

# The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

October 2009

## **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 24<sup>th</sup> 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.

## **14<sup>TH</sup> 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](http://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.)

## **13<sup>TH</sup> 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.

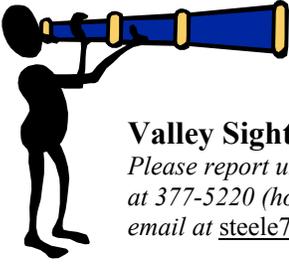
This is truly one of the best birding festivals around!

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.

## **15<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL TURKEY VULTURE FESTIVAL REPORT**

Last weekend's TuVu festival was one of the best yet! Audubon Kern River Preserve Outreach Coordinator Alison Sheehey 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](mailto: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 94<sup>th</sup> 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), **MacGillivray'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 Sheehy, 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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](mailto: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 11<sup>th</sup> and ends January 24<sup>th</sup>, 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 web site: <http://www.southernsierraresearch.com>.

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

**Deposits are needed by October 15<sup>th</sup>.** Contact [cuckoobuster@yahoo.com](mailto:cuckoobuster@yahoo.com)

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(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

Kerncrest Audubon Society

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*Explanation of membership categories:*

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