

# THE SIERRA WAVE

## EASTERN SIERRA AUDUBON SOCIETY

ESAS Website: [www.csupomona.edu/~larryblakely/ESAS/](http://www.csupomona.edu/~larryblakely/ESAS/)

ES Bird Sightings: [www.egroups.com/group/EASTERN\\_SIERRA\\_BIRD\\_SIGHTINGS](http://www.egroups.com/group/EASTERN_SIERRA_BIRD_SIGHTINGS)

### MEETINGS

Second Wednesday of the month, September through June, 7:00 PM (Board Meeting 5:45 PM), usually at the White Mountain Research Station (3 mi. East of Bishop on East Line St.)  
*Check local news media for possible changes.*

## Evening Programs

Evening programs will be preceded by (1) announcements of interest to the membership, and (2) recent bird sightings and other news on the local natural history scene. Come prepared to participate!

### November 8

Refreshments: **Mary Vocelka**

Main Program: **Rick Kattelmann** will speak on "Mountains, Forests, and Floods in the Nepal Himalaya".

Rick is a hydrologist based at the Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Lab on Convict Creek; he has worked on water problems in many mountain areas of the world. His presentation will include a discussion of perceptions, research, and



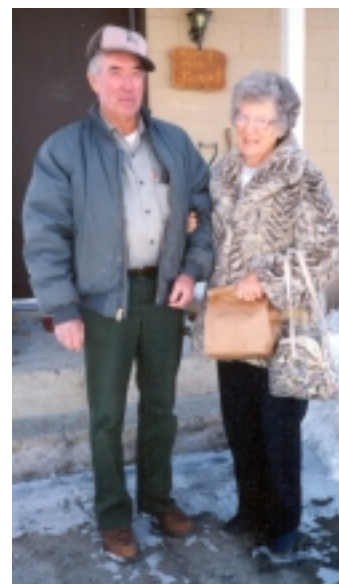
speculations about human impacts on the hydrologic cycle in the Nepal Himalaya. It will be illustrated with slides from ten treks in Nepal over the past two decades. Come hear about his most interesting work and experiences in a region with similarities to our own.

### December 13

**December Potluck:** Bring a dish to share, and your plate, glass, and tableware. **Meet at 6 PM in the Dining Room.**

Main Program: **Robert and Clara Calhoun**, photographers since 1950, when they bought their first camera and joined the Photographic Society of America, will present a selection of slides of scenes and wildlife around the West.

They have achieved what many of us only dream about, traveling in their truck and camper, touring the west's most spectacular scenery, like Glacier, Yellowstone and Bryce Canyon National Parks to smaller, lesser known spots, as Cave Creek in Arizona and photographing what they saw. They'll share with us photos of grizzly bears, buffalo, red and kit fox, ringtail cat, hawks and hummingbirds, insects and wild flowers. We are very fortunate to have these two talented guests, who, when not traveling, have had a home in Lee Vining for 63 years. Join us for this memorable evening and don't forget the potluck at 6 PM. All are welcome.



## Field Trips

**Saturday December 9th** - Winter birding at Crowley Lake. This is a good time for loons and swans. If too snowy/stormy, we'll bird the Owens Valley. Meet behind the "Y" gas stations in Bishop at 8AM. For more information, please call Jon Dunn at 387-1301.

**Saturday December 16th** - Bishop Christmas Bird Count - pretrip meeting on Thursday December 14th at 7PM at Chris and Rosie's, please RSVP to 873-7422 or [choward@telis.org](mailto:choward@telis.org). Participants should have working knowledge of common birds in the area.

**Sunday December 17th** - Lone Pine Christmas Bird Count - please RSVP to Mike Prather at 876-5807.

*Chris Howard*

# Chapter Notes



Chapter member Mason Begley, 13 years old, shows off his 'Best of Show' ribbon won in Environmental Education at the Inyo County Fair. He also won a First Place ribbon in the same category. His 4-H Project describes where and how new birders can go birdwatching in the Owens Valley. He won a third ribbon for 'Best of Show' in 4-H Science Projects. A birdwatcher himself, Mason is home schooled by his mother Kathleen, who is very proud of him, to say the least!

*Thanks to Debby Parker for this story.*

## OWENS RIVER VISIONEERS

Inyo Mono Advocates for Community Action (IMACA) has received a U.S. Forest Service Economic Recovery grant. It's called "A Community Vision for the Lower Owens River Project (LORP)."

The LORP has potential to bring real economic benefits to Central Owens Valley communities. The project can support in-

novative, small business creation. Good planning is key to developing economic opportunities, and our grant intends to bring together Central Owens Valley citizens to assess how the LORP may best contribute to community vitality. We invite your participation in assembling an informal group of "Visioneers." Group objectives might include such things as identifying small business creation opportunities, development of a marketing strategy, production of a river map and consideration of a River Center.

If you have an interest in joining the Owens River Visioneers, please contact:

Bruce Klein- (800) 541-1822 or (760) 873-8557 Or Richard Potashin-(760) 878-2388

## NEW WEBSITE URL

It's: [www.csupomona.edu/~larryblakely/ESAS/](http://www.csupomona.edu/~larryblakely/ESAS/)

## CONDOLENCES

Member George Fleming passed away in August. Our condolences go out to his family. His wife Stella donated \$25 to the chapter in his name. Thanks so much Stella.

## NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to these new, transfer, and returning members:

**Andy & Dick Cheeseman - Bishop**

**Joan Daykin - Bishop**

**Darlene Nichols - Bishop**

**Sharon Shields - Lone Pine**

**John Hey - June Lake**

**Mary Lu Miller - Mammoth Lakes**

**Joseph Yawman - Big Pine**

**William Gates - Bishop**

**Jon Dunn - Rovana**

*Jim Parker*

## FROM NATIONAL

### *Excerpts from the AUDUBON ADVISORY for Friday, October 20, 2000*

Good news! This week, the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives took action AND PASSED a handful of Audubon-supported measures, including legislation to save the Everglades, and legislation to commemorate 100 years of the National Wildlife Refuge System! . . .

**SENATE SAYS YES TO REFUGE SYSTEM COMMEMORATION** This week, the U.S. Senate passed legislation to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The House and Senate quickly resolved minor differences . . . and it has been sent to the President, who has pledged his support and is expected to sign it into law. . . . the National Wildlife Refuge System consists of more than 500 refuges that span across 50 states, host more than 700 bird species, and are the primary habitat for about 250 threatened and endangered species. These refuges are America's best hope for protecting our country's diverse bird and wildlife populations. But in spite of their important role, they find themselves in dire need of care: many are battling incompatible activities on and near refuge lands, inadequate water supplies, and insufficient budgets for operations, maintenance and new land acquisition. One of many responsibilities of the U.S. Fish and

## Newsletter Information

### **Editor:**

Larry Blakely  
(760) 872-1890

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The newsletter is sent to all Audubon Society members in our area. Non-members may receive the newsletter for \$6.00 annually (please send checks to the Membership Chair). Articles for the newsletter, or comments on it, should be sent to the editor (addresses above).

The newsletter is published in September, November, January, March, and May. Deadline for copy is 10 days before the month of publication.



Wildlife Service (FWS), the Refuge System receives limited and inconsistent management attention. The Refuge System's low public visibility also has made it a target for members of Congress over the years. Enactment of this measure is a positive step toward changing that . . .

**MORE GOOD NEWS FOR AUDUBON & CONSERVATION** . . . Congress passed several measures that will directly benefit several Audubon Centers, and specific conservation projects backed by Audubon state offices and chapters. Included: . . .

. . . \$225,000 for the Debs Nature Center in Los Angeles, California. . .

These actions indicate that the Congress will work with communities and Audubon as a partner in making Audubon's 2020 vision - our goal of 1000 Audubon environmental education Centers across the country by year 2020 - a reality.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**4th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium**

November 16th-19th, 2000, Stockton Radisson Hotel, Stockton, CA

The Symposium offers something for everyone: Great seminars; Renowned speakers (Incl. Jon Dunn and Ken Kaufmann); Workshops (bird identification, photo, sketching, gardening), Art show, Field Trips, and a Birder's Market.

For program and registration (\$75.00/person or less): Central Valley Bird Club Web page: <[www.geocities.com/aegolius/cvbc.html](http://www.geocities.com/aegolius/cvbc.html)>, or contact: Frances Oliver, 1817 Songbird Pl., Lodi, CA 95240. E-mail address: [ffoliver@ucdavis.edu](mailto:ffoliver@ucdavis.edu) (work) or [hummer52@lodinet.com](mailto:hummer52@lodinet.com) (home). Phone: (209) 369-2010.

**Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival**

January 12-15, Morro Bay, CA

Highlights (from the website: <[www.morro-bay.net/birds](http://www.morro-bay.net/birds)>): Field trips on land and sea led by expert birders; Friday evening program by photographer George Lepp; Saturday evening program by Kenn Kaufman; Sunday evening program by Brad Schram;

Art exhibit showcasing natural history and birds; Vendor displays focusing on birding equipment and information; Free admission to the Morro Bay State Park Museum of Natural History, and its programs and field trips; Open hours for birding at Sweet Springs Nature Preserve and Audubon Overlook; Many program options for the non-birder. MB CofC for brochure: 800-231-0592.

**California Duck Days**

February 16-18, 2001, Davis, CA

This Sacramento Valley festival, headquartered in Davis, includes workshops, field trips, demonstrations, artwork on display, etc. It is billed as "One of California's premier wildlife viewing festivals". For more information, visit their website: <[www.duckdays.org](http://www.duckdays.org)>, or call 530-758-1286.

**Conservation**

**WILDLIFE REHABBERS CARE FOR OVER 100 BIRDS THIS YEAR**

Between the end of September, 1999 and October 1, 2000, 130 birds needing help have come through Cindy Kamler and her fledgling rehabilitation organization, Eastern Sierra Wildlife Care. This number doubled the number seen previously in any one year. Of these birds, 63 were babies, 50 of them songbirds that included house wrens, lesser goldfinches, robins, western kingbirds and more. These babies require intensive care; nestlings are fed every 20-30 minutes from dawn to dark - about 14 hours each day.

"I couldn't have managed this year without the help of some wonderful volunteers who put in long hours with the babies; many of

them took the birds with them to their jobs," said Kamler, a permitted rehabber with 15 years in the field. "Others helped with transportation, facility, and other tasks."

Kamler continued: "Baby season is over, but we are seeing a number of migratory birds and young raptors in need of help. I think that greater public awareness of the availability of wildlife rehabilitation, as well as referral relationships we've developed with public agencies, veterinarians, and community groups and businesses, accounts for the rise in numbers."

Eastern Sierra Audubon, the Inyo-Mono Fish and Game Commission, and many individuals have contributed funding in support of these volunteer rehabilitators whose work has returned over 80 birds to the skies of the Eastern Sierra.



A Swainson's hawk "chick" that was returned to its nest with a cherry picker provided by DWP

## IT'S A WILD LIFE

by Joy Fatooh

BLM Biologist

### Gotta Like Fences

Yep, I went to school for this, I thought as I torqued my pliers and jerked a rusted nail out of a wooden post. All the required courses. Chemistry, physics, calculus – nobody’s asking me to calculate the force to pull this nail, or why it oxidized. Genetics? Cell and molecular biology? Fascinating. Never use ‘em. Ecology and conservation biology? Essential, but

not to the day-to-day work. The most useful course for an aspiring government wildlife biologist was not even listed.

“Fences 101. Construction, repair and maintenance with an emphasis on barbed wire.”

On the other hand, it doesn’t take much knowledge to fix a fence. And very little thought. You can think about anything. I thought about Edward Abbey’s novel, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. Abbey had his desert eco-heroes cutting barbed wire wherever they found it. Chopping down billboards

and blowing up dams may be just a bit radical for my personal tastes, but I cringe most mightily when they cut a fence.

Whether Hayduke likes it or not, it’s legal to graze livestock on most of the public land in the arid American West. Without fences and unattended a cow can go where it wants. And where is that? Somewhere moist and green and gentle like its ancestral homeland. Shady, with fresh water and tender things to eat. The sort of place that is rare in the desert. The sort that wildlife needs.

Here in the eastern Sierra it’s streams, springs, wet meadows and aspen groves, where a great diversity of wildlife thrives in the water and cool earth and complex layers of vegetation. An innocent, well-meaning herd of cows can denude and collapse stream banks, trample a spring into a mud puddle, and devour seedlings and saplings until nothing is left but decaying old trees shading bare soil. This used to happen a lot in past years before the public became acutely aware of the value of these lands and the government began adopting and enforcing more stringent regulations. Meanwhile, the only way some of the most damaged areas could recover was to exclude livestock completely for several years. With fences.

Wherever possible we look for other ways, like diligent herding (routine with sheep, uncommon with cows). Fences have drawbacks: they’re ugly, they impede movement, they kill creatures that run into them, and they require maintenance. A winter of heavy snow is followed by weeks of work splicing and tightening snapped and sagging wires. These days we’ve begun having grazing permittees take on that responsibility, but in the year I’m telling you about, the philosophy was that a fence to benefit wildlife was main-



tained by the wildlife staff.

That was a heavy snow year, too. We had four to six of us, including seasonal employees, working a full month to get the fences in shape. You could say we had fenced ourselves into

a corner, if you had a penchant for trite clichés and bad puns. I myself have a penchant for ridiculous doggerel. That day I was out with three colleagues and, after a long period of very little thought, I startled them by bursting forth to a familiar old cowboy tune:

Got my hammer and my stretcher and a good pair of pliers;

Don’t fence me in!

Got a handful of clips and a big roll of wire;

Don’t fence me in!

Working in the dirt with the bugs and the ants,

Cutting up my arms and tearing my pantses –

I don’t like cows and I don’t like fences;

Don’t fence me in!

My colleagues rolled their eyes and groaned, but they started pitching in a line or two. The seasonal hydrologist contributed “I was hired on false pretenses.” The range conservationist, happening by and hearing our work in progress, suggested “something about aspen branches.” By the end of the day we had this:

Got a pocketful of staples right in there with my pocket knife;

Don’t fence me in!

Gonna fix up some projects for the benefit of wildlife;

Don’t fence me in!

When I took this job I was out of my senses,

But I was hired on false pretenses:

No one ever told me I’d be fixing fences –

Don’t fence me in!

If you want to go to work for the U.S. Government,

It’s gonna be this way:

Got a botanist, biologists and even a hydrologist

Fixing fence all day!

Now don’t get me wrong, don’t take offences,

I ain’t un-American, I don’t hate ranches;

It’s the cows and their doo-doo and these gol-dang fences –

Don’t fence me in!

Maintaining those perimeters within those parameters;

Don’t fence me in!

You gotta pay the price if you wanna have your hamburgers;

Don’t fence me in!

Gotta give the grouse and the deer their chances;

Wanna see some meadows and some aspen branches;

If you want vegetation, you gotta like fences –

Don’t fence me in!

We actually sang it at the next staff meeting. To my amazement, the boss insisted that we submit it to our statewide internal newsletter. To my astonishment, they printed it. It was one of the proud moments of my career. Isn’t that pathetic? If my cell-and-molecular professor could see me now....





# Birding

## MOLTING, MIGRATING, AND MATING

### Major cyclic events in the life of a bird

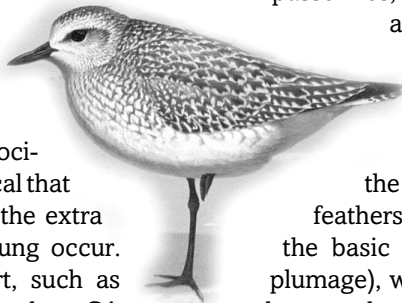
by Tom and Jo Heindel

The energy output required of birds to molt, migrate and mate is so great that these events usually do not occur simultaneously. A bird's year is spent balancing the energy needs so that these events do not interfere with each



other. It is no surprise that birds have developed a variety of strategies in order to balance a year's cycle. Breeding results in a great deal of wear and tear on feathers. Repeatedly entering and exiting trees, bushes, rocks, etc., causes friction that wears away the edges and generally roughs up the surface of feathers. Singing from exposed perches increases the amount of insolation hitting the feathers causing them to bleach and breakdown chemically. By the end of the breeding season both

body and flight feathers are badly worn and in need of replacement. Birds migrate primarily to utilize different habitats and the foods associated with them. It is critical that food is abundant when the extra demands of feeding young occur. Migration may be short, such as with those that go from southern CA and Mexico to Canada or Alaska, or extremely long, as with those who fly from

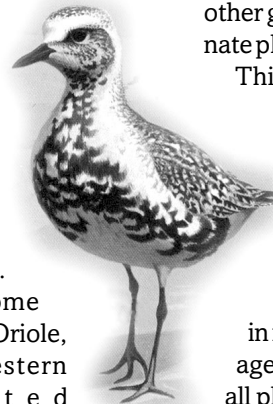


southern South America to northern North America. The energy needs during these biannual journeys are huge and none is left over to spend forming feathers, therefore, a bird must have plumage that is in good shape before undergoing migration. Because creating new feathers places a big demand on the energy budget of birds, the need to molt

has to be fitted around the energy needs of migration and breeding. Almost all species have a complete or nearly complete molt usually after breeding. One strategy is to molt on the breeding grounds (e.g. Lesser Nighthawk, most passerines, Baltimore Oriole, and the eastern Painted Bunting). Another strategy is to have a partial molt on the breeding grounds, then migrate and on reaching

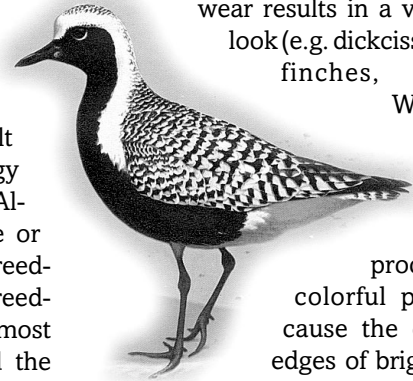
the winter grounds finish molting (e.g. shorebirds and terns). Yet another strategy is to begin migration without first molting, stop at feeding sites to molt, either partially or completely, and then continue to the winter grounds where the molt is finished, if necessary (e.g. Common Nighthawk, some

passerines, Bullock's Oriole, and western Painted Bunting). Most species maintain the same plumage throughout the year, although not the same feathers as discussed above. This is the basic plumage (formerly winter plumage), which in most species looks the same throughout the year (e.g. hawks, doves, owls, swifts, flycatchers, woodpeckers, swallows, shrikes, jays, crows, ravens,



wrens, thrushes, thrashers, towhees, sparrows, blackbirds, and some warblers, etc.).

A few species maintain the basic plumage throughout the year but wear results in a very different look (e.g. dickcissel, bobolink, finches, longspurs).



When their basic plumage becomes worn, it

produces a more colorful plumage because the dull colored edges of brightly colored feathers wear off revealing the hidden color. Because it is the same generation of feathers, this is not an alternate plumage even though some authors call it that. A minority of species adds another generation of feathers called the alternate plumage (formerly breeding plumage).

This produces fancy looking ducks, shorebirds, tanagers and some warblers plus others. It is especially useful to understand the different molt strategies of different species, as this is a critical criterion in separating some otherwise difficult species. It also helps in filling in the blanks between the plumages shown in field guides, as none show all plumages of all species. In addition, it helps in understanding the age and/or sex of a bird, which may also be a clue in determining the species. In other words, if you work at understanding molt and its impact on the appearance of a bird you will become a much better birder and will make far fewer identification mistakes.

Illustrations of the Black-bellied Plover are by Robert Verity Clem, in Stout, et al., "The Shorebirds of North America", Viking Press, 1967.

### Mono Lake Shorebird Count

On August 19, 2000 over a dozen participants plied the shores of Mono Lake to count shorebirds and waterfowl for the 4th year in a row. The entire mainland lakeshore was covered (including DeChambeau and County Ponds), and the last parties returned approximately 8 hours after the count began. A total of 43 protocol species were counted, with over 20,000 individuals, the

bulk of them Red-necked and Wilson's Phalaropes. Some of the highlights included 9 Brant in heavy molt near County Park, a Peregrine Falcon perched on a tufa tower eating an unidentified shorebird (Old Marina area), large flocks of Northern Shovelers along both the south and north shores, a pair of Baird's Sandpipers, one Solitary Sandpiper, and plenty of both Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes. For the first time a

canoe was used along the brush-choked shoreline below Hwy 395 to count birds. Many thanks go to the numerous Eastern Sierra Audubon members who headed up early in the morning and helped with the count! Next year's dates will April 21st and August 25th, 2001.

*Bartshe Miller*

Education Director, Mono Lake Committee

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Hundreds of shorebirds were seen in this recently flooded area on Owens Dry Lake. Not entirely dry, the Lake will soon be much wetter, to the great benefit of birds. The October 14th field trip (arranged after the last *WAVE* issue came out) was led by Judy Wickman and Bob Hudson.

**Tom & Jo on Molting, Joy on 'Fencing', Cindy on Rehabbing, plus Chapter Notes, Programs and Field Trips - all that, inside!**