



The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

March 2012

MARCH CALENDAR

Wed Mar 14 6:00 pm Board Meeting at Burnetts'
 Thu Mar 15 7:00 pm General Meeting
 Sat Mar 24 9:00 am Field Trip to the Argus Mtns
Save the April dates:
 Sat Apr 21 7:00 am Field Trip to Surprise Canyon
 Sun Apr 22 all day EARTH DAY
 Sat Apr 28 all day BIRDATHON

Field Trip

INDIAN JOE CANYON TO GREAT FALLS BASIN

Susan Steele and Bob Parker will co-lead this trip on March 24 to the Argus mountains, beginning with a walk to Indian Joe Spring and continuing for the brave and hearty with a hike over the top to the Great Falls Basin. Susan will lead the over-the-top hike, and Bob will accompany those of us who choose to return to the cars, to drive around and pick up the hikers. (There may even be some who do not walk all the way to the spring. Birding is great all along the way.) We will be joined by members of Eastern Sierra Audubon Society.

Wear good hiking shoes, for the terrain is somewhat rugged, even to the spring. Bring a picnic to enjoy along the way, and plenty of water. Show up by 9:00 AM at the Park-and-Ride on the north side of highway 178 at the last signal heading east toward Trona. We'll car pool from there. Those who drive will want to have high-clearance vehicles.

Call Bob Parker at 760-446-2001 to sign up.

Kerncrest Audubon Society Board of Directors

Brenda Burnett	President	375-8634 Lee
Sutton	Vice President	375-1981
Nancy Robinson	Secretary	375-2049
Dan Burnett	Treasurer	375-8634
	& Education	
Robert Parker	Field Trips	446-2001
	& Conservation	
Terri Middlemiss	Publications	377-5192
Noel Gravelle	Membership	375-2325
Nancy Robinson	Birdathon	375-2049
Hector Villalobos	Wind Energy	446-4908
Lloyd Brubaker	Member at Large	375-7245
Sherry Brubaker	Member at Large	375-7245
Shelley Ellis	Member at Large	446-5012
Newsletter Ed.	Brenda Burnett	375-8634
Webmaster	Noel Gravelle	375-2325
website:	www.kerncrestaudubon.org	

BOB STEELE

The Birds of Midway



© 2011 Bob Steele
www.bobsteelephoto.com

Midway Atoll (mid-way between the U.S. mainland and Japan) is important for many historical and biological reasons. Today it is part of three federal designations - Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, and the Battle of Midway National Memorial. Well over a million seabirds use the three tiny islands in the atoll to breed each season, including over half of the world's population of Laysan Albatross. Join professional wildlife photographer Bob Steele as we explore the human and natural history of this unique and fascinating place.

Thursday, March 15, 7:00 PM at the Maturango Museum.



Valley Sightings Jan-Feb 2011

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

January

A **Snow Goose** with neck collar A-PR was at the ponds Jan 12-27. This bird was first seen in the valley on Nov 17, 2004.

The blue phase **Ross's Goose** remained through at least Jan 29 (SLS) being seen mostly at Leroy Jackson Park or at the ponds.

Three **Cackling Geese** and a **Canada Goose** were at the ponds through Jan 10- 23 (SLS).

A **Wood Duck** was at the ponds Jan 2 (SLS).

A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was at the ponds Jan 28 (BB).

Merlins were seen in SE Ridgecrest Jan 1 (L&SSu), and at the Inyokern ponds Jan 11 for the 100th species at that location (SLS).

A **Peregrine Falcon** of the *tundrius* subspecies was in Ridgecrest Jan 26 (LB). This maybe the first time this subspecies has been recorded in the county.

The valley's 4th record of **Mew Gull** was at the ponds Jan 10-24 (SLS).

A **Red-breasted Sapsucker** was on the base Jan 9 (SLS).

The **Loggerhead Shrikes** SW of Inyokern were paired up and mate feeding by Jan 2 (LK).

Red-breasted Nuthatches were at the college Jan 1 (DVB), and Jan 8 (BB), and in SE Ridgecrest Jan 1 (L&SSu).

The **House Wren** continued at the college (SLS).

Good numbers of **Mountain Bluebirds** continue to be seen at the golf course (BS).

Three **Western Bluebirds** were in Sand Canyon Jan 28 on the Audubon field trip (m.ob)

Townsend's Solitaires remain at the college Jan 1 (DVB), and Jan 8 (BB),

While the calendar may still say winter, the **LeConte's Thrashers** think it is spring. They started singing on Dec 30 and by Jan 29 were carrying nesting material (LK).

The **Orange-crowned Warbler** that showed up in Ridgecrest on Dec 31 remained through at least Jan 29 (SE).

Early February

The blue phase **Ross's Goose** remained through at least Feb 9 (SLS).

Six **Cackling Geese** were on base Feb 6-9 (SLS).

A **Common Merganser** was at the ponds Feb 7 (SLS).

A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was at golf course Feb 1 (SLS).

The two **Dunlin** at the ponds Feb 3 were the first February record for this species in the valley (DVB).

The **Willamson's Sapsucker** on the base Feb 6 was the first seen in the valley since Jan 30, 2010 (SLS).

Good numbers of **Mountain Bluebirds** continue to be seen at the golf course (BS).

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes, David Blue, Linda Blue, Shelley Ellis, Louise Knecht, Bob Steele, Lee Sutton, Shirley Sutton*

SUSAN STEELE'S KERN COUNTY BIRDING BIG YEAR RECORD!

Contributed by Bob Barnes

Congratulations to Inyokern resident and Kerncrest Audubon member Susan Steele! She set a new Kern County Big Year record by observing 328 American Birding Association countable bird species in Kern County during calendar year 2011! What a remarkable feat involving a combination of supreme birding skill, focus, patience, and perseverance - hour after hour, day after day, week after week, month after month - for the entire year of 2011!

Susan shared some tidbits on her recently concluded big year that she told me I could share. I am hopeful you will find these tidbits as fun and interesting as I do.

"First I want to thank the many birders who gave fabulous help during my Kern County big year effort, both with finding and getting me on amazing birds which I might otherwise have missed, and also with all the support and encouragement I received. It meant so much to me.

"I ended the year with 328 countable bird species observed in Kern County along with 3 officially non-countable others (Gambel's Quail, California Condor, Rose-ringed Parakeet).

"The best bird this year was the Pyrrhuloxia I found in my backyard that stayed for Mother's Day. It was a first record for Kern County and well-photographed by Bob Steele. Nice.

"My biggest miss, well it **would have been** Red Crossbill, but for all the time I wasted the last couple of weeks looking for Barrow's Goldeneye. Those with a keen sense of irony will appreciate that I finally saw my Kern County first Barrow's Goldeneye on 2 Jan 2012, two days after the end of my Big Year effort!

"Bird species I thought would be easy to see that I didn't see: zero.

"Birds species missed that I thought I should see, but wasn't certain they'd show up: I had two of those - Red Crossbill and Lucy's Warbler.

"Number of bird species I saw that I thought would be hard to find, but I had a chance at: 47

"Number of bird species I rated as almost impossible to come across that I managed to see:

14

"Bird species I saw only once in 2011: 47

"Number of bird species that were seen in the county this year by one or more other birders that I missed: 6 or 2%

"My 326th species for the year was also my 326th life bird species for the Indian Wells Valley – Pacific Loon

"Miles that I drove: No idea, but many, many, many...

"What are my birding plans for this year of 2012? I'm still looking for new Kern birds, and I'm going to look for more birds for my North America list. Maybe one of these days I'll finally see a Blue-headed Vireo in Kern County."

If you are willing to inform Susan of selected species you find in Kern County this year, you may contact her for her want list via:

steele7@verizon.net (Susan Steele) with "Kern Want List" in the subject line.

NOTE: Susan is not only working on her Kern County and North America List. She and her husband Bob went on a birding and photography trip to bird-rich Thailand in February. That trip no doubt added numerous species to her worldwide list of birds, too! Maybe a program on Thailand's birds is in the future for Kerncrest Audubon Society! Stay tuned!

SAND CANYON BIRDING JANUARY 28

Submitted by Larry Nahm of Eastern Sierra Audubon Society

Sand Canyon, located at a southern corner of Inyo County, has been ravaged by fires, but hosts a pleasing array of cismontane species. Here eleven Auduboners from our chapter and Kerncrest Audubon walked a former road near a stream. We found the cactus wren, most of us heard the California thrasher, and all got to see brown towhees and black-throated sparrows. Several hairy woodpeckers worked a spacious grove below our lunch site. Admirable were the gray pines (*Pinus sabiniana*), whether in the form of charred trunks or lively cone-producing specimens with loosely tasseled needles. Scant flora bloomed, but plenty of invasive *Erodium* carpeted the ground.

Thanks go to leader Susan Steele, whose inspiration resulted in such a fine outing, and to co-leader Shelley Ellis.

DEATH PIPE WAR

Your Kerncrest Audubon Society has declared war on open pipes.

Open fence pipes, boundary marker pipes, gateposts, vent pipes and other open pipes trap and kill millions of birds. Cavity nesting birds looking for nesting places drop inside open pipes. Once inside they cannot fly out so they slowly starve to death. Open pipes as small as 1.5 -inch diameter kill birds!

Many open pipes are found on public lands. Miners used to use PVC pipes as claim posts and boundary markers. BLM has prohibited this practice but old ones are still to be found.

During the past two months Kerncrest members have helped the local BLM and Death Valley National Monument personnel remove or cap about 100 open pipes. When pipes were removed almost every pipe was found to hold one or more dead birds. Ash Throated Flycatcher was the most common victim.

Many thanks Gene Milton at BLM, Jeremy Stoltzfus and David Robertson from the Death Valley National Park and Kerncrest volunteers Bob Parker, Shelley Ellis, John Ellis and Dan Burnett for working to cap or remove these bird traps. Special thanks to Shelley Ellis for her persistence in finding these sites and seeing that they are taken care of.

Note from the Editor: I'm wondering if since so many Ash-throated Flycatchers have been found in mining claim posts all over the desert, perhaps we should think about replacing a few post caps with bird boxes. There must be a terrible housing shortage! Is anyone interested in researching how we might do this and if it is a good idea?

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBER

Please note in the Board of Directors box on page one the addition of a new board member, and a new committee. Hector Villalobos, recently retired as Director of the Ridgecrest Office of the Bureau of Land Management, has agreed to join our board. We are delighted to have him!

We have been increasingly concerned about the siting of future wind farms in locations that may have tremendous impact on bird migration routes in the area. Hector shares that concern and will head a Wind Energy committee, keeping abreast of what is proposed and attempting to find ways to work with planning agencies, industry biologists, and whoever will listen to ensure future wind farms are properly sited to be not too destructive.

BIRDATHON

It's not until April, but it's time to start thinking about it, forming teams and getting pledges. Thus the insert in this edition.

BIRDATHON

The 23rd annual Kerncrest Audubon Society BIRDATHON will be held Saturday, April 28th. We need you to form a team – even if it's only a team of one -- and sign up sponsors to contribute in support of the Kern River Preserve and our education programs. If you'd like to join, be, or form, a team, phone Nancy Robinson at 760-375-2049. Teams can meet at any time or place they like, but it's best to let Nancy know where you plan to go, so that she can provide a "clearing house" to ensure maximum coverage of the area to maximize the number of species seen.

We'll bird all day (and all night, starting at sundown on the 27th, if you want to get owls) then meet at a to-be-designated pizza parlor to compare and consolidate lists, and to celebrate!

Proceeds are split between the Kern River Preserve and our own education programs. This past year's education funds were spent entirely on expenses for the Faller and Inyokern Elementary School Junior Audubon Clubs. We can't think of a better way to ensure these children retain their excitement about birds!

So Sign up for a Birdathon Team, and sign up friends and acquaintances too. Collect pledges from friends wishing to sponsor by number of species seen, or contributions from those making lump sum donations, and bring them to the Birdathon. (Use the pledge sheet on the reverse.) E-mail Nancy Robinson at nepr918@gmail.com or call 760-375-2049 for extra pledge sheets, to sign up, or for information.

If you can't participate, MAKE A CONTRIBUTION and mail it to Kerncrest Audubon Society, PO Box 984, Ridgecrest CA 93556. If you wish to contribute by species, please note the pledge by species and include your telephone number, so someone can call you after the event and let you know how many species were sighted.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

National Audubon Society

Includes 1 year of Audubon magazine, Local chapter membership

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Donor's address for gift subscriptions:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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

_____ Senior (62+) or full-time Student - \$15

Please enclose a check payable to National Audubon Society

Clip out and mail to: National Audubon Society

Membership Data Center

C45 P.O. Box 51005

7XCH Boulder, CO 80323-1005

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Kerncrest Audubon Society

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

_____ 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.

Clip out and mail to: Kerncrest Audubon Society
P.O. Box 984
Ridgecrest CA 93556

National Audubon Society membership includes membership in the local chapter, a subscription to the Audubon magazine and 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

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage

PAID

Permit No. 75
Ridgecrest, CA

Return service requested

March, 2012

