

The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, PO Box 984, Ridgecrest, California

January 2025

CALENDAR

| | | |
|------------|------|---|
| Wed Jan 15 | 5 pm | Board Meeting at Burnetts' |
| Thu Jan 16 | 7 pm | General Meeting, Program Melanie Branson |

GENERAL MEETING

*Program A Conservation Journey to Belize, Costa Rica, Guyana and the IWW
with Melanie Branson*

This two and a half years journey of discovery showcases the amazing conservation efforts by several NGO groups in these central and south american countries. We will be hearing about manatees and Yellow-headed Parrots in Belize, Resplendent Quetzal and Loggerhead Turtles in Costa Rica and agroforestry and Hoatzin in Guyana, just to name a few.

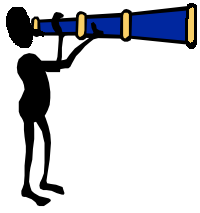
Returning to the Indian Wells Valley and the Mojave Desert, we see how similar conservation efforts and issues are being addressed by our own local conservation heroes.

Melanie Branson is currently a high school biology teacher Ridgecrest, California. As she spent her childhood overseas in Japan, England and Australia while her father was in the U.S. Navy, she enjoyed exploring the world's diverse nature in mountain trails, moors, and Indian Ocean coral reefs. After graduating from University of California, San Diego with a degree in Animal Physiology, Melanie joined the U.S. Navy. Learning management skills through mission planning and staff work, she also enjoyed the teamwork and camaraderie built during the many adventures around the world. After twenty years, it was time to move on, and apply her passion for mentoring people to the high school where Melanie was able to also focus on her love of science and the environment. She started to pursue her Masters of Biology in 2022, and readily found her niche in the conservation organizations of the Indian Wells Valley, focusing on birds, water conservation and xeric gardening. Melanie currently serves on the boards of the Eastern Kern County Resource Conservation District and the Kerncrest Audubon Society, along with serving as club advisor for the Burroughs High School Environmental Club. She enjoys her spare time exploring the Sierra foothill canyons, traveling, backpacking, gardening, working her small livestock farm and birding with her daughter and other long-time friends.

KERN RIVER VALLEY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

The South Fork Valley count is on Saturday, January 4th. Please contact Denise LaBerteaux at eremophile@gmail.com or phone 760-617-6306 to sign up.

The Kern Valley count is the following day, Sunday the 5th. To sign up, email Reed Tollefson at Reed.Tollefson@audubon.org.



VALLEY SIGHTINGS

for December, 2024

Please record your sightings at ebird.org or email them to Dan Burnett at imdanburnett@gmail.com or phone 760 375 8634.

Indian Wells Valley

- Barn Swallow:** (1) by Denise LaBerteaux at NAWS Sewage Ponds on 15 Dec
Black-crowned Night Heron: (21) by Lee and Shirley Sutton at NAWS Golf Course on 15 Dec
Brewer's Sparrow: (1) by Bob Steele at China Lake CBC area J on 15 Dec
Chipping Sparrow: (1) by Rachel Woodard and Peter Woodman in the Norma and Downs area on 15 Dec and by Brenda and Dan Burnett at Sonja Ave on 23 Dec
Common Gallinule: (3) by Megan Branson and Denise LaBerteaux at NAWS Sewage Ponds on 15 Dec
Common Yellowthroat: (1) by Megan Branson and Denise LaBerteaux at NAWS Sewage Ponds on 15 Dec
Eared Grebe: (1) by Megan Branson and Denise LaBerteaux at NAWS Sewage Ponds on 15 Dec
Golden Eagle: (1) by Susan and Bob Steele at Indian Wells Canyon on 17 Dec and (2) by them at Walker Pass on 30 Dec
Great Horned Owl: (1) by Susan and Bob Steele at Nightmare Gulch on 06 Dec
Great-tailed Grackle: (20) by Lee and Shirley Sutton at NAWS Golf Course on 15 Dec
Hooded Merganser: (1) by Bob Barnes at Watchable Wildlife Park on 15 Dec
Marsh Wren: (13) by Megan Branson and Denise LaBerteaux at NAWS Sewage Ponds on 15 Dec
Merlin: (1) by Bob Parker at Maturango Museum on 04 Dec
Mountain Chickadee: (1) by Bob Barnes at Pearson Park Area on 29 Dec
Northern House Wren: (1) by Susan and Bob Steele at Freeman Canyon on 07 Dec
Oak Titmouse: (2) by Susan and Bob Steele at Walker Pass/PCT on 30 Dec
Peregrine Falcon: (1) by Susan and Bob Steele at Inyokern on 24 Dec
Pine Siskin: (1) by Bob Barnes at Pearson Park Area on 17 Dec
Plumbeous Vireo: (1) by Susan Steele and Bob Barnes at Heritage on 15 Dec
Prairie Falcon: (1) by Rachel Woodard and Peter Woodman at Cerro Coso College on 15 Dec
Purple Finch: (2) by Susan and Bob Steele at Walker Pass on 30 Dec
Red-breasted Sapsucker: (1) by Lee and Shirley Sutton at Lilac St on 07 Dec
Sage Thrasher: (1) by Bob Barnes at Pearson Park Area on 21 Dec
Vermilion Flycatcher: (1) by Denise LaBerteaux at NAWS Sewage Ponds and (1) by Shirley and Lee Sutton at NAWS Golf Course on 15 Dec
White-throated Sparrow: (1) by Brenda and Dan Burnett at Sonja Ave on 06 Dec
White-throated Swift: (3) by Susan and Bob Steele at Nightmare Gulch on 23 Dec
Wilson's Snipe: (1) by Megan Branson and Denise LaBerteaux at NAWS Sewage Ponds on 15 Dec

Kern River Valley

- American Pipit:** (6) by Alison Sheehey at South Fork Wildlife Area on 11 Dec and (12) by her at Kissack Cove on 31 Dec
American Robin: (1) by Annie Meyer and Sasha Robinson at Kernville on 29 Dec
Bell's Sparrow: (2) by Denise LaBerteaux at Bird Springs area on 14 Dec
Belted Kingfisher: (1) by Kathy Dwyer at Whiskey Flats on 27 Dec
Brown Creeper: (1) by Kathy Dwyer at Whiskey Flats on 13 Dec
Burrowing Owl: (3) by Kathy Dwyer at Hanning Flat on 10 Dec and (5) on 23 Dec
Cactus Wren: (1) by Kathy Dwyer at Hanning Flat on 10 Dec
Cedar Waxwing: (1) by Annie Meyer and Sasha Robinson at Whiskey Flats on 28 Dec

Golden Eagle: (2) by Kathy Dwyer at Mill Creek Trail on 04 Dec and (2) by Annie Meyer and Sasha Robinson at Kern River Preserve HQS on 28 Dec
Hermit Thrush: (1) by Annie Meyer and Sasha Robinson at Kernville on 29 Dec
Ladder-backed Woodpecker: (1) by Denise LaBerteaux at Bird Springs area on 13 Dec
Lincoln's Sparrow: (8) by Alison Sheehey at South Fork Wildlife Area on 11 Dec
Long-billed Dowitcher: (4) by Alison Sheehey at South Fork Wildlife Area on 11 Dec
Marsh Wren: (1) by Annie Meyer, Sasha Robinson and Kethy Dwyer at Kern River Preserve HQS on 28 and 29 Dec
Merlin: (1) by Alison Pengilley-Wimmer, Pam Pengilley and Trevor Wimmer at Hanning Flat on 23 Dec and (1) by Annie Meyer and Sasha Robinson at Kern River Preserve HQS on 28 Dec
Mountain Bluebird: (2) by Alison Sheehey at South Fork Wildlife Area on 11 Dec
Mountain Chickadee: (2) by Alison Sheehey at Piute Mt. Rd on 21 Dec
Osprey: (1) by Monica Fletcher at Rattlesnake Creek on 08 Dec and (1) by Annie Meyer and Sasha Robinson at Wofford Heights Park on 28 Dec
Pied-billed Grebe: (1) by Annie Meyer and Sasha Robinson at Kern River Preserve HQS on 28 Dec
Prairie Falcon: (1) by Nancy Robinson at Fay Ranch Rd on 01 Dec and (1) by Kathy Dwyer at Hanning Flat on 23 Dec
Rufous-crowned Sparrow: (2) by Kathy Dwyer at Hanning Flat on 10 Dec
Savannah Sparrow: (2) by Kathy Dwyer at Hanning Flat on 10 Dec and (2) by Darren Hasagawa at South Fork Wildlife Area on 19 Dec
Sora: (2) by Reed Tolefson at Kelso Creek on 21 Dec
Turkey Vulture: (1) by Kathy Dwyer at Whiskey Flats on 03 Dec
Vesper Sparrow: (1) by Alison Sheehey at South Fork Wildlife Area on 11 Dec
Virginia Rail: (1) by Bob Barnes at Canebrake Reserve on 13 Dec
White-throated Swift: (18) by Alison Sheehey at Kissack Cove on 31 Dec
Williamson's Sapsucker: (1) by Alison Sheehey at Piute Mt. Rd on 21 Dec
Wilson's Snipe: (16) by Alison Sheehey at South Fork Wildlife Area on 11 Dec

Thanks to the following birders: Bob Barnes, Megan Branson , Melanie Branson, Brenda and Dan Burnett, Chris Clark, Kathy Dwyer, Monica Fletcher, Bruce Garlinger, Darren Hasagawa, Gary Hower, Louise and John Knecht, Denise LaBerteaux, Jane McEwan, Annie Meyer, Orlando Mielke, Bob Parker, Pam Pengilley, Laurel Rivers, Hannah Robinson, Nancy Robinson, Sasha Robinson, Sean Rowe, Alison Sheehey, Susan and Bob Steele, Lee and Shirley Sutton, Reed Tolefson, Javier Vazquez, Alison Pengilley-Wimmer, Trevor Wimmer, Peter Woodman, and Rachel Woodard.

A special thanks to Cornell University School of Ornithology the folks who created and maintain the ebird database (www.ebird.org) and the Merlin app.

About the Sightings

We glean checklists reported to the Cornell University's eBird program for these sightings. We encourage birders to use www.ebird.org to record their own sightings. It is free and provides birders with a variety of helpful tools, photographs, sounds, and information to enhance birding experiences. Sightings reported there become part of one of the largest citizen's science projects ever. The data then becomes available to scientists and others. For those not using eBird, you may email your sightings to danburnett@kerncrestaudubon.org or phone Dan at (760) 375 8634 – this number screens robocalls.

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