

# The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

September 2008

## SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

Thu Sep 11 6pm Board Meeting, Thompsons'  
Thu Sep 18 7pm General Meeting, Stephen Myers

## **GENERAL MEETING THE BIRDS OF PERU**

Steve Myers will present "The Birds of Southern Peru." Peru is home to almost 1,800 species of birds, second only to Columbia. The wide diversity of habitats in Peru, from dry coastal plains to the high Andes to the Amazon basin, is the primary reason such a rich avifauna occurs there. Steve and fellow travelers spent almost three weeks in southern Peru in June 2006, and he has the photos to prove it!

Steve Myers has almost 30 years' experience birding in southern California, other western states, and Central and South America. He works as a wildlife biologist and ornithologist for a private environmental consulting company in southern California, and also has taught an ornithology class at Victor Valley College and a bird banding class at U.C. Riverside Extension. He has served as an instructor on several Victor Valley College natural history classes to Costa Rica, Belize, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Peru. With his wife, Vesta, he hopes to visit many more of the world's great birding locales.

(As an aside, The Victorville area has a local bird club known as the Mojave Desert Bird Club. Steve Myers, whose wife is president of the club, leads birding walks through the Mojave Narrows regional park on a regular basis. He joined us for our field trip there back in May, and with his help we had a very successful morning, including finding the rare Eastern Phoebe he had scouted out previously.)

## **2008-2009 FIELD TRIPS**

The Kerncrest Audubon Society board of directors met last week to attempt to plan field trips and programs for the season. We partially succeeded.

There is no field trip planned for September. Many of us are just returning from summer trips and not ready to get organized enough to plan a birding trip.

October 18 – Burn areas of the Kern Plateau, in search of woodpeckers.

Late November – Wind Wolves Preserve, south end of the San Joaquin Valley. VP and Program Director Lee Sutton plans also to schedule Cheryl Glendenen, director of the preserve, to be speaker at our general meeting of the same month, so the date of this trip will depend on her availability. It may be rescheduled for later in the season.

December (date to be determined) Christmas Bird Count (including trip to China Lake sewer ponds)

January 31 – Indian Joe Canyon (east side of Argus range north of Trona)

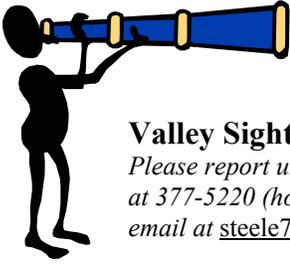
February 28 – Mojave Narrows Regional Park, Victorville (planned for earlier than last year's trip, to catch over-wintering waterfowl.)

March 28 – Cane Brake preserve, Weldon – a lovely place for a picnic, as well as breeding warblers and flycatchers

April 18 – Birdathon

May 16 – Silver Saddle Country Club at Galileo Hills, and California City Park. This is late in migration season, and a place famous for late-migrating rarities.

Note all these are tentative. Dates and destinations may change, depending on weather and the final selection of a date for the Wind Wolves Preserve trip and program.



**Valley Sightings June - August 2008**  
*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).*

This summer there were 21 species of shorebirds at the ponds. The highlights are:

Juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpipers** on July 30 and Aug 16 (SS).

It is uncertain if the **Least Sandpiper** on June 12 was heading north or south as this is 9 days after the last spring record and 11 days before the first fall record (SS).

An adult **Baird's Sandpiper** was on July 17-18 (SS). Juveniles are annual in the fall, but this is only the second adult for the valley.

An adult **Short-billed Dowitcher** was on July 24 and 31 (SS).

Species #174 for the college was a **Red-shouldered Hawk** (SS). There seems to be a pattern for post breeding dispersal in valley that starts in early July. This was a particularly good July. Other juveniles were noted July 7 N of Inyokern (TM), and July 17 on base (JC), and an adult July 9 and Aug 27 on base (SS).

A **Peregrine Falcon** was at the ponds July 29 (SS).

Species #175 for the cemetery list was a **Black Tern** on July 23 (SS).

**White-winged Doves** were in Ridgecrest May 29 (LL) and June 30 (BBu).

**Rufous Hummingbirds** seem to be finding enough to eat in the mountains with only these few reported in the valley -- July 11-18 in Ridgecrest (LL), July 15-16 SW of Inyokern (LK), and July 23-30 SE Ridgecrest (LS).

**Red-breasted Nuthatches** lingered in the valley this spring being seen May 29 and June 1 in two different Ridgecrest locations (LL), in SE Ridgecrest June 9 and 14 (LS), and in Ridgecrest June 22 (BBu). There was even a July record – on the 17<sup>th</sup> in Ridgecrest (LL). This is only the second July record.

Two **Northern Parulas** were at the ponds June 7 for the 9<sup>th</sup> valley record (SS).

**Common Yellowthroats** bred at the ponds with juveniles noted on July 29 (SS).

A **Summer Tanager** was N of Inyokern July 1 (BB).

A male **Western Tanager** was noticed singing in upper Nine Mile Canyon starting on June 14, he was still there on the 21<sup>st</sup>, and then on the 22<sup>nd</sup> he had quit singing as he now had a mate (SS).

**Cassin's Finches** continued N of Inyokern with five males, three females, and four juveniles on June 17 (PG). The last sighting was of a male on July 11 (PG).

LOS sightings include **Orange-crowned Warbler**, **Lazuli Bunting**, and **Ash-throated Flycatcher** in Indian Wells Canyon June 10 (LS), **Olive-sided Flycatcher** SW of Inyokern June 1 (LK), "**Western**" **Flycatchers** SE Ridgecrest and S of Inyokern June 20 (LS, SS), **Willow Flycatcher** S of Inyokern June 20 (SS), **Black-headed Grosbeak** S of Inyokern June 6, **Wilson's Warbler** at the ponds June 11 (SS), **Yellow Warbler** at the ponds June 7 (SS), **Western Wood-pewee** SE Ridgecrest June 10 (LS)

FOF sightings include **Warbling Vireo**, **Orange-crowned** and **Yellow Warblers** at the ponds July 29 (SS), and **Black-headed Grosbeak** at the college July 23 (SS), **Western Tanager** SW of Inyokern July 12 (LK)

*Thanks to the following observers: Bob Barnes, Brenda Burnett, Jeff Coker, Patrice Glasco, Louise Knecht, Lisa Lavelle, Lee Sutton,*

## LITTLE LAKE THREATENED

Coso Operating Company (Coso), the current operators of the geothermal power generating plant at Coso Hot Springs, has applied for a permit to pump water from the site of the former Hay Ranch just north of Little Lake in the Rose Valley, at the rate of 4,839 acre feet per year. According to their own Draft Environmental Impact Report analysis, this pumping would likely result in the drawdown of the water in Little Lake by 10%, a level they have arbitrarily described as inconsequential.

Kerncrest Audubon Society does not agree that any drawdown of the Little Lake water level is inconsequential! A decrease of even 5% of that level would likely result in a loss of all the surrounding wetlands, where we have personally observed

nesting Yellow Warblers and Common Yellowthroats, and great numbers of migrating songbirds. In addition, Little Lake itself is an important stopover and resting place for migrating grebes and waterfowl.

We also note that the DEIR does not consider any real alternatives to this increased pumping. It is our opinion that the desert is being run roughshod over to produce energy for urban areas. In this case, much of the power generated will be fed to the power grid and ultimately used in Los Angeles. The water to cool the geothermal plant should, therefore, be supplied by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP). Indeed, Hay Ranch, the proposed source of the water, is less than two miles from DWP's Haiwee reservoir, and to tap into that water source would be a simple matter. Alternatively, Coso should install an air cooled system.

The DEIR can be found at <http://inyoplanning.org/projects/Coso%20Geothermal/index.html>

We have been provided a copy of a letter written to the Inyo County Board of Supervisors regarding this project. Some excerpts, and ideas you might use to write the Planning Department, follow:

Inyo County Planning Department  
168 N. Edwards Street  
P. O. Drawer L  
Independence, CA 93526

Re: Coso Project  
Conditional Use Permit No. 2007-03

"Coso seeks to pump 4,839 acre-feet per year (AFY) of water from the underground aquifer known as the Rose Valley Basin for 30 years. The DEIR includes the alleged results and impacts from a new groundwater flow model for the Rose Valley Basin ("Hydrology Model"). We do not believe the DEIR accurately reflects the actual results and impacts from the calibrated Hydrology Model.

"The Hydrology Model states that the Rose Valley Basin is in a state of equilibrium. Succinctly, this means that any new pumping or transfer of water will deplete the water in the aquifer and be harmful to all of the Rose Valley residents, businesses and landowners, by way of reduced water availability. The Hydrology Model then predicts that (a) if Coso pumps at a rate of 4,839 acre-

feet per year (AFY), Coso would have to completely stop pumping after 1.2 years (less than 15 months) to avoid causing Little Lake to lose more than 10% of its water....

"The DEIR presumes that a 10% loss of the water resources at Little Lake is not significant. How was this determination made? Hasn't the County consistently rejected or refused to approve any project which would cause any depletion of water sources? Any loss of water in the high desert is significant. We disagree with the threshold assumption that a 10% loss of water is not significant. Any loss of water throughout the Rose Valley, even 10% or less, will impact the habitat and wildlife.

No resident, business or landowner in Rose Valley should be forced to suffer any water loss by virtue of the Project. A 10% decline, particularly during a normal drought, could destroy most, if not all, of the springs, lakes, ponds and wetlands at Little Lake and Rose Valley. There is no evidence in the Draft EIR to demonstrate otherwise.

"If the Hydrology Model predicts that Coso could only pump 4,839 AFY for 1.2 years, what justification is there for granting Coso a 30-year conditional use permit to pump at 4,839 AFY...?"

"The reason given for exporting water to Coso is that the water will help to replenish its geothermal reservoir and minimize power declines due to losses caused by evaporation. Coso is now in need of imported water for two fundamental reasons. First, Coso installed more production wells than could be sustained by its geothermal reservoir. Second, Coso designed its geothermal power plant, including the use of evaporative water-cooling towers, through which a substantial portion of the geofluids it produces is lost through evaporation. It could have used an air-cooled system to inject 100% of the geofluids and not lose any water through evaporation. Coso has sacrificed the geothermal reservoir to generate the maximum amount of power over the shortest possible term for its own profit. In so doing, Coso has depleted the geothermal reservoir and wants to take water from the Rose Valley Basin to offset its poor management decisions."

Note that this last point, the necessity to use dry cooling methods on the desert rather than water cooling, will apply also to the solar plant proposed for the Indian Wells Valley.

Energy production companies apparently think that since there aren't many of us living here, they can get away with anything and no one will care.

***We must stand up for our water!***

***Please write the Inyo County Planning Department now!! The deadline for comments on the DEIR is September 9<sup>th</sup>.***

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

National Audubon Society

Includes 1 year of Audubon magazine, Local chapter membership

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_ New Member/Gift - \$20 (Renewal will be \$30)

\_\_\_\_ Senior (62+) or full-time Student - \$15

Please enclose a check payable to National Audubon Society

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Membership Data Center

P.O. Box 51005

C45

7XCH

Boulder, CO 80323-1005

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Kerncrest Audubon Society

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ yr Kerncrest Audubon Society Membership @ \$15/year

(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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Lynne Thompson Member at large 375-5677

Newsletter Ed. Brenda Burnett 375-8634

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website: www.kerncrestaudubon.org

*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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P.O. Box 984, Ridgecrest, CA 93556

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**PAID**

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*September, 2008*

