

The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

September 2011

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

Wed	Sep 14	6:00 pm	Board Mtng	Brubakers'
Thu	Sep 15	7:00 pm	General Mtng	Alison Sheehey
Sat	Sep 17	7:30 am	Kern Valley Pride Day	
Sat	Sep 24	9:00 am	Nature & TuVu Fest	KRP
Sat	Oct 1	9:00 am	Nature Exploration	KRP

GENERAL MEETING PROGRAM

Alison Sheehey

The Big Picture in a Small Frame:

the Natural History of the Kern County including portions of Tulare and Inyo Counties in the Southern Sierra Nevada.

Why does landlocked Kern County have such an impressive list of flora and fauna? A diversity of geology and biology unparalleled for any area in North America, north of Mexico is why. Come learn about the natural history of Kern County from its beginnings: geology, tectonics, paleontology, Floristic Provinces, Native Americans, early settlers and about the diverse assemblage of flora and fauna in the modern day.

This whirlwind journey is the result of 20+ years of research and field explorations reconstructing the pieces on why this region is so diverse. It began as a result of working on endangered species issues back in the 1980's, where inquiries to researchers, government officials and literature yielded little information on life before European conquest of area Indians and common wildlife species. This program is an amalgamation of searches of literature, museum collections, interviews of experts, and Nature Ali's own field work. Expect to leave this presentation with a deep appreciation for why this area is so special.

Thursday, September 15, 2011 - 7 p.m.

Location: Maturango Museum, Ridgecrest

About the Speaker:

Alison Sheehey, aka Nature Ali, is the Outreach Director for Audubon California's Kern River Preserve. She moved to the Westside of Kern County in 1980 and now lives in the Kern River Valley. Her deep appreciation of all things Kern began with her explorations of the desert environs of the Temblor Range (the western border of Kern

County) where she fell in love with the intricacies of the geology, flora and fauna in a place many regarded as an ugly wasteland. Seeing beauty in every natural niche is one of the many talents of "Nature Ali".

A member of Audubon Society since 1985, she has been a staunch advocate for the environmental protection of Kern County and this planet preferring to quietly affect policy through education. Her website www.natureali.org provides an encyclopedia of free information and many of Ali's photos on the natural history of Kern County.

FIELD TRIP

Autumn Nature & Vulture Festival

Saturday, September 24 - 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Kern River Preserve Headquarters, 18747 Highway 178, Weldon.

The Kern River Valley Turkey Vulture Festival celebrates the height of fall Turkey Vulture migration through the Kern River Valley. This is one of the two largest known migration sites in North America north of Mexico. The 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.

Our late September festival date also corresponds with what is historically one of the finest weekends for observing fall land bird migration in California. Free booths, exhibits, workshops and children's activities at the Kern River Preserve as well as nature walks.

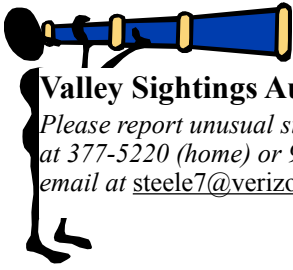
OTHER KERN RIVER VALLEY EVENTS

Saturday, September 17 - 7:30 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Kern Valley Pride Day - Trash pickup as part of the Kern River Preserve team, free BBQ lunch. RSVP.

Email: swieser@audubon.org

Saturday, October 1 - 9 a.m. - 11 a.m. Monthly Nature Exploration at Audubon Kern River Preserve. Fall Migration. KRP Headquarters, 18747 Highway 178, Weldon. (see their website: www.kern.audubon.org)



Valley Sightings August 2011

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

The immature **Gambel's Quail** S of Inyokern Aug 1 and 11 was a presumed escapee (SLS).

Red-shouldered Hawks were at the golf course Aug 8, and the ponds Aug 11, 15 and 17 (SLS, RAB).

A **Peregrine Falcon** was at the ponds Aug 31 (SLS).

It was a good month for **Sanderlings** with reports from the ponds Aug 6, and 19-31 (KL, RAB, SLS). Based on ages and coloration of birds it appears that there were five different individuals.

The first juvenile **Baird's Sandpiper** was at the ponds Aug 15 (SLS).

Juvenile **Short-billed Dowitcher** numbers are impressive this fall with up to thirty being seen starting on Aug 21 (SLS).

The 4th valley record of **Little Gull** was from the ponds Aug 29 (SLS).

A 2nd year **Sabine's Gull** showed up at the ponds Aug 19 (TL) and remained throughout the month. This is our earliest fall record by two days.

White-winged Doves were seen in Ridgecrest through Aug 22 (EC, RAB).

A **Belted Kingfisher** was at the ponds Aug 25 (SLS).

FOF for **Western Wood-pewee** was from the old sewage ponds Aug 15 (RAB).

FOF for **Willow Flycatcher** was from the ponds Aug 8 (SLS).

FOF for **Ash-throated Flycatcher** was from the ponds Aug 6 (SLS).

FOF for **Warbling Vireo** was from the college Aug 8 (SLS).

Red-breasted Nuthatches were reported Aug 8 at the college and in Ridgecrest (RAB).

A **Cactus Wren** was SW of Inyokern Aug 6 (LK).

A juvenile **American Robin** was in SE Ridgecrest Aug 20 (LS).

A **Phainopepla** was N of Inyokern Aug 23 (RAB).

FOF for **Orange-crowned Warbler** was from the college Aug 16 (SLS).

FOF for **Wilson's Warbler** was from the ponds Aug 15 (SLS).

FOF for **Brewer's Sparrow** was from the ponds Aug 18 (SLS).

FOF for **Lark Sparrow** was from the ponds Aug 22 (SLS).

FOF for **Savannah Sparrow** was from the ponds Aug 27 (SLS).

First of fall (FOF) for **Lazuli Bunting** was from the college Aug 16 (SLS).

Thanks to the following observers: *Robert Barnes, Encar Card, Kelli Levinson, Tim Ludwick, Louise Knecht, Lee Sutton*

CONSERVATION CORNER

by Terri Middlemiss

The California State Parks closure news has become real – beyond dire. \$22 million budget cut means 70 parks (25% of the whole system), including Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve, Portola Redwoods, Del Norte Coast Redwoods, Tule Elk State Reserve, Tomales Bay. Just to name a few. This is permanent closure. It starts September 1.

There are strenuous efforts being made to head off the final cuts with corporate sponsorships, operating agreements with qualified community-based non-profits and the like. Rallies have been held, exhibits shown, legislators contacted. What these closures mean for wildlife, recreation, education and the attendant connection to nature in various forms is nothing less than a catastrophe. Vandalism, illegal dumping, deterioration of structures and natural resources. Perhaps irreparable damage. And there will be further cuts unless we can make our representatives (!) understand what they are doing. I doubt that many of them are connected to the great outdoors and nature. It's easy to point to items on a list and eliminate them. So many of our state parks host numerous species of birds, other animals and plants through protected habitat.

YOU can help by joining the California State Parks Foundation. Their budget is strained to the limit due to all the unexpected expenses. Sign up for action alerts and e-newsletters at www.calparks.org NOW. We, as California citizens, must make a statement of our overwhelming support for our parks.

I continue to be astounded and pleased with the work of the Center for Biological Diversity. Their

latest newsletter, Summer 2011, has an article about a "A landmark agreement – the largest-ever struck for imperiled wildlife – will move 757 long-neglected plants and animals toward protection under the Endangered Species Act."

Did you know that most species spend 20 or more years on the candidate list before the government makes a decision?! At least 24 species have become extinct while waiting. The eastern massasauga rattlesnake has waited 30 years!!, the Oregon spotted frog, 18 years!! and on and on. This agreement has been reached after "...several years of litigation and 6 intense, drama-filled months of negotiation..." just for a weak agreement. Another month of intensity, courts and fending off a serious attack by the Safari Club International, a much better, final agreement was reached.

If you don't belong to this hard-hitting, get-it-done group, please consider doing so.

www.BiologicalDiversity.org.

Closer to home, I am starting to see migrants in my yard. I have been seeing a great number of Turkey Vultures migrating since the beginning of August. I am looking forward to Northern Flickers – that means cooler weather. And, almost unbelievably, White Crowned Sparrows are due September 19 at the earliest locations. In my yard it is September 21. I hope you are starting to see such signs of Fall, too.

OTHER CONSERVATION ISSUES

SOLAR MILLENNIUM UPDATE

No, this issue has not gone away. Solar Millennium LLC did submit a letter withdrawing their application for certification on January 25, 2011, and until the end of July of this year if you looked at the 09-AFC-9 case main page on the California Energy Commission's (CEC) web site you would have seen that withdrawal as the latest "key date." But guess what? It turned out the Commission, on a technicality, did not accept that withdrawal. Then Solar Millennium miraculously decided that instead of withdrawing they wished to redefine the project as photovoltaic, reduce its footprint, and request permission to voluntarily stay under the permitting jurisdiction of the CEC, who normally by law do not have jurisdiction of photovoltaic facilities.

Kerncrest Audubon Society is opposed to this and any action that would prolong the life of the application, as are the Center for Biological Diversity, the Desert Tortoise Council, Basin and Range Watch, and Western Watersheds. The Sierra Club has now also weighed in as opposed to the request for continuing CEC jurisdiction, on legal grounds.

Kerncrest has continued to act as Intervenor, diligently attending all sorts of telephone

conferences. The next will be a hearing on the jurisdictional issue sometime in late September.

NORTH SKY WIND PROJECT

This one is another wind project planned for the Jawbone Canyon/Kelso Valley area. Like the Pine Tree wind farm, against which we sued and lost, it is close to Butterbrecht Spring. Actually, this one is even closer than Pine Tree. Audubon California is opposing this project, as are the Defenders of Wildlife and Natural Resources Defense Council. Kerncrest Audubon Society signed a letter written by Garry George, California Audubon Renewable Energy Project Director, along with representatives of Defenders of Wildlife and Natural Resources Defense Council. Email chatbird@verizon.net if you would like a copy of that letter.

There will be a hearing on this project at the Kern County Board of Supervisors meeting at 2:00 pm on Tuesday, September 13, First Floor, Kern County Administrative Center, 1115 Truxtun Avenue, Bakersfield. On the agenda is a Zone Change Request. We hear also that certification of the Draft Environmental Impact Report will be considered and possibly voted upon. If you read Audubon California's letter, you will see the DEIR is woefully inadequate. And if you want to know why we are opposing the project, I have also available a copy of the Pine Tree Mortality Monitoring Annual Report.

You may recall that one of our problems with the Pine Tree project was that Kern County let them get away with calling monitoring mitigation. It turns out that their annual reports have been instrumental in attracting the support of others in the environmental community in opposing this project and, we hope, others planned for the vicinity. This is a major passerine migration route and should be protected!

Please try to attend this meeting. While sometimes opposition seems futile, activists opposed to a toll road in Orange County that would have destroyed thousands of acres of coastal scrub habitat defeated it by impressing elected officials with the sheer volume of opposition. Call 760-382-4935 to arrange carpools.

ELECTRONIC CHATS

Want to save paper and receive your copy of *The Chat* by email? Send an email to webmaster@kerncrestaudubon.org and let him know. You also have the option of receiving both an electronic copy *and* a paper copy. Just tell the webmaster you would like both. (Don't feel too guilty. We can only save paper down to 200 copies, after which we lose our 3rd class mailing price.)

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Name _____

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

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Please enclose a check payable to National Audubon Society

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Kerncrest Audubon Society

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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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Webmaster	Noel Gravelle	375-2325

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

Newsletter of the Kerncrest Audubon society
P.O. Box 984, Ridgecrest, CA 93556

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