



# The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

September 2012

## September/October CALENDAR

|     |        |         |                                     |
|-----|--------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| Wed | Sep 19 | 6:00 pm | Board Meeting at Brubakers'         |
| Thu | Sep 20 | 7:00 pm | General Meeting                     |
| Sat | Sep 29 | 8:00 am | Field Trip to TuVu Festival         |
| Sat | Oct 13 | 8:00 am | Rademacher Hills Cleanup            |
| Wed | Oct 17 | 6:00 pm | Board Meeting at Gravelles'         |
| Sat | Oct 20 | 8:00 am | Field Trip to Little Lake\ Overlook |

### General Meeting

#### SUSAN STEELE'S KERN BIG YEAR

From 1 Jan to 31 Dec 2011, Susan Steele set out to break the record for the greatest number of species of birds seen in Kern County in one year. She was attempting to exceed the previous record of 305 birds, set by Matt Heindel in the 90s.

Did she do it? Many of you know, and will enjoy hearing some of the details of that crazy year's adventure/slog. Others will have to come to the program to find out. We'll hear about some of the many folks who helped, some of the serendipitous finds, and some of the species missed. (I was personally with Susan all the way up in Aspendell above Bishop when a call came in about a needed vagrant at Galileo Hills, near California City. Susan, of course, quickly packed, jumped in the car and ran.)

There will also likely be some photos from husband Bob, or from Susan, no slouch as a photographer herself.

Maturango Museum, 7pm Thursday, September 20th.

### Field Trip

#### AUTUMN NATURE AND TURKEY VULTURE FESTIVAL

September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Audubon Kern River Preserve, Weldon

Here they come again! (Actually, many have already been here, the migration through Ridgecrest seeming to be a bit earlier than the big push through Weldon.) Thousands of Turkey Vultures will be alighting along the North Fork of the Kern River as it passes through Weldon and Onyx. Sometimes thousands in a day!

There will be booths and talks at the Preserve, beginning bird walks, activities for children, trips to the site of the multi-year migration count, chases to lift-off sites, and more.

A full schedule will be put out a short time before the festival.

Meet at the 76 Station in Inyokern at 8:00 am to car pool. Bring a picnic.

Call Lee Sutton at 760-375-1981 for further information

### October Field Trip

#### LITTLE LAKE OVERLOOK

On Saturday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, Lee Sutton will lead a field trip to the overlook above Little Lake. We have visited this site several times since we helped construct it, but never in the Fall. It will be interesting to see what comes through then.

Further details will be published in next month's Chat. For information in advance, call Lee at 760-375-1981.

### SAVE THE DATE

The following is brought to you as a public announcement on behalf of the Ridgecrest Field Office, Bureau of Land Management. We used to clean up Richmond Road. Here's an opportunity to again get out and help, and have some fun.



#### RADEMACHER HILLS CLEANUP DAY

As part of BLM National Public Lands Day, we are looking for volunteers to enhance our public lands. We plan to meet on Saturday Oct. 13, 2012 at 8:00 a.m., at the main parking lot at the end of the pavement on College Heights Blvd. We will gather garbage until 12:00 noon or when the trailers are full. Afterwards, we'll grill some food!

If you are interested in volunteering, please call: 760- 384-5447 before Oct. 11, 2012.



## Valley Sightings June-July 2012

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).

A scruffy young male **Wood Duck** was at the ponds July 18-19 (SLS), which is a couple weeks earlier than expected for a fall migrant.

A **Common Merganser** was at the ponds June 14 (TL).

A large influx of juvenile **Brown Pelicans** has been reported in California and we had one at the ponds June 27-28 (SLS) for the 4<sup>th</sup> valley record.

**Cattle Egrets** were at the ponds June 12 (SLS), 14 (TL), and July 7 (TW).

A spring migrant **Osprey** was at the ponds June 1 (SLS).

**Peregrine Falcons** were at the ponds June 2 (TW), June 5 (SLS), and July 11 (SLS).

**Common Gallinules** were again successful breeders with two juveniles seen at the ponds on July 18 (SLS).

The **Black-bellied Plover** at the ponds July 22 (DVB) was our only report this summer, which is fewer than expected.

FOF for **Semipalmated Plover** was at the ponds July 18 (SLS).

FOF for **Solitary Sandpiper** was at the ponds July 18 (SLS).

**Whimbrels** were at the ponds June 1 and 4 (SLS), June 2 and July 21 (DVB) and July 27 (SLS).

**Sanderlings** were at the ponds July 23-31, which a high count of four on July 27 (SLS).

An adult **Baird's Sandpiper** was at the ponds July 21 (DVB).

Two **Short-billed Dowitchers** were at the ponds July 7 (TW), and July 13 (SLS), with a single seen July 31 (SLS).

An immature **Franklin's Gull** was at the ponds June 2 (DVB, TW).

FOF for **Black Tern** was from the ponds July 3 (BB), for **Caspian Tern** July 19 (SLS), and for **Forster's Tern** July 10 (SLS).

On July 7 mating was observed with the **White-winged Dove** pair in Ridgecrest (EC). While there

have been many White-winged Doves here in the summer no juveniles have ever been noted.

**White-throated Swifts** were at the ponds July 17 (SLS), which are unexpected in mid-summer.

FOF for **Rufous Hummingbird** was from the old sewage ponds July 13 (BB).

The **Olive-sided Flycatcher** SW of Inyokern on June 28 is hard to explain (LK), but presumably a late spring migrant.

The **Willow Flycatcher** in Ridgecrest July 26 was our first of fall (JS).

An **Eastern Kingbird** made a brief appearance at the ponds June 1 (SLS) to become the 8<sup>th</sup> valley record.

FOF for **Bank Swallow** was from the ponds July 16 (SLS), for **Cliff Swallow** June 25 (SLS), and **Tree Swallow** June 19 (SLS).

A **Phainopepla** was SW of Inyokern July 9 (LK).

FOF for **Orange-crowned Warbler** was from SE Ridgecrest July 28 (LS), and for **Wilson's Warbler** from the ponds July 30 (TL).

The **Northern Parula** at the golf course June 20-21 was the 188<sup>th</sup> species for that location (SLS) and the first in the valley since May 2009. The following day another male **Northern Parula** was discovered N of Inyokern (BB).

The **Blackpoll Warbler** at the ponds June 5 was only our 2<sup>nd</sup> spring record and 7<sup>th</sup> record overall (TL).

FOF for **Western Tanager** was from SE Ridgecrest July 16 (LS).

Our first migrant **Brewer's Sparrow** was at the ponds July 31, which is our earliest fall record by four days (SLS).

The first fall migrant **Black-headed Grosbeak** was S of Inyokern June 27 (SLS). Other Black-headed Grosbeaks were noted SW of Inyokern July 2 (LK) and at the college July 22 (BB).

**Blue Grosbeaks** were at the ponds June 14 (TL), at the golf course June 20 (SLS), and in SE Ridgecrest July 12 (LS).

The juvenile **Lazuli Bunting** at the ponds June 28 was completely unexpected (SLS).

A male **Tricolored Blackbird** was at the ponds July 31 (SLS).

**Scott's Orioles** continued SW of Inyokern through June 26 (LK).

A **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was in Sand Canyon  
July 31 (BB).

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes,*  
*David Blue, Encar Card, Louise Knecht, Tim*  
*Ludwick, Joyce Seibold, Lee Sutton, Tom Wurster*

## TRIP REPORT

April 2012 to Surprise Canyon

Back in late April, a group of people from the Audubon Society and the California Native Plant Society participated jointly in what could only loosely be called a field trip. Some folks went early in hopes of seeing more birds, some went early to have time to hike farther up the canyon, some went later to have more time to sleep, and some went late and hiked miles up the canyon anyway.

Oddly, those who went earliest saw the fewest birds. As the earliest locals arrived, a couple from out of town were already leaving the canyon and met us at the mouth of the canyon reporting there were no birds at all. But it was migration season, and as the day wore on more and more birds dropped into the canyon. By the end of the day, the following list, compiled by Alison Sheehey, had been seen by all participants combined. It's a pretty incredible list!

|    |                             |
|----|-----------------------------|
| 6  | White-throated Swift        |
| 1  | Black-chinned Hummingbird   |
| 1  | Hammond's Flycatcher        |
| 2  | Gray Flycatcher             |
| 2  | Dusky Flycatcher            |
| 1  | Say's Phoebe                |
| 1  | Ash-throated Flycatcher     |
| 1  | Plumbeous Vireo             |
| 2  | Cassin's Vireo              |
| 2  | Hutton's Vireo              |
| 1  | Warbling Vireo              |
| 4  | Common Raven                |
| 3  | Canyon Wren                 |
| 1  | House Wren                  |
| 16 | Blue-gray Gnatcatcher       |
| 2  | Ruby-crowned Kinglet        |
| 1  | Orange-crowned Warbler      |
| 2  | Common Yellowthroat         |
| 1  | Yellow-rumped Warbler       |
| 1  | Black-throated Gray Warbler |
| 30 | Wilson's Warbler            |
| 2  | California Towhee           |
| 1  | Black-throated Sparrow      |
| 18 | White-crowned Sparrow       |
| 6  | House Finch                 |
| 2  | Lesser Goldfinch            |

The California Towhees would almost certainly have to be the endangered Inyo subspecies. This is the second time they have been spotted there in the Spring. Are they breeding there? If so, and we can document it, this bodes well for the long-term protection of Surprise Canyon.

**CONSERVATION CORNER**  
by Terri Middlemiss

Palm oil. A global catastrophe. I have traveled next to miles and miles of plantations in Costa Rica. I have seen photos of Southeast Asia with the monoculture stretching as far as you could see. (Like clear cutting in Oregon and Washington)

News from Rainforest Action Network (RAN) reports that deliberately-set fires by agribusiness giant Cargill have killed more than 100 Sumatran orangutans (critically endangered) and wiped out hundreds of acres of pristine wilderness in the Tripa peat forest. This is only the tip of the iceberg, so to speak, in place like Indonesia and Malaysia. Not just wildlife, but nearby communities who use the riches of the forest are severely impacted by slash-and-burn practices. Sumatran tigers, rhinos and Asian elephants also perish. One can't even imagine the numbers of birds, reptiles, insects and plants.

"Nearly 50% of all household goods contain palm oil," according to RAN. For over 2 years, I have read labels and refused to buy anything with palm oil in it, including some favorite cookies and chocolate.

While I choose to boycott palm oil, RAN, and others, are asking for comprehensive safeguards on the palm oil companies trade to eliminate profit from this devastating destruction of pristine and valuable forests. I hope that you choose to boycott this latest crop grown at the expense of animals and their forests.

Student Conservation Association. I started supporting this group several years ago and was pleased to meet several kids who were in the hardware store the same time as I was. They were so please that I was a member. This partnership with the National Park Service has provided "energetic students to do the vital work of helping to keep our parks from being 'loved to death.'" For 5 decades. I receive emails detailing the projects they are working on. It is great to see young people outside, discovering nature, camaraderie and being fulfilled. It is worth considering. And even as I whittle down the large number of organizations that I belong to, this one I will keep. For the Future.

Call Terri at 760-377-5192 or email her at [catbird4@earthlink.net](mailto:catbird4@earthlink.net) for more information about these organizations and to find out how to join.

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

National Audubon Society  
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Or go to our website at [www.kerncrestaudubon.org](http://www.kerncrestaudubon.org), click on "Membership" in the right-hand column of the page, then click on the Audubon logo with the flying egret. When filling in the form, select the chapter C45 KERNCREST AUDUBON SOCIETY from the pull-down menu to have your first year's dues credited directly to our chapter, please.

By joining on line, you may pay by credit card.

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Kerncrest Audubon Society

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\_\_\_\_\_ 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

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