



The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

September 2010

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

Wed	Sep 15	6:00 pm	Board meeting, Brubakers'
Thu	Sep 16	7:00 pm	General meeting, Hector Villalobos, Maturango Museum
Sat	Sep 25	all day	Field Trip, TuVu Festival Kern River Preserve

GENERAL MEETING

Hector Villalobos

Renewable Energy Development Project Applications in the California Desert

Hector Villalobos has been the Field Manager for the Bureau of Land Management Ridgecrest Field Office since 1999. This office's area of responsibility includes scattered lands near Palmdale and Lancaster to public land between the southern Sierras and Death Valley National Park, all the way to the Nevada border. They are responsible for permitting use of public lands under the jurisdiction of this office for such things as mining, geothermal exploration and development, filming, special recreation events, vendors, grazing and right-of-ways, which may include roads, pipelines, transmission lines, and renewable energy projects.

Prior to coming to Ridgecrest, Hector worked for the BLM in increasingly responsible roles in the Albuquerque District Office, at BLM headquarters in Washington, DC, and at the Arizona State Office. He also has experience in engineering and environmental studies for the US Geological Survey, and has a BS degree in geology from Cal State Long Beach and a MS from San Jose State.

Hector will talk about some of the many applications for renewable energy proposals before the BLM on the California Desert Conservation Area, including those within the Ridgecrest Field Office management area. He says, "Applications for renewable energy proposals, primarily wind and solar projects, cover over 1 million acres of public land in the California Desert Conservation Area. There are approximately 67 applications for wind; 77 applications for solar; two new geothermal leasing areas; and 3 major transmission line proposals."

The program will be at 7:00 pm at the Maturango Museum.

16th Annual Kern River Valley

AUTUMN NATURE & VULTURE FESTIVAL

The Kern River Valley Turkey Vulture Festival celebrates the height of fall Turkey Vulture migration through California's "Valley Wild", the Kern River Valley. Although there is no longer an official Turkey Vulture count, it is known that this is one of the two largest migration sites north of Mexico. Seven-thousand six-hundred sixty-four Turkey Vultures were counted during the 4-day festival in 2004. The total 2004 count period from September 14th through October 14th tallied 23,898 vultures. The magnitude of the migration over this southern Sierra Nevada count site is awe inspiring.

To watch the morning lift-off, show up at the Audubon California Kern River Preserve in Weldon by 8:30 on Saturday, September 25th. Preserve volunteers will have scouted where the vultures roosted the previous night and will be available to guide you to where they will lift off. There will also be workshops and events at the preserve throughout the day.

For more information on this festival and others, visit Alison Sheehey's great website at http://www.natureali.org/nature_festivals.htm

SAVE THE DATES

Another great festival coming up this fall is the Central Valley Birding Symposium in Stockton, November 18-21. A couple of us locals plan to go this year. If you'd like to join us, call Brenda Burnett at 760-382-4935. A link to this festival is at Ali's site, or go directly to <http://cvbs.org/>.

Kerncrest Audubon Society field trips planned for this season include:

October 23	Mojave Narrows, Victorville
November 13	Tehachapi
December 19	Christmas Bird Count
January tbd	Channel Island Pelagics
February tbd	So Cal Shorebirds
March 19 th	Ash Meadows, Nevada
April 23	Birdathon
May 21	Bird Ridgecrest – local hotspots



Valley Sightings May-July 2010

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

May

Two **Canada Geese** and two **Snow Geese** have been hanging around the golf course (BP). I wonder how long it will take to have Canada Geese reach nuisance proportions.

A **Brant** was at the golf course May 24 (SLS).

While the Inyokern ponds typically only produce eight or so species a visit, they have produced some interesting birds. An example is **Wood Duck** with eight records over the years. The latest was May 2 (SLS).

A **Green Heron** was at the ponds May 17 (SLS) and May 20 (BB).

Species # 149 for Sand Canyon was a **Snowy Egret** on May 24 (SE). This is also the first time this species has been seen in any canyon.

An immature **Red-shouldered Hawk** was at the ponds May 15 (KL).

Make that fourteen **Swainson's Hawks** this spring! One was S of Inyokern May 10 (BS), and May 19 (SLS), the other was from SW Ridgecrest May 15 (LS).

The **Peregrine Falcon** at the ponds May 29 successfully caught a meal (KL).

The **Long-billed Curlew** at the golf course May 19 was only the 3rd May record (BB). While looking for the curlew later in the day, a **Whimbrel** was found (SLS). Another **Whimbrel** was at the ponds May 29 (KL).

A **Marbled Godwit** was at the ponds May 2 (SLS).

The **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at the ponds May 8-10 was only our 4th spring record (AH) with the 5th May 18 (SLS).

The **Baird's Sandpiper** at the ponds May 24 was our 6th spring record for this species (SLS).

Franklin's Gulls were at the ponds May 3 and 18-20 (SLS) and May 29-30 (KL).

A **Band-tailed Pigeon** was in Indian Wells Canyon May 20 (LS, SE).

The 120th species for Nine Mile Canyon was a **Eurasian-collared Dove** on May 31 (SLS).

A **Calliope Hummingbird** was S of Inyokern May 9 (BS).

An **Acorn Woodpecker** was in Indian Wells Canyon May 8 (L&SSu).

The first **Willow Flycatcher** this spring was from Indian Wells Canyon May 8 (L&SSu).

Vermilion Flycatchers had their first successful nesting in the valley since May 2005 with two juveniles located on the base May 26 (SLS).

The 186th species for the golf course was a **Vaux's Swift** on May 11 (SLS).

The last report of **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** this spring was from Indian Wells Canyon May 8 (L&SSu).

The **Brown Thrasher** N of Inyokern first noted Apr 27 remained until May 3 (LB).

The thirteen **Phainopela** in Sand Canyon May 10 were more than expected (LS, BP).

While not unexpected at this time of year, the **Red-breasted Nuthatch** in SE Ridgecrest May 13 (LS) was the only report since Feb 25.

Pinyon Jays are not expected down on the valley floor, so the one N of Inyokern May 1 was a treat and a new yard bird (BB).

The first **Swainson's Thrush** report this spring was from Indian Wells Canyon May 8 (L&SSu).

The **Red-eyed Vireo** at the college May 12 was the 6th valley record and earlier than expected by a couple weeks (SLS).

A female **Black-and-white Warbler** was seen on the base May 24 (SLS).

The last report of **White-crowned Sparrow** this spring was from the ponds May 24 (SLS).

A male **Bobolink** was at the ponds May 21 (SLS).

Our records are from May 21-June 3 and Sep 11 – Oct 29.

Orchard Orioles this spring! Yes, you read correctly we had two Orchard Orioles this spring. One was N of Inyokern May 1 (BB), and the other was in Ridgecrest May 12 (JAS). This is the 3rd spring record of this species in the valley and there are two records from the fall. In both cases these were new yard birds.

The last report of **American Goldfinch** this spring was from S of Inyokern May 9 (SLS).

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes, Linda Bates, Shelley Ellis, Andrew Howe, Louise Knecht, Lisa Lavelle, Kelli Levinson, Terri Middlemiss, Bob Parker, Joyce Seibold, Bob Steele, Susan Steele, Lee and Shirley Sutton.*

June-July

The big news this month is another addition to our valley list! This time it was a **Little Blue Heron** at the ponds June 27 (BB). This bird was re-located the next day at Lark Seep (SLS) where it appeared to be ill.

Our golf course **Canada Geese** have reproduced with six very cute goslings noted on June 20 (BP).

Fifteen **Brant** on June 23 at the ponds?? Yes, they were resting in a nice tight flock and took off shortly after dawn (BB). In terms of timing this is right at the end of their expected spring migration window, in terms

of numbers all but one of our previous records were of a single bird, the exception was four birds on April 23.

Our 4th nesting record of **Northern Pintail** was a mother and three ducklings on June 15 (SLS).

The **Common Merganser** at the ponds June 8 is our only June record (BB).

Our last **Lesser Scaup** this spring was at the ponds July 13 (SLS).

A **Clark's Grebe** was at the ponds June 15 and another was seen July 1 (SLS).

Where have all the **Cattle Egrets** gone? Last year there were three sightings. This year one was noted on June 16 (SLS). This is compared to our average of 13 sightings per year over the last 22 years.

The **Cooper's Hawks** at the college managed to raise two chicks to fledging. The first chick was seen in the nest June 1 and two fledglings were noted July 5 (BB).

Another **Swainson's Hawk** in the valley this year, this makes 15. This was an extremely early south bound migrant seen at the ponds July 29 (SLS).

A **Peregrine Falcon** was at the ponds July 24, and 30-31 (BB).

The **Lesser Yellowlegs** at the ponds June 21-25 was our earliest fall record by a couple days (SLS).

The **Baird's Sandpiper** at the ponds July 13 was a new early fall date by one day (SLS).

The alternate plumaged **Dunlin** at the ponds June 8-9 was a week later than our previous spring records (SLS).

The male **Red Phalarope** at the ponds June 8-9 was only our 4th spring record and also the latest with the previous being 20 May (BB).

A **Franklin's Gull** was at the ponds June 1-9 (BB).

The two **Least Terns** at the ponds July 15 were completely unexpected (SLS). Our previous records are all in the spring occurring between May 16 and June 24.

Our first of fall **Rufous Hummingbirds** were SW of Inyokern July 22 (LK).

Two **Nuttall's Woodpeckers** were in Ridgecrest this July, one on July 2 (B<) and the other July 9 (JAS).

Last reports of **flycatchers** this spring include **Olive-sided**, **Pacific-slope**, and **Ash-throated** from Indian Wells Canyon June 10 (BP) and **Vermilion** from the base June 3 (SS).

The **Western Wood-Pewee** at the college July 5 was a complete surprise (BB). Our latest spring migrant is June 17 and our earliest fall migrant is Aug 3.

The **Gray Catbird** that was found dead N of Inyokern July 27 was our 4th valley record (LB). Our other spring record was from 29 May.

A **Phainopepla** was at the college June 15, others were S of Inyokern July 15 (SLS), and SW of Inyokern July 4 (LK).

The **Ovenbird** SW of Inyokern June 18 was a complete surprise (LK). Our 10th valley record was a new late date, previous was May 30. This bird was found dead apparently of a window strike.

A first year male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was N of Inyokern June 21 (MH). It was our only report this spring and occurred towards the later part of their window May 11 – June 30. To round out our **Grosbeak** reports our last spring sighting of **Black-headed** was from Ridgecrest June 15 (EW) and **Blue** was from the ponds June 2 (SLS).

Our last **Western Tanager** of the spring was from the golf course June 9 (SLS) and our first of fall was S of Inyokern July 28 (SLS).

Lucy's Warblers were at the ponds July 25-26 (BB). This is right in the middle of their fall migration window of June 29- Aug 11.

Six **Lark Sparrows** were at the college July 13 (SLS).

The male **Tricolored Blackbird** at the ponds July 20 was within the window of their post breeding dispersal (SLS).

Brewer's Blackbirds attempted nesting N of Inyokern. They were building the first nest on May 24, on June 22 the three nests had 4 chicks in one and 4 eggs in two others. Unfortunately, most of the chicks disappeared and the final nest's chicks had to go to a rehabilitator due to the death of the female (LB).

A Scott's Oriole was SW of Inyokern July 13 (LK)

The **Cassin's Finch** in Ridgecrest July 15 was completely unexpected (EW). This bird had been hanging around for several weeks prior to this.

Another unexpected finch was the **Red Crossbill** at the college July 23 (BB). This is only our 2nd July record.

Well, I spoke way too soon on the last report of **American Goldfinch**. It was June 9 from S of Inyokern (SLS) and was a stunning male in complete breeding plumage.

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes, Linda Bates, Melissa Hero, Louise Knecht, Bob Parker, Joyce Seibold, Barry and Lynne Thompson, Ellen Warbeck*

NOTE: With a few exceptions, these sightings are about northward migrating and breeding birds. The fall migration began in August, so rather than add pages to this Chat I will include the August sightings with the September ones in the October issue. Ed.

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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.

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The Chat

Newsletter of the Kerncrest Audubon society
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September, 2010