

# The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

March-April 2007

## March-April Calendar

Thu	Mar 8	7pm	Board Meeting, Burnetts'
Thu	Mar 15	7pm	General Meeting
Sun	Apr 1	7am	Field Trip
Thu	Apr 12	7pm	Board Meeting, Meades'
Fri	Apr 27	5:45am	Beginning of Kern River Valley Spring Nature Festival (1 <sup>st</sup> field trip)

## FIELD TRIP

### Galileo Hills and California City Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup>

At last – a field trip close to home! We hope for a big turnout, having not done one of these for a while. Early spring migrants should be about.

Meet at 0700 at the SW corner of Albertson's parking lot.

We'll consolidate into as few cars as possible, to avoid having too many vehicles converge on the Silver Saddle resort and country club at Galileo Hills. We'll then drive south on 395, and take a good, graded dirt road west to the club.

After seeing all we can find there, we'll choose a place to picnic (either there or at the park in California City) then bird the lake and park for a while.

Bring a picnic, layered clothing, sunglasses and sunscreen and a hat. Call Dan or Brenda Burnett at 375-8634 if you have questions, or would like to arrange to borrow binoculars.

Beginners are always welcome!

*The next Chat will be out May 1<sup>st</sup>.*

## GENERAL MEETING PROGRAM

### THE ARCTIC AND THE EQUATOR: ECUADOR'S HUMMINGBIRDS AND NOME'S BIRDS

Ralph Paonessa is a renowned nature photographer and leader of photo workshop tours. When he isn't gallivanting around the world, he lives in Ridgecrest. Just a few of the credits from Ralph's website are: "My photographs have been published in such magazines as *Outdoor Photographer*, *WildBird* (including several covers), *Birder's World*, *Birdwatcher's Digest*, *Nature and Wildlife*, *Martha Stewart Living*, and *Outdoor Traveler*. My work has been featured in calendars by **Audubon**, **Barnes and Noble**, **Birder's World**, **Sierra Club**, **World Wildlife Fund**, **At-A-Glance**, **Pet Prints**, and the **Himalayan Calendar**.

"*WildBird* magazine recently honored me by publishing a portfolio of some of my favorite hummingbird images. *Birder's World* included one of my photos in their selection of the very best photos from their twenty-year history, an honor accorded to only fourteen photographers."

And that's just a few! It will be a beautiful program! Join us at 7pm on Thursday, March 15 at the Maturango Museum.

### From the Editor:

You may notice there's a lot in this issue about the Kern River Valley Spring Nature Festival. That's because we bet there are many of you who have never attended. Well, it's a really big deal! Famous around the country! We want to make sure you know all about it and plan to go this year!

*Brenda*

## !!!! GARAGE SALE !!!!

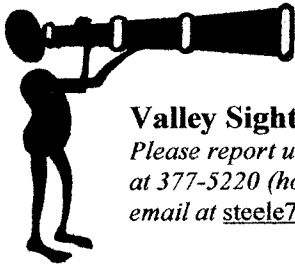
Instead of having a garage sale in the fall this year, Kerncrest Audubon Society is planning to rent space at the *Maturango Museum Swap Meet* on **Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup>**. (That's a flex Friday.) *That's soon!*

So, it's time to go through your closets and cupboards, and decide to get rid of things you don't use.

Since our space will be more limited than usual, we would like to concentrate on really good things. (Please, no stuff that didn't sell at another garage sale!) Almost-new clothing on hangers is OK. So is new clothing (like gifts that didn't fit). And how about jewelry you're not wearing? Antiques are always welcome, and the usual knick-knacks and houseware items.

Bring contributions to the Burnetts' at 735 W. Sonja Ave, or call any board member for pick-up.

We'll still need help pricing items the day before the sale! Call 375-8634 to volunteer.



## 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)

The four grazing **Greater White-fronted Geese** in the 100 block of Lilac Street continued through Feb 12 (LS) and were seen at Pearson Park on Mar 1 (DBu).

The flock of 120 **American White Pelicans** circling the ponds the evening of Feb 20 was earlier than expected (SS).

A **Short-eared Owl** was found dead at the ponds Feb 20 (SS). This is the second one this winter. Many places in southern CA are reporting good numbers of these owls this winter.

A flock of fifteen to twenty **Long-eared Owls** was SW of Inyokern Feb 5 (LK).

**Turkey Vultures** are early spring migrants and one was seen in SE Ridgecrest Feb 12 (LS) and ten were in Ridgecrest Feb 19 (LL).

**Common Ravens** were seen bringing soft material to their nest on Feb 11 and were sitting on the nest Feb 18 (LS).

The **Greater Roadrunners** SW of Inyokern had a nest with four eggs in it on Feb 20 (LK).

Three **Mountain Bluebirds** S of Inyokern Feb 7 were the 174<sup>th</sup> species for that location (SS, BS). This has been a very good year for this species in southern CA.

A flock of **Western Bluebirds** was reported from the desert west of the college Jan 22 (LL).

**Le Conte's Thrashers** were carrying nesting material SW of Inyokern Feb 17 (LK).

**Oak Titmouse** continue through Feb 6 at the cemetery (BB) and Feb 19 S of Inyokern (SS).

Four **Bushtits** were at the ponds Feb 6 (SS).

An intergrade **Northern Flicker** was in SE Ridgecrest Feb 4-5 (LS).

*Thanks to the following observers: Bob Barnes, Dan Burnett, Louise Knetch, Lisa Lavelle, Lee Sutton*

## CONSERVATION CORNER

by Terri Middlemiss

Here is more on how we waste energy and how we are becoming disconnected from nature.

We need smaller new houses, not "McMansions". We need to build up, not out. That goes for housing, for parking lots, for commercial buildings. We need less lawns.

From the magazine, "Conservation" January/March 2007, comes a sad and thoughtful commentary on the direction our lives are taking. I think that the main focus is on the Midwest and East where people spend a lot of time indoors due to weather such as snow and rain, but where they could also, be outside on a clement winter day.

The article, "Strangers in Our Own Land", by David Ehrenfeld, focuses on the people who move to the suburbs that cut into forests and farmland. They create "...an elaborate new kind of habitat, pleasing to us and to wildlife alike. It is

complete with food sources such as bird feeders, succulent ornamental plantings, and garbage cans: and it has open spaces, clumps of trees and shrubs, and various kinds of shelters under and around houses – the whole area interspersed with stream corridors, forested strips, and vegetated right-of-way." The author wonders why people are not outside enjoying this paradise they have created. Why are they inside with television sets and computer monitors and text messaging children?

In addition to wasting energy, we are losing generations who value the natural world.

Richard Louv in his book, "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder" says "Our society is teaching young people to avoid direct experience in nature. This is the first generation to be raised indoors by parents who themselves have little direct contact with the natural world." Pamphlets and signs with disclaimers about bears, snakes, poison oak, drowning, etc. scares parents and keeps the whole family out of any parks. Boy, do I agree with that, even here in a more clement climate where we can be in nature most every day.

An article in the Bakersfield Californian, Nov. 29, 2006, discusses the loss of visitors to our National Parks. Baby Boomers and retirees are going elsewhere. Boomers play hard with activities not allowed in national parks and then want a cushy place to stay at night. Children want to go to theme parks. Richard Louv finds that The Park Service is doing a poor job of attracting young people and minorities. Blacks, Asian-Americans and Hispanics report that they feel unwelcome or not safe.

A teacher in a south Los Angeles school leads the school's Sequoia for Youth groups, a park-sponsored program to take kids into Sequoia National Park. They are reluctant to go, but once there, they overcome their fear of nature, and also leave behind the street violence, the noises of boom boxes, sirens and other nerve-wracking city sounds.

Members of Congress want to "modernize" Parks by offering more commercialized activities and businesses – opening parks to motorized recreation, putting up cell phone towers, degrading the experiences of Nature. We must remain vigilant and informed to stop these changes.

With all this use of energy by TVs, computers, etc., it turns out that there is an ironical side benefit for the wildlife. Wild Turkeys love the suburbs, using the wooded corridors, scratching in yards, eating at bird feeders and reproducing in abundance. Crows are also happy in the suburbs. Coyotes and foxes we know can happily co-exist with people, especially house bound people. Black bears, deer and others are also doing well.

I think that computers are wonderful tools that have many uses, but I still worry about how they take us away from the natural world, which we then don't care enough about to conserve.

I am watching my neighborhood change, as I suspect you are, too. Some of my new neighbors are afraid of snakes, so they clear the desert. Others shoot the rabbits and coyotes. Others bring kids on ORVs. They all bring yard lights (for safety!) They need to be educated to the natural wonders, which we all have been enjoying for years. I am so pleased that at least one of our new neighbors wouldn't let the developers clear the whole 2-1/2 acres and are relishing the bird life their feeders and water are bringing.

## **2007 KERN RIVER VALLEY SPRING NATURE FESTIVAL**

### **BIRDS, BIRDS, BIRDS**

The Kern River Valley/Southern Sierra Nevada region is growing rapidly in stature as a destination for birders worldwide. Late April/early May is a peak time for residents and visitors alike to bird our area. To date, this year's April 27-30 Kern River Valley Spring Nature Festival program lists thirty-five birding field trips over four days! Lee Sutton, representing our Kerncrest Audubon Chapter, will lead FREE Beginning Birdwatching trips at the Kern River Preserve 9am-11am, Saturday and Sunday, April 28th and 29th. Inyokern's Bob Steele will conduct two bird photography workshops on Saturday. All birding trips are filling fast with birders from all over California plus Arizona, Arkansas, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Virginia, Washington, and Ontario, Canada. The demand has been so great, five to ten new trip leaders are being recruited to match to-be-added trips!

### **BIRD BANDING**

As part of the Spring Nature Festival, a bird banding station, staffed by the Southern Sierra Research Station, will be set up along the Nature Trail at the Kern River Preserve, Saturday and Sunday, April 28th and 29th. The station will be open 7am-12 noon each morning. Bird banding will be demonstrated to station visitors throughout the morning. Here is a chance to observe birds "up close and personal," hear their heartbeats, and take photos. This is a FREE festival activity.

### **MORE THAN BIRDS!**

Birds and birding are a major focus of the April 27-30 Spring Nature Festival. But, the festival is much more than birds. To recognize and celebrate the world class natural and recreational wonders of the Kern River Valley and Southern Sierra Nevada, a host of varied field trips and workshops form an important core for this year's festival. A 5K/10K run/walk, Bodfish Piute Cypress Botanical Walk, butterflies, comprehensive natural history, fishes, geology, habitat restoration, mammal tracking, native plant gardening, nature walks, reptile ID, and wildflowers are presented via twenty-plus field trips and workshops.

### **NOTHING COMES FREE?**

The saying goes, "Nothing comes for free." While it is true that many activities at this year's Spring Nature Festival require fee payment, over twenty-five, FREE quality activities await: children's activities, baby bird caring and feeding, bird banding, bird walks, exhibitors, habitat restoration walk, Kern Valley Museum, mammal tracking, music, Native American culture, snakes & lizards, a trout festival, and wild bird rescue. You are definitely invited!

### **EATING, LEARNING, & FUN COMBO PLEASE**

Fast food restaurants, step aside! This year's Spring Nature Festival will be highlighted by two, featured dinner programs. Friday evening, April 27<sup>th</sup>, Fred Heath, North American Butterfly Association (NABA) BOD member, will present "An Introduction to the Butterflies of the Kern River Valley and Southern Sierra Nevada." Fred's program will also provide a link to his butterfly field trips Saturday and Sunday and to the 7<sup>th</sup> Biennial Meeting of NABA, to be held in Kernville June 26-29, 2008. Saturday evening, April 28<sup>th</sup>, Alison Sheehy, Nature Ali, will present "Big Picture in a Small Frame: The Natural History of Kern County and the Southern Sierra Nevada." Alison's program will serve as a link to her Sunday natural history field trip and her in-the-works, comprehensive and definitive, natural history of Kern County. Each dinner and program is \$20 per person, including meal, tax, tip, and program. Such a deal!

### **USPS MOTTO: "Neither rain, nor snow,..."**

Nothing will stop Steve Kenton, Weldon Postmaster, from delivering the goods at this year's Spring Nature Festival. Steve set up an official USPS postal station in Kernville's Circle Park, 10am-4pm, Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup>. He will be offering a special festival cancellation on stamped envelopes for the price of a first class stamp. The stamped envelopes may be added to a collection or used for first class mailings for up to a month. John Schmitt's Cactus Wren artwork is featured.

### **MORE ON THE FESTIVAL**

The above copy was provided by Bob Barnes. Now here's more from a female point of view. It's about shopping, of course.

Because of the festival's fame, many vendors come to hawk their wares in Circle Park in Kernville on Saturday, and at the Kern River Preserve on Saturday and Sunday. Need binoculars? There should be a good selection available, with expert advice and samples to try out.

Note also the absolutely spectacularly beautiful T-shirt artwork of John Schmitt is available as T-shirts and (now, for the first time) note cards.

### **Visit the festival website at**

**[kern.audubon.org/bioregion.htm](http://kern.audubon.org/bioregion.htm) or call (760) 378-3044 for more information.**

A handy carry-around schedule (with a picture of the latest John Schmitt design) is enclosed. Share it with friends!