Silver Saddle Field Trip Report

If you missed the May field trip to the Silver Saddle Resort in California City, you missed a good one. The resort, located in a remote section of California City at Galileo Hills, is known to the Southern California birding community as an outstanding migrant trap and birding hot spot. Timing for a field trip to the Silver Saddle can be tricky as the late season spring migration, which is known to attract an unusual number of eastern vagrants, is significantly weather dependent. But Saturday morning the 16th of May proved to be a good guess as we were rewarded with good birding.

Not only were some of the usual suspects present in good numbers (Swainson’s thrushes and Wilson’s warbler’s were everywhere) but as we had hoped, a good number of vagrants were there also. As a result, some of us saw bird species we had never seen before. When you have been birding as long as the majority of the participants, getting a “life bird” is not a very common event. So it was a great day. To top it off, the temperature was just about perfect.

Two carloads of eager Kerncrest birders arrived about 9 o’clock to join Lee and Shirley Sutton, who had stayed overnight in their RV at the resort on Friday. The birding was good through the morning, and all then gathered for a picnic beneath the large trees near the larger of the many ponds at the resort.

The list of sightings for the Suttons alone that day totaled 42 species! Highlights included snowy egret, green heron, lesser nighthawk, Swainson’s hawk, pacific slope, Hammond’s, dusky and willow flycatchers, western wood-pewee, warbling and Cassin’s vireos, hermit thrush, yellow, Townsend’s, MacGillivray’s and **black and white** warblers, **American redstart**, common yellowthroat, **indigo bunting**, Lincoln’s sparrow, **rose-breasted grosbeak**, and yellow-headed blackbird. Note: the birds shown in “bold” are normally considered to be eastern vagrants.

Submitted by Lee Sutton

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**Birdathon**

In the past, the practice has been to publish the list of birds seen at the annual Birdathon in a separate letter, issued only to those who contributed to the Birdathon, sort of as a "bribe." This year, however, the response to our plea for contributions was so prompt and overwhelming that we decided to publish the list in the Chat itself for all to see. **We thank all of you who contributed, and know that all of you do all you can.**

It's still not too late, of course. You can still mail contributions to PO Box 984. Half of the proceeds go to the Kern River Preserve in Weldon, and the other half to support our education programs here in Ridgecrest. And next year we will be adding a second Junior Audubon club for elementary students. Now we will have a club in Inyokern, as well as Faller school!

See the complete list of birds seen on page 3.

**Thanks**

The election held at our annual meeting, held in May, replaced two officers who had been "term limited" by our bylaws at 3 terms of 2 years each. That means Noel Gravelle as Secretary and Phil Archibald as Treasurer put in 6 years each of hard work! Our sincere thanks to them, and our welcome to new Treasurer, Lynne Thompson and Secretary, Nancy Robinson.

A complete list of board members and their phone numbers is on page 4.

**Annual Planning Meeting**

This will be the last issue of the Chat for the season. No more meetings or field trips to publicize until we all return from our summer meanderings in August, at which time we will hold our usual planning potluck barbecue at the home of Lloyd and Sherry Brubaker. That is not just for board members! If you have an idea for a field trip and would like to help with the planning (or any other ideas for things you would like Kerncrest Audubon to get involved with) come on in!

The date is August 25th. Details are not yet finalized, so to keep up and find out time and menu plans, notify Noel Gravelle to be put on his email reminder list, or Sherry Brubaker to ask for a phone call.
Valley Sightings May 2009
Please report unusual sightings to Susan Steele at 377-5220 (home) or 939-1722 (work), or by email at steele7@verizon.net.

The hybrid Cinnamon Teal x Blue-winged Teal at the ponds May 19-24 was a striking bird (SS).

A male Wood Duck was at the Inyokern Ponds May 3 (SS).

Interesting birds at the ponds May 20 included a male Wood Duck, a Western Grebe, and a male Indigo Bunting (SS).

A Clark’s Grebe was at the ponds May 5-7 (SS).

The flock of one hundred and two American White Pelicans at the ponds May 21 was a large flock for so late in the spring (SS).

An American Bittern was reported from the old sewage ponds Apr 30 (EE).

Several juvenile Copper’s Hawks have been noted in Ridgecrest in the summer over the last several years. While it was indicative of nesting, these young birds were flying and nests were never found. We now have confirmation of nesting when a pair was discovered at the college May 16, with the female sitting on the nest and the male close by (SS). A chick was noted on the 25th (JS) and at least three were seen on the 27th (SS).

A White-rumped Sandpiper was at the ponds May 24-25 (TW). This is an extremely rare bird in California, which makes it being our 4th valley record even more amazing.

Franklin’s Gulls were seen at the ponds May 1, 4, 5 (SS) and 23 and 24 (TW).

A Band-tailed Pigeon was at the college May 21 (JS). Of our 20 records, 8 are in May, and 8 are on the valley floor.

The White-winged Dove in Ridgecrest May 27 was a new yard bird (BB).

A few Long-eared Owls have been seen. The first was SW of Inyokern May 19 (LK), and two were at the college May 24 (m.ob.).

A Common Nighthawk was seen May 15-16 SW of Inyokern and well described (LK). This date is extremely early, being two weeks before Kern’s early date.

The Ladder-backed Woodpecker in SW Inyokern May 13 was at lower elevation than expected (LK).

A Pacific-slope Flycatcher on May 4-5 was a new yard bird for Ridgecrest residents (BBu).

Plumbeous Vireos were at the college May 19 (SS) and May 25 (JS).

Two Red-eyed Vireos were at the college May 21 for the 4th valley record (SS). The last sighting was May 15, 2002.

Phainopeplas were seen May 6-17 SW of Inyokern with a valley high count of fifteen on the 17th (LK). Phainopeplas were also seen at the college Apr 18 – May 24 (JS).

Eight of our seventeen records are from May.

The Tennessee Warbler N of Inyokern Apr 23 was our 5th valley record and the 154th species for that location (SC).

A Northern Parula was SW of Inyokern May 14 (LK). Of our 11 valley records, 8 have been in the spring, from May 4-June 26.

The Hermit Warbler SW of Inyokern May 14 was our only report this spring (LK).

An American Redstart was at the college May 22-23 (L&CL, JS).

An Ovenbird, 8th valley record, at the college May 16 (JS), inspired much searching on May 17. While it wasn’t found several interesting birds were turned up including: an Olive-sided Flycatcher (SS), the 3rd valley record of Brown Thrasher (SS), Lesser Nighthawks - species # 176 for that location (AS), a hybrid male Indigo x Lazuli Bunting (AS), male Blue and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (SS), a White-crowned Sparrow (AS), and a “Myrtle’s” Warbler (SS, SG).

The 9th record of Ovenbird was from the college May 24 (JS, VH).

The Northern Waterthrush that was discovered N of Inyokern Apr 30 stayed a remarkable 12 days (LB). This was the 7th valley record with the last on Sep 15, 2004.

Only two reports of Yellow-breasted Chat this spring. The first was from Ridgecrest May 6 (JS), and the other from SE Ridgecrest May 5-10 (LS).

Inyokern experienced a mini-fallout on May 12 with the most numerous species being Wilson’s Warbler: at least 60 SW of Inyokern (LK) and 20 S of Inyokern (BS). Other species included Lazuli Bunting, Black-headed Grosbeak, Western Tanager, MacGillivary’s Warbler, Western Wood-Pewee, and Ash-throated Flycatcher.

May 25 was a great day for Summer Tanagers in the valley with one at the college (JS), and another in NW Ridgecrest (BSh).

The singing Black-chinned Sparrow in Freeman Canyon May 15 was the 104th species for that location (BB). All seventeen of our records fall between March 29 and June 5.

A Fox Sparrow was N of Inyokern May 16 (PG).

Golden-crowned Sparrows were S of Inyokern May 3 (BS), SE Ridgecrest May 5 and Sand Canyon May 8 (LS).

A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at the college May 24 (JS).

A male Indigo Bunting was at the college May 28 (SS).

Lawrence’s Goldfinches have been seen at the college May 16-24 (JS). While it was suspected that they were breeding this wasn’t confirmed until the 23rd when three juveniles were seen with the adults (L&C L). Another Lawrence’s Goldfinch made a brief appearance in a Ridgecrest backyard May 10 (BBu).

FOS sightings include: Willow Flycatcher May 10 SW of Inyokern (LK), Swainson’s Thrush May 5 in Ridgecrest (BBu), Lesser Nighthawk May 5 S of Inyokern (SS).

LOS sightings include: Rufous Hummingbird May 1 S of Inyokern (SS), Ruby-crowned Kinglet May 1 SE Ridgecrest (LS), White-crowned Sparrow May 20 at the college (SS), American Goldfinch May 10 in Ridgecrest (BBu).

Thanks to the following observers: Linda Bates, Brenda Burnett, Scott Carpenter, Elias Elias, Patrice Glasco, Stan Gray, Vernon Howe, Louise Knecht, Leslie and Cindy Lierwance, Beaujoun Shull, Joyce Seibold, Alison Sheehey, Bob Steele, Lee Sutton, Tom Wurster.
Birdathon
combined list of birds sighted in the Indian Wells and Kern River valleys on April 18, 2009

Pied-billed Grebe
Eared Grebe
Western Grebe*
Clark's Grebe*
American White Pelican*
Double-crested Cormorant
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Cattle Egret
Green Heron
Black-crowned Night-Heron
White-faced Ibis
Wood Duck*
Mallard
Cinnamon Teal
Northern Shoveler
Gadwall
American Wigeon
Canvasback
Redhead
Ring-necked Duck
Ruddy Duck
Turkey Vulture
Osprey*
Northern Harrier
Red-shouldered Hawk*
Red-tailed Hawk*
Ferruginous Hawk*
American Kestrel
Chukar
California Quail
Mountain Quail*
Virginia Rail
Sora*
American Coot
Killdeer
Black-necked Stilt
American Avocet
Greater Yellowlegs
Solitary Sandpiper
Western Sandpiper
 Least Sandpiper
Dunlin
Common Snipe
Franklin's Gull
Bonaparte's Gull
Ring-billed Gull*
California Gull
Rock Dove
Mourning Dove
Eurasian Collared-dove
Greater Roadrunner
Barn Owl
Great Horned Owl*
Long-eared Owl
Black-chinned Hummingbird
Anna's Hummingbird
Costa's Hummingbird
Acorn Woodpecker*
Ladder-backed Woodpecker*
Nuttall's Woodpecker*
Downy Woodpecker*
Hairy Woodpecker*
Northern Flicker*
Gray Flycatcher
Black Phoebe
Says' Phoebe
Ash-throated Flycatcher
Western Kingbird
Horned Lark
Tree Swallow*
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Cliff Swallow*
Barn Swallow*
Steller's Jay*
Scrub Jay
Common Raven
Mountain Chickadee*
Oak Titmouse*
Verdin
Bushtit*
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch*
Brown Creeper*
Cactus Wren*
Rock Wren
Bewick's Wren
House Wren*
Marsh Wren
Golden-crowned Kinglet*
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Western Bluebird*
Hermit Thrush*
American Robin
Northern Mockingbird
Sage Thrasher
California Thrasher*
Le Conte's Thrasher
Cedar Waxwing
Phainopepla
Loggerhead Shrike
European Starling
Warbling Vireo
Orange-crowned Warbler
Yellow Warbler*
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Painted Redstart!
Black-headed Grosbeak
Spotted Towhee
California Towhee
Chipping Sparrow*
Brewer's Sparrow
Black-chinned Sparrow
Lark Sparrow*
Black-throated Sparrow
Sage Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Fox Sparrow*
Song Sparrow*
Lincoln's Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Red-winged Blackbird
Tricolored Blackbird*
Western Meadowlark*
Yellow-headed Blackbird
Brewer's Blackbird
Great-tailed Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Hooded Oriole
Bullock's Oriole
Scott's Oriole
Purple Finch*
House Finch
Red Crossbill
Pine Siskin*
Lesser Goldfinch
Lawrence's Goldfinch*
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow

* seen only in Kern River valley

Have a nice Summer
Keep cool, and
Keep your bird baths full!
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New Member/Gift - $20 (Renewal will be $30)
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Please enclose a check payable to Kerncrest Audubon Society.
Clip out and mail to: Kerncrest Audubon Society
P.O. Box 984
Ridgecrest, CA 93556

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.

A subscription to The Chat only does not provide the right to vote in elections.

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Kerncrest Audubon Society
P.O. Box 5173
Boulder, CO 80323-1005

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