



The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

February 2013

February CALENDAR

Wed	Feb 20	6:00 pm	Board Meeting at Burnetts
Sat	Feb 24	??	Field Trip to Kern NWR and Pixley NWR

FEBRUARY FIELD TRIP

SAN JUAQUIN VALLEY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

Kern National Wildlife Refuge has developed a new driving route through an area never before open to the public. We will explore this route (and likely the old one, too) on Saturday, February 24th.

Several members of our board are also members of a Good Sam RV club, some of whom may join us on this trip. Those with RVs plan to drive over on Friday, February 23rd to Colonel Allensworth State Park (also an interesting place to explore) and will camp at the campground there. Tents are welcome, too. There are nice restrooms and showers. You might also wish to drive over on Saturday morning for the driving tour and plan to camp only Saturday night.

After touring the Kern NWR, we will proceed to the Pixley NWR to watch the evening fly-in of thousands of Sandhill Cranes and White-faced Ibis that roost there each night through the winter months.

Those camping at the Allensworth State Park will then go back to the campground for a potluck dinner. If you are tent camping, you need not bring anything but something to drink. There is always a plethora of food.

Brenda Burnett is organizing (more or less) this trip. Please call her at 760-375-8634 if you plan to go, or for more information.

These are mainly ducks and shorebirds to view, so there is no need for us to start the tour terribly early. If you plan to join us on Saturday morning, we will schedule our departure for the NWR for when you can meet us. It's about a three-hour drive from Ridgecrest. There may also be a need for directions to the campground or refuge, or a wish to organize a caravan or car pool.

SAVE THE DATES

(more info in the March Chat)

The speaker for our general meeting in March will be John Stanek, biologist with the Southern Sierra Research Station in Weldon, who will update us on their work researching the Yellow-billed Cuckoo population in the lower Colorado River and in the Kern River valley. Also speaking will be Jenna Stanek, also with the SSRS, who will tell us about her work researching Flammulated Owls in the local mountains. (Kerncrest Audubon Society contributed to the building materials for owl boxes to be placed in the Piutes, and Kerncrest volunteers helped with hanging the boxes.) Thursday, March 21, Maturango Museum.)

March's field trip will be led by Hector Villalobos, to Panamint Warm Springs and other sites in the Panamint Valley. March 23rd.

On Saturday March 16th, the Indian Wells Valley Water District will present a Spring Xeriscape Workshop featuring Norm Schilling, radio co-host of "Desert Bloom" on KNPR in Las Vegas. After the presentation, at the historic USO building on Ridgecrest Boulevard, there will be vendors and information booths.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

On page 3 of this newsletter, there is a list of all the birds seen in the China Lake and the South Fork, Kern River Christmas Bird Counts. Numbers listed are for China Lake before the comma and South Fork, Kern after the comma. I apologize for the difficult format. I did not take the time to put all in Excel this time.

Of interest: both counts reported all-time highs of Western Meadowlark; and three new species, Bald Eagle, Herring Gull and Hooded Oriole were seen on the China Lake count.

HELP WANTED

A colony of Burrowing Owls was recently plowed under south of Inyokern, and a project is planned to construct artificial burrows for the owls on an adjacent piece of property. Call Dan Burnett at 760-375-8634 for more info.



Valley Sightings Dec 2012 - Jan 2013

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

DECEMBER 2012

A **Cackling Goose**, three **Common Goldeneye**, and a **Common Merganser** were at the ponds Dec 19 (SLS).

A **Green Heron** was at the golf course Dec 4 (SLS).

A **Black-crowned Night Heron** was at the golf course Dec 16 (TL, JS, MK).

The **Mountain Plover** at the ponds Dec 16 was a very good find (GW). It is the 8th valley record, our first December record, and a month later than any other previous sighting.

A **Turkey Vulture** was in Ridgecrest Dec 16 (SR, D&BBu).

An adult **Bald Eagle** was found at the ponds Dec 10 (SLS), and later that day an immature bird was noted too (TL).

An immature **Bald Eagle** and **Red-shouldered Hawk** were at the golf course Dec 16 (TL, JS, MK).

A **Merlin** was W of Ridgecrest Dec 16 (SR, D&BBu).

A **Herring Gull** was at the ponds Dec 16 (DVB) for the 4th December record for this species.

Grapevine Canyon list is now at 120 with the exciting additions of **Rock Pigeon** and **Eurasian Collared-Dove** on Dec 21 (BS, SLS). Interesting birds seen that day included a **Stellar's Jay**, **Acorn** and **White-headed Woodpecker**, three **Red-breasted Sapsuckers**, four **Western Bluebirds**, and fifty-five **Pine Siskins**.

SE Ridgecrest has one less **Black Phoebe** after a **Loggerhead Shrike** killed and ate it Dec 21 (L7SSu).

A **White-breasted Nuthatch** was W of Ridgecrest Dec 16 (BS).

Red-breasted Nuthatches continued in the valley in good numbers with 71 noted on the CBC.

The **Brown Creeper** continued at the cemetery (BB, SLS).

Mountain Bluebirds returned to the golf course Dec 4 with eight noted (SLS). On the CBC forty were seen (TL, JS, MK).

A **Cactus Wren** was at the college Dec 16 (GW), which is unusual on the valley floor.

Swamp Sparrows were at the ponds Dec 16 (SLS, GW).

The **Rusty Blackbird** was seen again at the ponds Dec 6 (SLS).

The immature **Hooded Oriole** was in Ridgecrest through Dec 17 (JS).

Red Crossbills were discovered at the cemetery Dec 5 and were seen intermittently through the month (SLS). Other Red Crossbills were at the college Dec 19 (SLS) and in SE Ridgecrest Dec 31 (L&SSu).

Pine Siskins were noted in SW Inyokern Dec 17 (PW), and intermittently S of Inyokern (SLS).

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes, David Blue, Dan and Brenda Burnette, Maryanne Kissler, Louise Knecht, Tim Ludwick, Sean Rowe, Joyce Seibold, Lee and Shirley Sutton, Tim Ludwick, Gary Woods*

JANUARY 2013

The seventeen **Greater White-fronted Geese** flying over Ridgecrest Jan 11 were an exciting find (BB).

Yard species #187 was a small flock of **Ross's Geese** with a **Snow Goose** mixed in on Jan 21 S of Inyokern (SLS, BS).

The **American Bittern** W of Inyokern Jan 7 was an interesting find, both for the date and location (BW).

A **Merlin** was at the ponds Jan 3 (SLS).

FOS for **Double-crested Cormorant** was Jan 28, **White-throated Swift** was Jan 2, and **Tree Swallow** was Jan 23 (SLS), all from the ponds.

A **Willamson's Sapsucker** was seen at the college on the Audubon field trip Jan 19 (D&BBu, L&SSu).

A sapsucker species was noticed at the cemetery Jan 9 and two days later identified as a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** (SLS). Based on photos, this could be the same Yellow-bellied Sapsucker that was noted back in November, but missed in between. The bird was seen occasionally throughout the month.

Hairy and Nuttall's Woodpeckers were in Nine Mile Canyon Jan 8 and a **Hairy Woodpecker** was in Indian Wells Canyon Jan 5 (SE).

Red-breasted Nuthatches continued at multiple locations in the valley (L&SSu, BB, TL, SLS).

The **Brown Creeper** continued at the cemetery (BB, SLS, TL).

A **House Wren** continues to be seen occasionally and heard more often SW of Inyokern (LK).

Mountain Bluebirds returned to the golf course Dec 4 with eight noted (SLS). On the CBC forty were seen (TL, JS, MK).

Swamp Sparrows continued at the ponds through Jan 3 (TL).

Red Crossbills seem to have moved on with the last report a single bird from the cemetery on Jan 12 (TL).

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes, Dan and Brenda Burnett, Shelley Ellis, Louise Knecht, Tim Ludwick, Bob Steele, Lee and Shirley Sutton, Tim Ludwick, Betty Weik*

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2012

Snow Goose (white form) 2,350, 0
Snow Goose (blue form) 12, 0
Ross' Goose 315, 0
Wood Duck 0, 5
Gadwall 16, 7
American Wigeon 22, 13
Mallard 101, 30
Blue-winged Teal 2, 0
Cinnamon Teal 3, 0
Northern Shoveler 2,382, 0
Northern Pintail 16, 0
American Green-winged Teal 350, 0
Canvasback 6, 0
Redhead 1, 0
Ring-necked Duck 2, 0
Lesser Scaup 2, 0
Common Goldeneye cw
Common Merganser cw
Bufflehead 6, 3
Ruddy Duck 127, 0
Chukar 46, 6
Wild turkey 0, 27
California Quail 373, 386
Pied-billed Grebe 3
Eared Grebe 18
Great Blue Heron 2,2
Black-crowned Night-Heron 1
Turkey Vulture 1 (unusual),1
Bald Eagle 1 (new to count), 0
Northern Harrier 6, 7
Sharp-shinned Hawk 4, 4
Cooper's Hawk 11, 13
Accipiter Sp. 0, 1
Red-shouldered Hawk 1, 2
Red-tailed Hawk 19, 37
Ferruginous Hawk 0, 8
Rough-legged Hawk 0, 1 (unusual species)
Golden Eagle (Adult) 3, 7
American Kestrel 11, 8
Merlin 1, 3
Prairie Falcon 5, 5
Virginia Rail 10, 10
Sora 10 (high count), 2
Common Gallinule 3, 0
American Coot 676, 25
Killdeer 22, 0
Mountain Plover 1(new to count), 0
American Avocet 3, 0
Greater Yellowlegs cw
Western Sandpiper 1
Least Sandpiper 41
Dunlin 3
Long-billed Dowitcher 9
Wilson's Snipe 6
Ring-billed Gull cw
California Gull cw
Herring Gull 1 (new to count)
Rock Pigeon 802, 8
Eurasian Collared Dove 533 (high count), 21
Mourning Dove 984, 146
Greater Roadrunner 6, 7
Barn Owl cw (Kern South Fork)
Great Horned Owl 3, 13
Northern Pygmy Owl 0, 1
Burrowing Owl 1, 2
Western Screech Owl 0, 1
Long-eared Owl 4, 0
White-throated Swift 16, 145
Anna's Hummingbird 32 (high count), 6
Costa's Hummingbird 24, 0
Hummingbird species 3, 0
Acorn Woodpecker 0, 23
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 0, 1 (unusual species)
Red-naped Sapsucker 0, 4
Red-breasted Sapsucker 0, 9
Williamson's Sapsucker 0, 1
Ladder-backed Woodpecker 0, 3
Nuttall's Woodpecker 0, 21
Downy Woodpecker 0, 12
Hairy Woodpecker 0, 10
White-headed Woodpecker 0, 6
Northern Flicker 61(high count), 31
Black Phoebe 14, 14
Say's Phoebe 24, 11
Loggerhead Shrike 10
Plumbeous Vireo (unusual) 0, 1
Steller's Jay 0, 1
Western Scrub-Jay 0, 210 (high count)
Common Raven 1768 (high count), 282
Horned Lark 788, 21
Mountain Chickadee 0, 3
Oak Titmouse 0, 73
Verdin 32, 0
Bushtit 0, 228
Red-breasted Nuthatch 71 (high count), 0
White-breasted Nuthatch 1 (unusual), 8
Brown Creeper 1 (unusual), 0
Cactus Wren 1, 15
Rock Wren 7, 6
Canyon Wren 0, 2
Bewick's Wren 6, 63
House Wren 0, 1
Marsh Wren 39, 6
American Dipper 0, 3
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 33, 51
Western Bluebird 0, 236
Mountain Bluebird 40, 7
Hermit Thrush 6, 4
American Robin 20, 14
Wrentit 0, 7
Northern Mockingbird 62, 8
Sage Thrasher 0, 2
California Thrasher 0, 8
Le Conte's Thrasher 2, 0
European Starling 635, 356
American Pipit 17, 13
Cedar Waxwing 14, 6
Phainopepla 0, 6
Loggerhead Shrike 0, 9
Orange-crowned Warbler 0, 3
Yellow-rumped Warbler 52, 26
Spotted Towhee 4, 27
California Towhee 0, 118
Chipping Sparrow 0, 1
Rufous-crowned Sparrow 0, 14
Vesper Sparrow 0, 1
Lark Sparrow 0, 520
Black-throated Sparrow 1, 21
Sage Sparrow 164, 1
Savannah Sparrow 85, 56
Fox Sparrow 0, 1
Song Sparrow 25, 36 (low count)
Lincoln's Sparrow 17, 4
Swamp Sparrow 2 (second time on count)
Golden-crowned Sparrow 0, 180
White-crowned Sparrow 549, 1766
Dark-eyed Junco(Oregon)136, 339
Dark-eyed Junco (Slate-colored) 7,0
Western Meadowlark 82 (high count), 269 (high count)
Red-winged Blackbird 115, 930
Tricolored Blackbird 0, 27
Brewer's Blackbird 111, 917
Great-tailed Grackle 48, 0
Brown-headed Cowbird 0, cw
Blackbird Sp, 0, 300
Hooded Oriole cw (new for count),0
House Finch 342, 690
Red Crossbill 20, 0
Pine Siskin cw, 137
Lesser Goldfinch 70, 17
American Goldfinch 16, 27
House Sparrow 307, 141
China Lake Total Species 96
Count Week (cw) Additions 8
New Species 3
Total Birds 15,216
Kern River Total Species 103
Count Week Additions 1
New Species 0
Total Birds 9328

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