OCTOBER CALENDAR
Tue Oct 13 6pm Board Meeting, Burnetts'
Sat Oct 24 8am Field Trip: Owens Lake

FIELD TRIP
OWENS LAKE
Join us at 8am on Saturday, October 24th at the 76 Station in Inyokern to car pool to Owens Lake for a day of birding and taking in the beautiful sights of the eastern Sierra Nevada.

We'll visit the ponds and wetlands in the area of Cartago and the west side of the lake, and the self-restoring wetlands along the lower stretches of the Owens River. We're also working on getting permission from the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power to visit their re-watering project on the lakebed.

Come prepared to picnic, and to survive the desert's unpredictable weather (layered clothing, sunscreen, the usual). Wear shoes you don't mind getting muddy!

Please call Lee Sutton at 375-1981 and let him know you plan to go.

14TH ANNUAL MORRO BAY WINTER BIRD FESTIVAL, JANUARY 15-18, 2010
MORRO BAY, CALIFORNIA – Come to where the birds are and join Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) for our 14th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival. Located on California’s scenic Central Coast, Morro Bay is an important stop on the Pacific Flyway and one of the country’s pre-eminent birding spots. The area is recognized worldwide for its diversity of both resident and wintering birds. At last year’s festival, over 200 species of birds were identified!

The Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival is sponsored by MCAS and gives you the chance to join local and national birding experts on a variety of field trips and workshops. Field trip group sizes are limited to maximize spotting and identification opportunities. The Festival also offers workshops aimed at sharpening your birding skills, as well as evening programs with outstanding speakers.

To register and for more information about the Festival, check out our website at www.morrobaybirdfestival.org, or call (805) 772-4677. Both the brochure and online registration will be available in October 1, 2009. The registration deadline is December 31, 2009 but early signups are encouraged as the most popular events fill up quickly.

(Editor's note: I go to this festival every year. It has great field trips and workshops, many vendors, and it's a wonderful excuse to go to the coast, where it's warm.)

13TH ANNUAL CENTRAL VALLEY BIRDING SYMPOSIUM
November 19-22, at the Stockton Hilton hotel, Stockton, California.

Evening programs include Murrelet Halterman on Yellow-billed Cuckoos and Stephen Shunk on "The Magic of Birding". Workshops include raptor expert Bill Clark sharing his expertise, and Jon Dunn and Joe Morlan as well as other experts doing the same. You can even learn to digiscope, draw birds, and carve decoys!

Test your ID skills along with the experts at the Bird ID Panel. Find lots of goodies on our far-flung field trips. The Birder's Market is full of artists and vendors with bird and nature related items.

This is truly one of the best birding festivals around!

Registration is available on-line at http://www.cvbs.org. Click on the Regonline link. Or, brochures and registration forms are available here in Ridgecrest by calling Brenda at 375-8634.

15TH ANNUAL TURKEY VULTURE FESTIVAL REPORT
Last weekend's TuVu festival was one of the best yet! Audubon Kern River Preserve Outreach Coordinator Alison Sheehy did a bang-up job lining up vendors and organizations, and the vultures even cooperated! Well, mostly. Several hundred roosted right around the preserve headquarters on Friday night, so the Saturday lift-off was up close and spectacular. On Saturday night, exactly two Turkey Vultures flew into the area, so the Sunday lift-off was a fizzle. But there was no wind, and the weather wasn't too hot in the shade, and we all had a fine time!

Hope to see you there next year.
Valley Sightings Early Fall 2009

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

August

Snowy Plovers were at the ponds Aug 5 and 31 (SS).

Adult Sanderlings were at the ponds Aug 3-4 and 31 (SS).

An Adult Pectoral Sandpiper was at the ponds Aug 22 (SS).

Good numbers of juvenile Baird’s Sandpipers were noted this fall. The first was seen Aug 3 and a high count of sixteen was recorded on Aug 22 (SS).

A juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk was at the ponds Aug 11 and 26 (SS) and 28 (BB).

A Peregrine Falcon harassed the shorebirds at the ponds Aug 31 (SS).

The Belted Kingfisher at the ponds Aug 31 fit nicely into their fall migration window of July 31-Oct 17 (SS).

Six Long-eared Owls were at the college Aug 20 (JS).

A Barn Owl was at the ponds Aug 28 (BB).

The Hairy Woodpecker at the college Aug 20 was our earliest on the valley floor in fall, with the previous early date being Sep 16 (JS).

The 94th species of birds at the Inyokern Ponds was a Bullock’s Oriole on Aug 16 (SS, AS).

Two Virginia’s Warblers were found this August. The first was at the ponds Aug 9 (TW), and the second in Ridgecrest Aug 22 (JS). While they are an expected fall bird, our last sighting was Sep 10, 2006. The Aug 9 bird is our new early fall date by two days.

A female American Redstart was at the ponds Aug 28 (BB).

The last sighting date for the Lucy’s Warblers at the ponds was Aug 11 (SS).

Hermit Warblers were at the college Aug 20 (JS) and at the ponds Aug 31-Sep 1 (SS).

First Of Fall (FOF): Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Baird’s Sandpipers and Western Wood-Pewee at the ponds Aug 3 (SS), juvenile Short-billed Dowitcher at the ponds Aug 11 (SS), Wilson’s Snipe at the ponds Aug 22 (SS), Northern Flicker S of Inyokern Aug 5 (SS), Willow Flycatcher at the college Aug 16 (JS), Warbling Vireo at the college Aug 16 (JS), Black-throated Gray Warbler at the ponds Aug 17 (SS), Wilson’s Warbler at the ponds Aug 17 (SS), MacGillivary’s Warbler at the ponds Aug 17 (SS), Nashville Warbler at the ponds and SW of Inyokern Aug 16 (SS, LK), Yellow-breasted Chat in Ridgecrest Aug 22 (JS), Chipping Sparrow at the college Aug 20 (JS), Brewer’s Sparrow SW of Inyokern Aug 29 (LK), Lazuli Bunting at the college Aug 17 (SS), Black-headed Grosbeak SW of Inyokern Aug 21 (LK), Blue Grosbeak SW of Inyokern Aug 11 (LK), Western Tanager at the ponds Aug 4 (SS)

Thanks to the following observers: Bob Barnes, Louise Knecht, Joyce Seibold, Alison Sheehey, Tom Wurster

September

Our first goose of the fall was a Greater White-fronted Goose at the ponds Sep 29 (SS). They are also our earliest arriving goose species; typically 2-4 weeks before the white geese.

One of the small Grebe species landed in the desert SW of Inyokern and after splashing in the water in a tree basin and resting in the shade disappeared (SM).

An adult and a juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk were seen intermittently at the ponds this month (SS).

A Peregrine Falcon was at the ponds Sep 1 (SS).

A Virginia Rail was N of Inyokern Sep 17-28 (TM). Even more interesting than its desert location was its visit to the chickens in their coop.

Long-billed Curlews are using grassy areas around the valley and were noted N of Inyokern Sep 7-8 (LB) and at the golf course Sep 17-20 (JR).

A juvenile Sanderling was at the ponds Sep 17-20 (SS).

The first juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper of the fall was at the ponds Sep 9 and the first juvenile Short-billed Dowitcher was Sep 22 (SS).

Barn Owls were in SE Ridgecrest Sep 20 (LS) and at the ponds Sep 23 (SS).

A Long-eared Owl was N of Inyokern Sep 26 (TM).

An Acorn Woodpecker was at the college Sep 8 and 28 (SS).

Only two reports of Nuttall’s Woodpecker have been received this year with the second from Ridgecrest Sep 3 (EC).

The Hairy Woodpecker SW of Inyokern Sep 19-22 was the second on the valley floor this fall (LK).

A White-breasted Nuthatch was at the college Sep 3-8 (SS).

The Varied Thrush SW of Inyokern Sep 4 was three weeks earlier than our previous early fall date (LK).

In a typical year there are several Sage Thrasher sightings in the valley. So far this year, the only report is Sep 14-15 SW of Inyokern (SM).

Our 5th valley record of Brown Thrasher was from N of Inyokern Sep 26-28 (LB).

A Phainopepla was at the ponds Sep 20 (BB).

Our third Virginia’s Warbler of the fall was at the college Sep 8 (SS).
The American Redstart in SE Ridgecrest Sep 7-10 was our second this fall (LS). A Yellow-breasted Chat was in SE Ridgecrest Sep 8 (LS).

A Vesper Sparrow was at the ponds Sep 22 (SS). Our first report of American Goldfinch this fall was from Ridgecrest on Sep 1 (BBu).

FOF: Gray Flycatcher at the ponds Sep 9 (SS), Pacific-slope Flycatcher at the ponds Sep 8 (SS), Ruby-crowned Kinglet at the ponds Sep 23 (SS), Yellow-rumped Warbler at the ponds Sep 8 (SS), White-crowned Sparrow at the ponds Sep 9 (SS)

Thanks to the following observers: Linda Bates, Brenda Burnett, Encar Card, Terri Middlemiss, Susan Moore, Joanna Rindt, Lee Sutton

**CONSERVATION CORNER**
by Terri Middlemiss

I have been meaning to become one of National Wildlife Federation's backyard Wildlife Habitats for years and am finally signing up. What hooked me, and may work for you, too, is their goal to have 150,000 Wildlife Habitats by Dec. 31, 2009. I filled out a form that came in the magazine and sent it in with $15. It is easy and I am glad to finally DO IT. You can sign up at their website www.nwf.org. Maybe you can also be part of their goal.

It is also time to sign up for Project FeederWatch run by Cornell Lab. of Ornithology. Monitoring winter bird populations has become an awesome data set through this Citizen Science project. An article from their winter highlights of 2007-08 discusses the need for gathering data on unpopular House Sparrows, Starlings and Rock Doves. Even though we don’t like to see them at our feeders, tracking changes in “…common species, is important - declines in common species are often more visible, and we can learn a great deal by studying the underlying causes of change.” I personally like doing this because it focuses me on my birds on the days I record for the watch. I tend to only give glances otherwise and just keep the many feeders filled. They have a nice website and a good publication. feederwatch@cornell.edu.

Not directly related to birds, but in the long run, really is. I brought back 2 really nice shopping bags from my trip to Ireland. The cost was miniscule and one of them is burlap with sturdy handles and a cute design of ladybugs. On the bags, it says, “Every little helps.” While I was shopping at grocery stores, I saw people carrying groceries out in their hands, either because they had bought so little, had forgotten their bags, or didn't want to PAY for one. It was great! A simple, thin plastic bag cost about 44 cents. Californians Against Waste almost had the bill passed last year that would have put a 25 cent fee on every disposable plastic or paper bag distributed at large grocery stores and pharmacies. (that's a start – what about department stores...?) It was defeated, but will probably be passed this year. 5 Billion bags in California alone, are passed out every year from groceries and pharmacies!!! In Ireland now, 90% reduction of plastic bag consumption has been realized. I hope all of you are taking back your own bags. Even the flimsy plastic can be reused several times, washed out and dried even, to reuse. I have zip locks that have a “food history”; they have been reused so many times. Helping birds by conserving resources.

**2010 SOUTHERN SIERRA RESEARCH STATION TRIP TO COSTA RICA**

Once again the Murrelet Halterman of the Southern Sierra Research Station (SSRS) is planning a birdwatching trip to Costa Rica. Several of our members have gone with her in the past and can testify to the quality and outright fun of her trips. The groups are small, the bus small and comfortable, and the driver a birder and excellent spotter himself, so he knows when to slam on the brakes and point. And the cost, at $3150 per person including all rooms, meals, snacks, park entry, transportation within the country, boat trip, and guides, is astoundingly reasonable. It is way less than any for-profit birdwatching tour company, in spite of the fact the price is pegged to benefit the SSRS if enough people sign up. Do it! The trip begins January 11th and ends January 24th, 2010, with an optional additional 2-day extension.

From Murrelet:

“We have planned an exciting and very birdy trip the south-pacific region of Costa Rica. Although this is primarily a birdwatching trip, we will also look at monkeys, lizards, butterflies, insects, and plants, and learn about tropical ecology. We will begin near San Jose, then go to the Pacific Coast, and begin working our way south. We will visit Carara National Park, the coastal forest near Dominical, then the outer edge of the Osa Peninsula. We will next spend several days at the Wilson Botanical Gardens, and cool off with a few nights in the highlands of the Rio Savegre area. We will spend another night near San Jose. We will spend our last day birding north of San Jose, and end with dinner at our friend Alberto’s house. We will stay two nights at most locations, and a few single nights at others. Although we prefer to spend multiple nights at each location, there is a lot of ground to cover to visit the southern Pacific coast! We are also offering a single supplemental day visit to Tapanti National Park, on the Atlantic slope of the country.”

The complete itinerary may be seen at the SSRS website: http://www.southernsierraresearch.com.

Or call me (Brenda) at 760-375-8634 for a hard copy.

**Deposits are needed by October 15th.** Contact cuckoobuster@yahoo.com
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P.O. Box 984, Ridgecrest, CA 93556

October, 2009

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