



AUDUBON'S WARBLER

Vol. 39 No. 1 - January 2010
Newsletter of Kern Audubon Society
A chapter of National Audubon Society
www.kernaudubonsociety.org

Kern Audubon Society
Tuesday January 5, 2010
7:00pm

Kern Sup't of Schools
17th & L Sts. - Bakersfield
Street parking or in the KSS's lot at 18th & K

Birding Ecuador: A Summer's Journey
Presented by Kelli Levinson



Join Kern Audubon for a great beginning to 2010 with a program presented by one of Kern County's avid birders, Kelli Heindel Levinson. Kelli grew up in a birdwatching family but didn't begin seriously birding until 2000. Now she has become Kern County coordinator for *North American Birds*, the journal of the American Birding Association. Kelli has been teaching high school for 18 years and presently teaches in the Kern High School District. She travels extensively during summers off and has been to most of the US, Canada as well as Kenya, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Belize and Costa Rica. This past summer she spent six weeks in Ecuador, birding and exploring the habitats of this beautiful South American country. In her presentation she will share how she prepared for this trip, about the people she stayed with, what she learned about Ecuador and will show some of the thousands of bird pictures she took. This will be a fascinating program by one of Kern Audubon's own members and supporters!

Avocet at Kern Water Bank



JANUARY FIELD TRIPS

Check the website for the latest information on field trips planned for January:

www.kernaudubonsociety.org

The Executive Board is putting together a Field Trip Committee and more help is needed to organize future trips. Call Ted (325-0307) or Madi (322-7470)!

KERN AUDUBON EXECUTIVE BOARD

Madi Elsea, Co-Chair
madielsea@aol.com; 322-7470
Ted Murphy, Co-Chair
tmurphy@bak.rr.com; 325-0307
Harry Love, Conservation
love3@bak.rr.com; 589-6254
Tim Lynch, Publicity
Lynchtim1968@yahoo.com; 428-4455
Kathy Love, Hospitality
love3@bak.rr.com; 589-6254
Ginny Dallas-Dull, Education
vdallas@bak.rr.com; 587-6323
Annette Wells, Membership
awells0526@yahoo.com; 333-4019
Lisa Twiford, Secretary
letwiford@aol.com
Bill McDonald, Treasurer
WJLJMCD@aol.com; 665-2111
Madi Elsea, Warbler Editor
madielsea@aol.com; 322-7470



11th Annual Snow Goose Festival

January 28-31, 2010, Butte County, California

Field Trips Workshops Banquet/Auction Art Show Special Events Registration Map Sponsors Past Festivals

HOME MEDIA CONTACT US

UPCOMING BIRD FESTIVALS

Snow Goose Festival

January 28-31, Chico, CA
Celebrates the great Pacific Flyway
www.snowgoosefestival.org

40th Annual Rivers & Wildlife Celebration

Sandhill Crane Migration
March 18-21, 2010
Kearney Nebraska
www.nebraska.audubon.org

San Diego Bird Festival

March 4-7, 2010
www.sandiegoaudubon.org

If you like travel, birding, fun and education, consider a birding festival. For more information:

www.birdwatchersdigest.com
www.Americanbirding.org/festivals

RAFFLE ITEMS

At most Kern Audubon monthly meetings, a raffle is held as part of the chapter's fund-raising, plus it's a lot of fun...everyone likes to win something! If you have gift-type items, especially bird-related, or something else you think someone would enjoy "winning", bring to one of the meetings. Usually 6-8 items are raffled each month, so we can always use items for the drawings.

WORK PARTIES AT PANORAMA PRESERVE

On a hazy, cool morning, four members of Kern Audubon showed up to take care of our 'adopted child', the Panorama Preserve. Andy Honig, the 'father', gave people directions on tasks to be done and off we went, with tools in hand. Deb See and Tucker Moffet went out to place water basins around the trees. Becky Rule, a new volunteer, joined in. Andy and I became the wheel barrow crew, delivering compost to each tree. Two hours later, with muscles stronger, we left to enjoy a sunny Saturday.

The next work day will be the second Saturday, January, the 9th, 8 - 10AM. Reason: we need a break after celebrating the coming in of 2010. Interested in joining in the fun? If so you can email me or call 589-6245. Come and start the New Year with our 'adopted child'!!

Harry Love (love3@bak.rr.com)

THANK YOU, ALISON SHEEHY

Alison Sheehey, former president of Kern Audubon and currently Outreach Coordinator at Audubon's Kern River Preserve, is hanging up her count sheets on the Buena Vista CBC after leading it for 20 years!! She's given days and days of preparation, counting and compiling for this important annual count and we want to acknowledge and thank her for her dedication. Now someone else is needed to coordinate this count...please call Alison for information and to volunteer: 760/417-0268 or email her: natureali@lightspeed.net

GOT PAPERBACKS??

If you have paperbacks you dont know what to do with, consider giving them to the library at Delano State Prison. Books requested are mysteries, self-help, novels, inspirational. Madi Elsea is collecting books for the prison librarian, so bring to the next meeting on Jan. 5th or call Madi: 322-7470.

We thank Joseph V. Higbee for the Audubon's Warbler photo used as the newsletter logo. Used by permission.
(www.pbase.com/jvhigbee)

STATE POPPY PRESERVE IN ANTELOPE VALLEY NEEDS PROTECTION

An Orange County businessman wants to build a motor sports racetrack on 320 acres that is only 1.5 miles from the California State Poppy Reserve in the Antelope Valley. This racetrack would potentially host high performance race vehicles 365 days a year.

The draft EIR has been submitted and the first Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission hearing was held on September 2. The staff report concluded with a recommendation to approve the project. There will be another hearing on February 6, 11am - 5pm at the Lancaster Branch of the L.A. County Library, 601 W. Lancaster Blvd, Lancaster.

What can you do?

1) Attend the hearing on Feb. 6. Why? The majority of the speakers at the September meeting were in favor of the racetrack.

2) Write to the Planning Commission and/or LA County Supervisor Mike Antonovich. Tell that that you think the wildflower preserves and motor sports parks do not make good neighbors.

Address letters to: Mr. Jodie Sackett, County of Los Angeles Regional Planning, Room 1382, 320 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012 and/or Supervisor Michael Antonovich, 500 West Temple Street, Room 869, Los Angeles Ca 90012

3) Send an email to express your concerns:

jsackett@planning.lacounty.gov

fifthdistrict@lacbos.org

What should you mention?

- Sound will be clearly heard on the Reserve hiking trails and within the poppy preserve.
- The zone change to industrial/commercial will open the gate to more damaging developments that are completely incompatible with the rural nature of the area
- current property owners who bought under the current zoning
- will suffer from the noise and possible deflation of their property.



Act today!

Harry Love
Conservation Chair

WEBSITES to check out...

Kern Birding For a comprehensive website about numerous Kern County birding locations go to www.natureali.org/birding.htm.

Kern County Bird Sightings/photos Go to this website for what's unusual in Kern County: kerncobirding@yahoogroups.com You'll find recent bird sightings, reports by Bob Barnes, Michael McQuerry, Alison Sheehey, pictures by Ken Kyle and others.

Audubon California has a great website about its activities and organization: www.Audubon-ca.org

Audubon in the news - To find out more about national Audubon happenings through an informative electronic newsletter, email chapterleaders@audubon.org

TOPO MAPS AVAILABLE

Several topographical maps have been donated to Kern Audubon and are available for "adoption". If you are interested, please contact Madi Elsea (322-7470). These are the quad maps:

White Mountains
Blanco Mountains
Kernville
Onyx
Lamont Peak

BINOCULARS

Kern Audubon now has two excellent pairs of 8x42 binoculars for use on field trips and birding classes through a special program by Eagle Optics. If you'd be interested in purchasing a pair as part of this program in the future, contact Rod Lee (322-7470).

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Bakersfield CBC Sun. Dec. 20

John Wilson reports a total of 140 species were counted with highlights being Plumbeous Vireo, Wild Turkey (new to the count), Black-throated Gray Warbler & Townsend's Warbler. Many thanks to the 11 birders who participated in this annual count of the Bakersfield area, including Hart Park and Lake Ming: John Wilson, leader; Brenda & Ken Kyle, Alison Sheehey, Bill Lydecker, Michael McQuerry, Gary File, Steve Williams, Kathy & Dennis McDonnell & Kelli Levinson.

Buena Vista CBC Monday. Dec. 21

Alison Sheehey served as leader for Buena Vists CBC for the last time after 20 years of leadership. Six birders participated in the count: Alison Sheehey, Al Martini, Bill Lydecker, Frank Gibson, Susan Steele and Bob Barnes. 110 species were counted, including Brown Thrasher, a rarity for California, and a total of FIVE species of thrashers: Brown, California Northern Mockingbird, LeConte's and Sage, a definite highlight!

South Fork Kern River Valley CBC, Sat. January 2...Contact Denise La Berteaux to participate: (760)378-4278

Kern Valley Christmas Bird Count - Sunday, January 3, 2010

Alison Sheehey is the leader/compiler of this count centered around Isabella Reservoir and covers territory from Bodfish to Weldon and into the eastern Greenhorn Mountains. For information and to register, contat Alison Sheehey: 760-378-2029 or natureali@lightspeed.net

A \$5.00 participation fee paid by Kern Audubon defrays a portion of the cost of tabulating and publishing the count results by National Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

In Condor Country

Kern Audubon Book Review by Scott Frazer

Anyone who has an interest in CA Condors, *Gymnogyps californianus*, and the Southern San Joaquin valley history will find the detailed descriptions in this book by David Darlington interesting. Darlington was working as a reporter in Berkeley when he first met Ian and Eben McMillan in 1980 and became acquainted with their environmental activism on behalf of the California Condor. The many story lines in this book parallel the decisions by state and federal agencies to take all of the wild Condors into captivity. Numerous visits to the McMillan ranches and opportunities to visit the dry landscapes that supported Condors and ranchers influenced the opinions of this author and many who have visited Condor country.

The stories contained in this volume run back to settlement of California in the 1860's, establishment of early ranches on the Carrizo Plain and evolution of agricultural and suburban developments that continue to present day. Stories that only the well informed or local sources would know are repeated, including how Kelly Truesdale of Shandon collected Condor eggs for collector's who would pay up to \$300 each, an amount equal to more than a years pay for a ranch hand. Eben McMillan accompanied Truesdale as an assistant in 1920. This illustrates how at least 70 Condor eggs were collected between 1859 and 1943, a significant number for the bird with the lowest natural reproductive rate of any North American bird.

A review of earthquakes along the San Andreas fault are analogous to the changes in modern society that effects all environmental issues. Published in 1987 many of the references are now dated but still thought provoking. The local insights and historical perspective are valuable and may allow us to consider events of our own time with a more informed perspective.

This book can be borrowed from the Kern Audubon library at the January 5th meeting!

Yellow-billed Magpie named Audubon California's 2009 Bird of the Year

Emeryville, CA – A bird well known to bird enthusiasts, but perhaps not to most Californians, was named the 2009 Audubon California Bird of the Year after it received nearly 26 percent of votes cast during an online poll this fall. The Yellow-billed Magpie lives only in California's Central Valley and coastal ranges, and may be enjoying a comeback after experiencing major declines due to habitat loss, West Nile Virus and pesticide use.

Audubon California created the designation this year to highlight the state's remarkable birds and the conservation challenges many of them face. The recognition specifically sought to recognize bird species that were of significant conservation interest in 2009, but that also had a compelling story and rallied the public around it. "This is a terrific bird to feature as Audubon California's first Bird of the Year," said Graham Chisholm, executive director of Audubon California. "First of all, it's a dynamic bird that people enjoy watching. Moreover, as Californians, it's our bird, and it could really benefit from us knowing more about it and taking care of it."

The Yellow-billed Magpie is one of California's most striking birds, popular among birders and compelling among conservationists. Aside from its yellow bill, the bird is easily recognizable from its white, black and iridescent body and wings. The Yellow-billed Magpie was one of the six nominated birds along with the California Condor, Brown Pelican, Western Snowy Plover, Peregrine Falcon and Acorn Woodpecker. The California Condor came in second place with 19 percent of the vote, while the Western Snowy Plover came in third with 16 percent.

"I couldn't be more pleased to see the Yellow-billed Magpie get this recognition," said Holly Ernest, who directs the Wildlife Population Health and Ecological Genetics Unit at the Veterinary Genetics Laboratory at UC Davis. "This is a wonderful bird that faces a number of challenges to its survival." According to research by Ernest and others, the Yellow-billed Magpie declined at a slow but steady rate from 1995 to 2003, when the total number of magpies was estimated at 180,000 birds. Then the onslaught of West Nile Virus made the decline even steeper. Breeding Bird Survey and Audubon Christmas Bird Count data showed the decline as somewhere between 22 percent and 42 percent through 2006. "Between 2004 and 2006, over 12,000 magpie carcasses were reported to the California Dept of Health Services and 78 percent of the magpies tested were West Nile Virus-positive," said Ernest.

The last year brought hope that the Yellow-billed Magpies were coming back. "Lots of anecdotal evidence suggests a rebound in birds" says Gary Langham, director of bird conservation for Audubon California. "People are reporting them in their yards after a few years absence and you can see it for yourself as you drive through the valley. The magpies are back." Audubon California also has plans to support Yellow-billed Magpie conservation through public education and landowners and ranchers who steward the oak woodlands and farmland where the bird makes its home.



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Kern Audubon Society
PO Box 3581
Bakersfield CA 93385



www.kernaudubonsociety.org

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Join KERN AUDUBON for these activities..

- Tues. Jan. 5, 7:00pm - Meeting/program on "Birding Ecuador"
- Jan. 2 & 3 - Kern River Valley Christmas Bird Counts
- Sat. Jan 9, 8:00am - Panorama Vista Preserve Work Party

Membership Application -- KERN AUDUBON SOCIETY (C9ZC300Z)

If you would like to be part of a grass-roots conservation organization with a distinguished history, join the National Audubon Society and Kern Audubon! Please complete the form below and send with your check !

Membership includes *Audubon Magazine* (6 Issues) and the *Audubon's Warbler*. (11 issues)

____ New Member \$20 ____ Renewal \$35

Make check payable to **NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY** (not Kern Audubon)

Send check & form to ...Kern Audubon
PO Box 3581
Bakersfield CA 93385

I am enclosing an additional tax-deductible donation for the work of Kern Audubon in the amount of _____. (Check payable to Kern Audubon)

Name(s) _____ Amount enclosed _____

Address _____ E-mail _____

City _____ Zip Code _____ Phone # _____