



The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

February 2014

February CALENDAR

Wed Feb 19 6:00 pm Board Meeting at Burnetts'
(refreshments by Parker)
Sat Feb 22 6:45 am Field Trip to Lake Isabella

FEBRUARY FIELD TRIP LAKE ISABELLA AND ENVIRONS WITH JOHN SCHMITT

Renowned birder, artist, feather expert, and author John Schmitt has agreed to lead us on a field trip on Saturday, February 22. We will meet at the Inyokern Union 76 station at 6:45 am to form car pools and will depart promptly at 7:00.

John will have scouted out good birding sites before the date and will lead us to where the birds are -- likely around Lake Isabella and the Tillie Creek campground.

Please call Bob Parker at 760-446-2001 to sign up and, if you live in the Kern River Valley or wish to meet us there, to arrange a meeting place and time.

It will be cold! Wear warm clothing and sturdy shoes, and bring a lunch.

JANUARY PROGRAM

Our January program by Dr. Kristin Berry on "Changes to Vegetation in the Indian Wells Valley and Surrounding Areas over Time" was a surprise to many of us. She found old photographs of historical sites, found the sites, and took current photographs of exactly the same places. Using those, she discussed the effects of human activities on vegetation and recovery of vegetation after disturbance.

As it turned out, photographs of the area before any European/American settlement do not exist, so the earliest photographs were from historical times, most being taken around such places as stage stops and a hot spring resort. The early settlers and travelers were all accompanied by horse teams and livestock, which trampled and grazed the areas heavily. So the later photographs showed a largely recovered landscape, not a deteriorated one. One major difference between those and what we may assume existed before settlement was that the plants recovering were mainly what the livestock did not like to eat -- largely creosote bush and saltbush -- with a decrease in native grasses.

It was a most interesting program. Our thanks to Dr. Berry. (And my apologies for oversimplifying and describing only a tiny portion of it.)

A BRAND NEW BIRDING FESTIVAL IN APRIL
OLYMPIC BIRDFEST 2014
April 4-6, 2014, Sequim, WA

Visit the rain shadow of the **Olympic Peninsula** to discover the birds of the coastal Pacific Northwest—Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, dippers, Black Oystercatchers, Long-tailed Ducks, and more. Guided field trips, a boat cruise in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, silent auction, and a gala banquet. Our featured speaker is Noah Strycker: "Bird World: the fascinating parallels between bird and human behavior". The festival with the most spectacular setting!

Immediately following BirdFest, join us for a birding cruise of the San Juan Islands, April 6-8, 2014.

Website address: www.olympicbirdfest.org

E-mail address: opas.birdfest.info@gmail.com

Contact name: Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society,
360-681-4076

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

or "WHAT YOUR BOARD HAS BEEN UP TO"

Wrote a letter to Senator Dianne Feinstein opposing a House bill to expedite logging in recently burned national forests and asking her to kill it when it comes to the Senate. (We also addressed it to Senator Boxer, but her web site wasn't working. Will send another later if necessary.) Burned forests are what black-backed woodpeckers need. The letter was composed by our member and local forest management expert, Dr Ed Royce.

Wrote a letter to the Federal Department of Fish and Wildlife opposing the proposed delisting of the Inyo California Towhee. The department is citing the towhee as a "success story" stating its population is recovering. We reference the ongoing drought and its effect on desert seeding plants, the increased feral horse populations in towhee habitat, and the threat of future water diversions for alternative energy production in the Searles Valley and recommend the decision be delayed until recovery is better documented and ensured.

Signed on to an Audubon California letter proposing the listing as a threatened species of the California population of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo. We hope protection of the species will help guard against poor water management in the Kern River Valley.

Signed on to an American Bird Conservancy letter to the Secretary of the Interior suggesting the prohibition on BLM lands of the establishment of trap-neuter-and-return programs for feral cats.

Copies of the letters or references to their locations are available from chatbird@verizon.net.

**CHINA LAKE
CHRISTMAS BIRD
COUNT 2013** (with some
historical data for
comparison)

Species	Prev		
	Max	2013	2012
Grtr Wht-frnted Goose	21	3	
Snow Goose (white form)	3,941	1,213	2,350
Snow Goose (blue form)	23	5	12
Ross' Goose	650	434	315
Canada Goose	103	7	
Tundra Swan	6	2	
Gadwall	86	50	16
American Wigeon	130	79	22
Mallard	400	60	101
Blue-winged Teal	3		2
Cinnamon Teal	16	2	3
Northern Shoveler	6,178	722	2,382
Northern Pintail	300	48	16
Green-winged Teal	1,200	976	350
Canvasback	104	1	6
Redhead	20	cw	1
Ring-necked Duck	35	12	2
Lesser Scaup	11	1	2
Bufflehead	69	16	6
Common Goldeneye	9	1	cw
Common Merganser	4		cw
Ruddy Duck	551	264	127
Chukar	98	3	46
California Quail	697	78	373
Pied-billed Grebe	11	2	3
Eared Grebe	73	10	18
Great Blue Heron	3	1	2
Blck-crwned Nt-Heron	10		1
Turkey Vulture	1		1
Bald Eagle	1	1	1

Northern Harrier	20	4	6
Sharp-shinned Hawk	11	4	4
Cooper's Hawk	20	11	11
Accipiter sp	6	2	
Red-shouldered Hawk	2		1
Red-tailed Hawk	45	11	19
Golden Eagle (Adult)	7	cw	3
American Kestrel	30	5	11
Merlin	1		1
Peregrine Falcon	1	1	
Prairie Falcon	12	3	5
Virginia Rail	25	12	10
Sora	15	15	10
Common Gallinule	14	6	3
American Coot	822	369	676
Killdeer	58	49	22
Mountain Plover	1		1
American Avocet	15	3	3
Greater Yellowlegs	8	1	cw
Western Sandpiper	100		1
Least Sandpiper	165	18	41
Dunlin	7		3
Long-billed Dowitcher	24	1	9
Wilson's Snipe	6	5	6
Ring-billed Gull	74	cw	cw
California Gull	48	cw	cw
Herring Gull	1		1
Rock Pigeon	1,209	703	802
Eurasian Collared Dove	533	246	533
Mourning Dove	3,083	608	984
Greater Roadrunner	14	3	6
Barn Owl	9		cw
Great Horned Owl	4		3
Burrowing Owl	11		1
Long-eared Owl	50		4

White-throated Swift	45		16
Anna's Hummingbird	32	15	32
Costa's Hummingbird	32	12	24
Hummingbird species	19	4	3
Nuttall's Woodpecker	1	1	
N. Flicker (Red-shafted)	61	41	61
N. Flicker (Yellow- ")	1	1	
Black Phoebe	19	17	14
Say's Phoebe	48	15	24
Loggerhead Shrike	32	3	10
Common Raven	1,768	571	1,768
Horned Lark	3,737	577	788
Verdin	34	18	32
Red-breasted Nuthatch	71		71
White-breasted Nuthatch	3		1
Brown Creeper	1		1
Cactus Wren	5		1
Rock Wren	17	8	7
Bewick's Wren	8	2	6
House Wren	1	1	
Marsh Wren	65	55	39
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	40	19	33
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1	1	
Mountain Bluebird	130	50	40
Townsend's Solitaire	3	1	
Hermit Thrush	15	8	6
American Robin	320	118	20
Varied Thrush	6	cw	
Northern Mockingbird	115	27	62
Le Conte's Thrasher	11	3	2
European Starling	2,447	234	635
American Pipit	100	4	17
Cedar Waxwing	85	2	14
Yellow-rumped Warbler	99	54	52
Yellow-rumped (Myrtle)	3	1	

Spotted Towhee	31	6	4
Black-throated Sparrow	20		1
Sage Sparrow (Bell's)	543	56	164
Savannah Sparrow	260	67	85
Fox Sparrow	14	2	
Song Sparrow	223	30	25
Lincoln's Sparrow	25	19	17
Swamp Sparrow	2	2	2
Harris's Sparrow	2	2	
White-crowned Sparrow	1,549	484	549
Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon)	273	208	136
Dark-eyed Junco (Slate)	7	7	7
Red-winged Blackbird	1,071	286	115
Western Meadowlark	82	28	82
Brewer's Blackbird	1,403	400	111
Great-tailed Grackle	89	75	48
Brown-headed Cowbird	23	12	
Hooded Oriole	0		cw
House Finch	882	152	342
Red Crossbill	138		20
Pine Siskin	18		cw
Lesser Goldfinch	161	39	70
American Goldfinch	150	14	16
House Sparrow	1,858	338	307

KERN COUNTY BIRDS JANUARY 2014

For the month of January, over 100 birders put in a concerted effort to see over 200 species of birds in Kern County. The story goes: Bob Barnes had planned to "take it easy regarding birding in January 2014 after CBC season so I could concentrate on office work..." when Susan Steele called suggesting that "this might be the best year for birders to collectively go for 200 species in Kern County in January building upon the species tallied during three CBCs conducted in Kern Co. January 3-5 and entered into the eBird database." So Bob took on the task of coordinating the effort.

They more than did it! Here are the 204 species:

Greater White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Cackling Goose, Canada Goose, Tundra Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, American Wigeon, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Mountain Quail, California Quail, Ring-necked Pheasant, Pied-billed Grebe, Eared Grebe, Western Grebe, Clark's Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Cattle Egret, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, White-faced Ibis, Turkey Vulture, California Condor, Osprey, White-tailed Kite, Golden Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Virginia Rail, Sora, Common Gallinule, American Coot, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Killdeer, Mountain Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Long-billed Curlew, Lesser Yellowlegs, Dunlin, Least Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, California Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Glaucous-winged Gull, Rock Pigeon, Band-tailed Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Spotted Dove, Mourning Dove, Common Ground-Dove, Greater Roadrunner, Barn Owl, Western Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Burrowing Owl, Spotted Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, White-throated Swift, Anna's Hummingbird, Costa's Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Lewis's Woodpecker, Acorn Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker, Red-naped Sapsucker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, White-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Prairie Falcon, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Black Phoebe, Say's Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, Hutton's Vireo, Pinyon Jay, Steller's Jay, Western Scrub-Jay, Yellow-billed Magpie, Clark's Nutcracker, American Crow, Common Raven, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Mountain Chickadee, Oak Titmouse, Verdin, Bushtit, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Pygmy Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Rock Wren, Canyon Wren, House Wren, Pacific Wren, Marsh Wren, Bewick's Wren, Cactus Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, American Dipper, Golden-

crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Wrentit, Western Bluebird, Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Varied Thrush, California Thrasher, Le Conte's Thrasher, Sage Thrasher, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, American Pipit, Cedar Waxwing, Phainopepla, Black-and-white Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated-Gray Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Green-tailed Towhee, Spotted Towhee, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, California Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Black-throated Sparrow, Bell's Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, Tricolored Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Great-tailed Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, House Finch, Purple Finch, Cassin's Finch, Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin, Lesser Goldfinch, Lawrence's Goldfinch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

Missing from the list were two of the same species missed on our China Lake CBC in December but almost always seen: Chukar, and Long-eared Owl. (We also missed burrowing, barn, and great-horned owls on the Christmas Bird Count.) These are all species that depend directly or indirectly on desert flowering plants. Likely another result of the long drought.

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Newsletter of the Kerncrest Audubon society
P.O. Box 984, Ridgecrest, CA 93556

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