

The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

October 2008

OCTOBER CALENDAR

Thu	Oct 09	6pm	Board Meeting, Gravelles'
Sat	Oct 18	8am	Field Trip, Burn areas of the Kern Plateau

OCTOBER 18TH FIELD TRIP

This month while the weather is still nice, we are going up to the **Kern Plateau** for our monthly birding trip. We'll pay special attention to some of the areas that have burned in recent years. We are hoping to be accompanied by one or more people with a bit of expertise regarding fire ecology and forest regeneration. Woodpeckers often frequent old burn areas so hopefully we will see some. It has been a number of years since we've had a field trip to the mountains for some of the mountain specialties.

There is a good chance that we will lunch at the Kennedy Meadows campground. So bring your lunch, fluids, hats, warm cloths, binoculars, etc.

Meet at the Union-76 station in Inyokern at 8am for car-pooling. Members coming from the Kern River Valley are invited to meet us at the Chimney Creek Fire Station above Nine Mile Canyon around 8:45am. Don't forget, this trip is on Saturday, October 18th.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

For purposes of marking your calendar, here is a short summary of the Kerncrest Audubon Society programs planned for the remainder of the 2008/9 season.

November 13th – First, note that this is not the usual 3rd Thursday. Instead, this program will be on the 2nd Thursday. Howard Clark will tell us of his experiences trapping Mojave Ground Squirrels in the Mojave Desert. I am sure he will have interesting stories to tell. Some of his study areas were near Ridgecrest.

January 15th – Sherryl Clendenen of the Wind Wolves Preserve, located in the foothills south of Bakersfield, will tell us about the Preserve and "The Wildlands Conservancy" that acquired the property with its outstanding wildlife habitat. We hope to have a field trip to the Preserve sometime after the program, perhaps on the 31st of January.

March 19th – Jon Schmitt will give a fascinating program on feathers.

May 21st – Buzz Lunsford will give his always-popular program on snakes and other reptiles.

UPCOMING FESTIVALS

12th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium

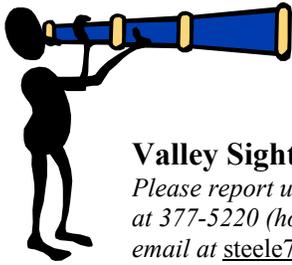
November 20th to 23rd, 2008 at the Stockton Grand Hotel, Stockton, California

Judged by many as one of the premier birding events in the West, the CVBS is hosted by the Central Valley Bird Club. There will be well-known speakers, multiple field trips, artists' displays, vendors and birders. The number of participants usually reaches near complete capacity so plan to register early if you want to attend. For details, please visit the CVBS website <http://www.cvbirds.org/Symposium.htm>.

13th annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival

Every January on the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend (January 16-19 in 2009), the Morro Coast Audubon Society in collaboration with California State Parks, Central Coast Natural History Association, the city of Morro Bay, the Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce, and Friends of the Estuary, host the Winter Bird Festival. All-day and half-day tours will take participants to a wide variety of habitats, including deep water pelagic, oak woodland and riparian, wetland and estuary, and the unique grassland habitat of the Carrizo Plain. Workshops will cover a vast array of topics ranging from beginner birding classes to gull identification. Outstanding Evening Speakers will make presentations on Saturday and Sunday. A variety of vendors will be present with nature related artwork, books, field equipment and attire, and local merchant wares. You may view the schedule, sign up for trips and register for the festival at their web site, www.morrobaybirdfestival.org.

Note: I try never to miss this one! Its trips and workshops fill early, too, so it's not too soon to visit their web site and sign up. Or call me at 375-8634 to arrange to borrow my paper copy of the schedule and registration form.



Valley Sightings September 2008

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

Fall migration for **Turkey Vultures** hits a peak in the area at the end of September as evidenced by a count of 60 in SE Ridgecrest on Sep 24 (LS) and over 200 on September 30 (BB, DLaB).

An **Osprey** was SW of Inyokern Sep 9 (LK).

The **Merlin** at the ponds Sep 29 was the first seen in the valley since December 16, 2007 (SS).

The **Sanderling** at the ponds Sep 29 was the first seen since May 10, 2007 (SS).

A **Wilson's Snipe** was using the water drainage area behind Home Depot on Sep 12 (LL).

Franklin's Gulls are not seen every fall making the bird at the ponds Sep 22 a treat (SS).

Sabine's Gulls were at the ponds Sep 14 (DB) and another was noted on Sep 27 (SK).

Long-eared Owls returned SW of Inyokern on Sep 7 (LK). They have been scarce in the valley this past year due to the lack of small rodent prey.

The **Vaux's Swift** at the ponds Sep 9 was only our 9th fall record (SS).

Rufous Hummingbirds were seen in good numbers throughout the month (m.ob).

A **Belted Kingfisher** was at the ponds Sep 23-25 (SS).

The valley's second record of **Least Flycatcher** was S of Inyokern Sep 25-28 (SS). It was also yard bird #177.

A **Cassin's Vireo** was at the college Sep 21 (JS).

Red-breasted Nuthatches made one day appearances SE Ridgecrest Sep 21 (LS) and at the college Sep 27 (JS).

The **Winter Wren** at the college Sep 21 was a good find (JS).

A **Townsend's Solitaire** was at the college Sep 28 (JS).

It is very unusual to have to wait until fall for the first **Cedar Waxwing** sighting of the year, but we did. It was Sep 12 at the college (LL).

Hermit Warblers are rare in fall. We have two sightings, the first in Ridgecrest Sep 7 (LA) and the second at the ponds Sep 29 (SS).

Species #289 at the ponds was an **American Redstart** seen Sep 18 -22 (SS). Another **American Redstart** was at the college Sep 21 (JS).

A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was at the ponds Sep 1-9 (SS).

A **Green-tailed Towhee** was at the college Sep 21 (JS).

A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was S of Inyokern Sep 25 (SS).

Two **Bobolinks** were at the ponds Sep 20 (TW).

First of fall sightings include **Dunlin** at the ponds Sep 24 (SS), **Pectoral Sandpiper** at the ponds Sep 18 (SS), **Northern Flicker** at the ponds Sep 25 (SS), **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** SW of Inyokern Aug 31, **Spotted Towhee** at the ponds Sep 23 (SS), **White-crowned Sparrow** at the ponds Sep 8 (SS), **Black-throated Gray Warbler** at the ponds Sep 1 (SS), **MacGillivray's, Wilson's, and Nashville Warbler** at the college Sep 1 (SS), **Yellow-rumped Warbler** at the college Sep 21 (JS), **American Goldfinch** N of Inyokern Sep 19 (PG).

Last of summer sightings include **Western Kingbird** at the ponds Sep 22 (SS), **Western Tanager** SE Ridgecrest Sep 10 (LS), **Bullock's Oriole** at the ponds Sep 23 (SS), **Hooded Oriole** S of Inyokern Sep 9 (SS).

Thanks to the following observers: Linda Anderson, Dave Blue, Brenda Burnett, Patrice Glasco, Sandy Koonce, Louise Knecht, Denise La Bertaux, Lisa Lavelle, Joyce Seibold, Lee Sutton, Tom Wurster

CONSERVATION CORNER

by Brenda Burnett

No, Terri Middlemiss has not forsaken you. She will be back, I promise. But she has family matters to attend to, and hasn't had time to write a column recently. So I have to fill this space myself. Get ready for a ramble.

First, I have joined a Senior Fitness program lately and doing exercises every morning have discovered that I absolutely cannot do "crunches" (little mini sit-ups where you lift only your head and shoulders). They *kill* my neck. Well, leafing through old *Bird Watcher's Digest* issues looking for copy for this column, I found an article describing what I have as a classic case of Warbler Neck. Warbler neck, according to the article, is "caused by looking up into the treetops with binoculars for extended periods. It is a minor inconvenience to some, a source of chronic pain for others." The article goes on to say that it is normal for people older than the age of 40 (That's an understatement!) to experience a gradual wearing down of the disks between the neck vertebrae. This wear decreases the amount of space between the bones and can cause pinching of the nerve branches that exit the spine through those spaces, in turn resulting in irritation of the surrounding soft tissue.

The best way to avoid the ill effects of warbler neck is to prevent the condition in the first place.

The problem is in posture: Most birders, to view birds above their heads, stand with the lower back arched, the upper back hunched over, and the neck sharply bent back. This posture creates compression in all three areas. Instead, try this: Create a single gentle arch from your feet to the top of your head, with one foot slightly ahead of the other, the hips gently tucked under to prevent the lower back from arching too much, the shoulders down and back allowing the neck to extend upward and gently back. Your eyes should be looking up through tilted binoculars, allowing the head to remain closer to upright, thus reducing the amount of pinching in the back of the neck.

Simply being aware of your posture will often prevent warbler neck. Think of lengthening your spine upward before bending in any direction. Consciously allow your shoulders to drop down and back, keeping your neck long and relaxed and your upper back straight. Tucking your hips and engaging your abdominal muscles will reduce the amount of arch in your lower back, providing more support for your upper body.

Once you've developed a case of warbler neck, there are exercises to help treat it. But be careful! Pay attention to their effect, and if it hurts, don't do it! And with all exercises, breathe deeply and stay relaxed.

Head rolls: With your shoulders down and back, imagine your neck lengthening upward. Lower your head to your chest. Slowly roll your head all the way around one direction, then the other.

Forward stretch: Grasp the back of your head with your right hand, with your elbow in front of your face. Turn your head 45 degrees to the right and gently pull your head down toward your right leg, keeping your back straight and your shoulders down. Hold for about 15 seconds, slowly return your head to an upright position, then repeat on the other side.

Side stretch: Place your right hand on top of your head, with your right elbow pointing to the side. Gently pull your head to the right, until you feel the stretch down the left side of your neck into your left shoulder. Hold for 15 seconds, slowly return your head to an upright position, and repeat on the other side.

Last, WHY I AM OPPOSED TO THE ECONOMIC BAILOUT.

A couple of weeks ago, I watched an interview on Bill Moyer's Journal with Andrew J. Bacevich, retired Air Force Colonel and author of several books on American foreign policy. (I am currently reading *The New American Militarism* and *The Limits of Power*, books I heartily recommend.) This may sound like an impossible reach to the topic of conservation, but it

really isn't. They are part of the same issue he talks about – American hubris, the opposite, he says, of realism. We are doomed, he says, to fight an endless war because we cannot admit we have reached beyond our limits, and insist on continuing to consume beyond our resources. That's impossible, but our political candidates cannot admit it, so no leader will ever do anything about it. Instead, they look outside our borders and attempt to solve what isn't really the problem by fighting wars to get control of ever-expanding resources to consume.

I make the connection between that and our apparent inability to do anything about global warming. We cannot reduce our carbon output until we lower our rate of consumption.

As I listen to people being interviewed on TV, when asked what is the potential impact of the failure of the "bailout" bill, their answers all involve credit, and our ability to continue to consume! If banks cannot borrow from each other, people won't be able to get mortgages and the value of real estate will continue to fall. And, they say, we need to get the value of real estate back up! (Where are the people who were saying we were in an unrealistic bubble?) My opinion is the houses we've been building are too big. We're consuming too many resources continuing to build them, and they consume too many resources to operate.

And, according to these experts, people also won't be able to get financing to buy a new car! Well, I never borrowed money to finance a car, but then I never bought a Hummer or other high gas consumption SUV or high performance vehicle. Again, what we've been buying is too expensive and consumptive. (Admittedly, I had the advantage of a college education and never was without a good job or a husband who had one, but I think the point still stands. And further discussion of how to solve this problem is really off the subject of conservation.)

Mr. Bacevich, a conservative, doesn't see any solution to this situation. I'm often tempted to agree with him, but, liberal that I am, keep hoping that we can gather the public support to involve the government in finding solutions. For instance, the development of more fuel-efficient vehicles requires research and development, a cost that must be passed on to the consumer (impossible under the current circumstances) unless the government funds it.

In the meantime, the adjustment of our economy and culture to a lower rate of consumption of resources is not going to be painless. But it must happen. I don't think that artificially shoring up our dysfunctional modus operandi is the way to go.

Note this is my opinion and is not an expression of an official position of the Kerncrest Audubon Society Board of Directors.

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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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