time, and I like using it. The brick-colored plastic plant saucers are not as durable and I don't like how they get powdery.

For frozen water problems, the article suggests bringing warm water out at the same time each day – the birds will take to the routine and arrive when you do. There are submersible birdbath heaters, thermostatically controlled that can help you out. The article also suggests making or buying an insulated holder to help retain warmth.

Keep water away from feeders to eliminate seed debris. Don't have anything deeper than bird belly height. Except – I have a shallow plastic molded waterer that has a depth in it that the Cooper's hawk uses. You can use rocks to make different heights if you need to. Have cover nearby, but not so close that cats can use it for ambushes. On windy days, water evaporates fast, so watch for when to refill. Nearby perches, in plants, or something you add, helps the birds dry out.

I really enjoy my bird waterers and will be adding more. In the winter, when we can't conceive of an outdoor "bath", birds are delighted to take one. Hardy feather-covered beings!

Garage Sale!

We plan to have one this Spring, but have not established a date yet. Likely April or early May. Start gathering items to contribute! Furniture, bric-a-brac, gadgets and tools, new articles of clothing are all welcome.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

National Audubon Society

Includes 1 year of Audubon magazine, Local chapter membership

Name _____

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____ New Member/Gift - \$20 (Renewal will be \$30)

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Please enclose a check payable to National Audubon Society

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Kerncrest Audubon Society

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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

Sherry Brubaker	President	375-7245
Lee Sutton	Vice President	375-1981
Nancy Robinson	Secretary	375-2049
Lynne Thompson	Treasurer	375-5677
Brenda Burnett	Publications	375-8634
Robert Parker	Field Trips	446-2001
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Terri Middlemiss	Conservation	377-5192
Dan Burnett	Education & Membership	375-8634
Nancy Robinson	Birdathon	375-2049
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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