



# The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

Summer 2009

## SUMMER CALENDAR

Tue Aug 25 tbd Annual Planning Meeting –  
Brubakers'

## 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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

## 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 25<sup>th</sup>. 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](mailto: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 25<sup>th</sup> (JS) and at least three were seen on the 27<sup>th</sup> (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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> (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 5<sup>th</sup> valley record and the 154<sup>th</sup> 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**, 8<sup>th</sup> valley record, at the college May 16 (JS), inspired much searching on May 17. While it wasn't re-found several interesting birds were turned up including: an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** (SS), the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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**, **MacGillivray'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 104<sup>th</sup> 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 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 Lieurance, Beaujourn Shull, , Joyce Seibold, Alison Sheehy, 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	Eurasian Collared-dove	Loggerhead Shrike
Eared Grebe	Greater Roadrunner	European Starling
Western Grebe*	Barn Owl	Warbling Vireo
Clark's Grebe*	Great Horned Owl*	Orange-crowned Warbler
American White Pelican*	Long-eared Owl	Yellow Warbler*
Double-crested Cormorant	Black-chinned Hummingbird	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Great Blue Heron	Anna's Hummingbird	Common Yellowthroat
Great Egret	Costa's Hummingbird	Painted Redstart!
Snowy Egret	Acorn Woodpecker*	Black-headed Grosbeak
Cattle Egret	Ladder-backed Woodpecker*	Spotted Towhee
Green Heron	Nuttall's Woodpecker*	California Towhee
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Downy Woodpecker*	Chipping Sparrow*
White-faced Ibis	Hairy Woodpecker*	Brewer's Sparrow
Wood Duck*	Northern Flicker*	Black-chinned Sparrow
Mallard	Gray Flycatcher	Lark Sparrow*
Cinnamon Teal	Black Phoebe	Black-throated Sparrow
Northern Shoveler	Says' Phoebe	Sage Sparrow
Gadwall	Ash-throated Flycatcher	Savannah Sparrow
American Wigeon	Western Kingbird	Fox Sparrow*
Canvasback	Horned Lark	Song Sparrow*
Redhead	Tree Swallow*	Lincoln's Sparrow
Ring-necked Duck	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	White-crowned Sparrow
Ruddy Duck	Cliff Swallow*	Dark-eyed Junco
Turkey Vulture	Barn Swallow*	Red-winged Blackbird
Osprey*	Steller's Jay*	Tricolored Blackbird*
Northern Harrier	Scrub Jay	Western Meadowlark*
Red-shouldered Hawk*	Common Raven	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Red-tailed Hawk*	Mountain Chickadee*	Brewer's Blackbird
Ferruginous Hawk*	Oak Titmouse*	Great-tailed Grackle
American Kestrel	Verdin	Brown-headed Cowbird
Chukar	Bushtit*	Hooded Oriole
California Quail	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Bullock's Oriole
Mountain Quail*	White-breasted Nuthatch*	Scott's Oriole
Virginia Rail	Brown Creeper*	Purple Finch*
Sora*	Cactus Wren*	House Finch
American Coot	Rock Wren	Red Crossbill
Killdeer	Bewick's Wren	Pine Siskin*
Black-necked Stilt	House Wren*	Lesser Goldfinch
American Avocet	Marsh Wren	Lawrence's Goldfinch*
Greater Yellowlegs	Golden-crowned Kinglet*	American Goldfinch
Solitary Sandpiper	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	House Sparrow
Western Sandpiper	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	
Least Sandpiper	Western Bluebird*	* seen only in Kern River valley
Dunlin	Hermit Thrush*	
Common Snipe	American Robin	
Franklin's Gull	Northern Mockingbird	
Bonaparte's Gull	Sage Thrasher	
Ring-billed Gull*	California Thrasher*	
California Gull	Le Conte's Thrasher	
Rock Dove	Cedar Waxwing	
Mourning Dove	Phainopepla	

Have a nice Summer  
Keep cool, and  
Keep your bird baths full!

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*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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