



The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

November 2012

FIELD TRIP

November/December CALENDAR

Wed	Nov 14	6:00 pm	Board Meeting at Burnetts'
Thu	Nov 15	7:00 pm	General Meeting, Maturango Museum
Sat	Nov 17	8:00 am	Field Trip to China Lake "Ponds"
Sat	Nov 17	9:00 am	BLM Travel Mgmt Wrkshp

BIRDING WORKSHOP WITH BOB BARNES

Ridgecrest's Bob Barnes will help attendees prepare for the upcoming 2013 year of birds and birding with a highly interactive, audience participation program of concise helpful tips on topics including bird attraction and feeding; hummingbird attraction, feeding, and gardening; binocular selection and use; birding and radio etiquette; learning bird song; digital photography use; field guide review and use; participatory events; using weather patterns to help predict bird migration; helpful references including web sites; what has resulted in Kern County being named "America's Birdiest Inland County" for the past nine years in a row; and Kern County wildlife viewing hotspots using an informative, upbeat, "newscast" style.

Numerous take-home handouts will supplement the topics covered for use as references at home.

PLEASE bring binoculars, cameras, and spotting scopes with tripods if possible to use and share as doing so will be VERY HELPFUL to the success of the program. Numerous other enhancing props will be on hand.

Ridgecrest resident Bob Barnes is former Audubon-California Director of Bird Conservation Programs, an avid Kern County birder and field trip leader, and presenter of similar workshops at birding festivals in California and Nevada

Be sure to attend this November 15th program, which will start at 7pm at the Maturango Museum.

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CHINA LAKE

WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT

Join Us at the Ponds. Sewage ponds that is!!

Thanks to the Naval Air Weapons Station's Environmental Management Division, our next field trip will be to the China Lake sewage ponds. The ponds provide a rare desert water "preserve" for wintering birds. This time of year we could see upwards of 30 species on this trip.

If you wish to go on this trip and you do not have access to the base and to the North Ranges you must contact Dan Burnett at (760) 382-4934 **no later than the 7th of November**. Provide Dan with the following information: your full name, your date of birth and the last five digits of your social security number.

The morning of the trip, Saturday November 17th, we will meet at 0800 in the parking lot by the Ridgecrest Cinemas to car pool and caravan to the ponds.

If you do have access to the north ranges, call Dan at 760-375-8634 to sign up and for any possible last-minute changes or cancellation, and so we will know how many vehicles and drivers we have.

SAVE THE DATE

The China Lake Christmas Bird Count will be Sunday, the 16th of December. More in next month's Chat.



Valley Sightings October 2012

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



This is a partial list of sightings for the month of October. Susan Steele went on travel and had to cut off early. The remainder of the October sightings will be listed next month.

The 2nd valley record of **Field Sparrow** was from the ponds Oct 14-15 (LB). This is the 294th species for that location. If my reckoning is correct, this is also the 9th record for California.

Snow Geese made their fall appearance at the ponds Oct 1 (SLS).

A **Eurasian Wigeon** was at the ponds Oct 2 (SLS).

A **Cattle Egret** was at the ponds Oct 4 (SLS).

The fifteen **White-faced Ibis** in SE Ridgecrest Oct 22 were a good number for so late in the fall (L&SSu).

Turkey Vultures made quite an appearance in NW Ridgecrest with 148 being counted on Oct 1 and 518 on Oct 6 (BeS). Another 200 were noted in Ridgecrest on Oct 7 (LL).

Merlins were at the ponds Oct 2-4 and S of Inyokern Oct 10 (SLS).

An **American Coot** was running around the desert SW of Inyokern Oct 3 (LK).

While looking to re-find the Field Sparrow on Oct 15 a **Mountain Plover** was discovered at the ponds (DVB), and while looking for the first Mountain Plover a second Mountain Plover was discovered (SLS). One of the plovers remained through the 16th.

A **Baird's Sandpiper** lingered until Oct 15 (SLS).

The first **Dunlin** of the fall was at the ponds Oct 4 (SLS).

FOF for **Bonaparte's Gull** was from the ponds Oct 24 (SLS).

A juvenile **Sabine's Gull** was at the ponds Oct 24 for our latest fall record (SLS).

Red-breasted Nuthatches continue to be seen in numerous locations in the valley (M.ob.) with good numbers being reported such as the 15-25 at the cemetery Oct 20 (BB).

A **Brown Creeper** was at the college Oct 20 (JS).

Two **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were at the college Oct 20 (JS).

A **Sage Thrasher** was at the ponds Oct 15 (StSu).

A **Palm Warbler** was at the college Oct 8 (DVB).

Clay-colored Sparrows were at the college Oct 8 (DVB) and at the ponds Oct 9 (TL).

Fox Sparrows were noted at the ponds Oct 21 (DVB) and S of Inyokern Oct 22-24 (SLS).

A **Golden-crowned Sparrow** was S of Inyokern Oct 23-24 (SLS).

An **Indigo Bunting** was at the college Oct 10 (SLS).

A young male **Hooded Oriole** is hanging around a backyard feeder in Ridgecrest. It has been seen through Oct 23 (JS). With the except of an outlying December record this is the latest record for the valley.

Pine Siskins were S of Inyokern Oct 14-24 (SLS) and SW of Inyokern Oct 18-21 (LK).

A **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was at the ponds Oct 15 (CM).

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes, David Blue, Linda Blue, Louise Knecht, Lisa Lavelle, Tim Ludwick, Beaujourn Shull, Joyce Seibold, Steve Summers, Lee and Shirley Sutton*

YES ON 37

OK, as a 501C3, we can't advocate for a political party or candidate. But there's nothing keeping us from standing up for an environmental issue, and genetically engineering crops is an environmental issue.

I'm pretty sure that eating an ear of corn genetically modified to grow bigger or faster won't hurt me, but that's not what's happening, as evidenced by the corporations funding the ad campaign in support of Proposition 37. A recent article in the Atlantic reveals that "Monsanto has given the most to defeat Prop 37, donating nearly twice the total amount raised by the measure's supporters, most of whom are individuals rather than corporations.... Lined up behind Monsanto are DuPont, BASF, Bayer, Dow, in descending order of millions spent in opposition to Prop 37. These happen to be the five biggest pesticide manufacturers in the world."

Most genetic modification that is occurring is designed to make crops more resistant to pesticides. And pesticides kill birds!!

Many studies have shown that in the long run the cheapest, most effective way to control crop pests is to stop using pesticides, which simply tend to breed more resistant pests, and to encourage predator species, ie birds, to eat them. But there's no profit in that for the chemical companies.

Several European countries have banned the genetic modification of crops altogether, based on a fear that the modified crop itself could be harmful to one's health. That may or may not be a legitimate fear. But the harm pesticides do to birds is a known.

VOTE YES ON PROPOSITION 37!!

BLM Workshop for El Paso and Ridgecrest Travel Management Subregion

The second of 2 BLM public workshops for the El Paso and Ridgecrest travel management subregions to be held in Ridgecrest will be Saturday, Nov.17, 9 am to noon at the Carriage Inn.



Happy Thanksgiving

FINAL PUSH FOR TESHEKPUK LAKE

from Audubon Alaska

Rumor has it there will be big news for the Arctic this November as the Bureau of Land Management will release its final management plan for the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

On August 13, 2012, Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar announced the proposed "preferred alternative" for managing the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska as part of creating the first-ever area-wide management plan. This alternative, called "B2", would make several Special Areas, including the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area (a globally-significant Important Bird Area), off-limits for oil and gas leasing. Overall, the B2 alternative provides a responsible balance that would protect about half of the nearly 23-million acre Reserve while still allowing for the vast majority of the area's oil to be accessed.

The Reserve encompasses an immense and spectacular Arctic ecosystem that provides critical habitat for many species of fish and wildlife. This vast landscape has remained largely unchanged in character over millennia with globally significant wildlife and wilderness values.

The wetlands along the northern edge of the Reserve teem with life during the summer. An epicenter of this activity is the wetland maze surrounding Teshekpuk Lake. This biological hotspot provides essential habitat for the Teshekpuk Lake Caribou Herd and hundreds of thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds. Bird species that breed here migrate to places across the Lower 48 and to six continents—some of the birds you see in your backyard may have been fledged in the Reserve!

This fall, we have an unprecedented opportunity to help protect these extraordinary areas. The BLM is working on a Reserve-wide resource management plan that could help protect the area surrounding Teshekpuk Lake, by designating it as not available for oil and gas leasing under the B2 alternative. **Your voice will be critical** in one last comment period! Visit www.AudubonAlaska.org for more information on sending in your comments.

RENEWABLE ENERGY ROUNDUP

by Hector Villalobos

Fall is here and migratory birds are on the move, so is the Department of Interior (DOI) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The latest news from the DOI is that in October Secretary Salazar signed the Record of Decision for the Final Programmatic Impact Statement (PEIS) which provides for streamlining solar energy development within six southwestern states including California.

The Final PEIS establishes 17 solar energy zones across six western states. Two of these zones are located in California, identified as the Riverside East zone and the Imperial East zone. The Riverside East zone includes 147,910 acres of public land with the potential for 16,434 megawatts. The Imperial East zone consists of 5,713 acres of public land with the potential for 635 megawatts. The PEIS recognized BLM lands such as Wilderness Areas and some ACECs that not available for solar development. The good news is the decision puts in place

measures to protect additional BLM lands with significant natural and cultural resources. A map of BLM administered lands shows most of the lands surrounding Ridgecrest and China Lake NAWS are proposed for exclusion from solar development. However, the PEIS decision also provides for zone variances which allow development of well-sited solar projects on millions of acres outside the development zones. The BLM PEIS map shows only a few small variance areas south of California City.

The DOI and the BLM also announced its 2012 Renewable Energy Priority Projects. Basically, the BLM will be giving priority status to 17 proposed projects with the potential of generating 7,000 megawatts. Of these 17, seven projects are in California. There are five proposed PV solar projects listed as the McCoy Solar, Desert Harvest, Calico Solar Redesign, Ocotillo Sol, and Mount Signal Solar Farm#1. None of these proposed PV projects are in the Ridgecrest area. One proposed wind project is the Walker Ridge Wind project which is located in northern California. And there is a geothermal project identified as the Casa Diablo project proposed to be developed on Forest Service lands in the Mammoth Lakes area. Most of these proposed projects are in the early stages of the environmental review process.

In addition to the newly identified 2012 Renewable Energy Priority Projects, work continues on numerous active projects in California. These active projects include the Stateline Solar Farm Project, Palen Solar Power Project, and the Rio Mesa Solar Project. The Alta East Wind Project, Tylerhorse Wind Project, the Granite Mountain Wind Project, and the Haiwee Geothermal Leasing Area proposal are all in various stages of the environmental review process. Final decisions are pending for all of these projects.

Meanwhile, the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) slowly progresses through the planning process. A workshop on governance, costs, and financing was conducted in September. A 200-plus page transcript can be reviewed the DRECP website. The DRECP planning process is being guided by a Renewable Energy Action Team (REAT) which includes officials from various State and Federal agencies which work through workshops that include various stakeholders. A review of a REAT renewable energy tracking map (www.drecp.org/documents/#drecpl, click on MAPS, then click on CALIFORNIA RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS UNDER REVIEW IN 2012.) shows numerous projects and proposals throughout California. The tracking map shows about ten wind testing projects that extend northeast from Tehachapi to the Little Lake area and east along the Rands and the El Pasos. These are BLM approved or pending wind testing projects that are of concern to Kerncrest Audubon because the proponents could file future wind development applications with the BLM. An interesting solar project identified on the REAT tracking map is located in the Ridgecrest area. It is a PV project named the Solar Avenida Del Sol, located somewhere northwest of Ridgecrest. It seems that there may be a need to follow up on this apparent DRECP conflict with the BLM PEIS decision to protect certain areas from solar development.

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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

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