

SIERRA WAVE

EASTERN SIERRA AUDUBON SOCIETY

ESAS Website: ESAudubon.org ES Bird Sightings: ESAudubon.org/birds

MEETINGS

Second Wednesday of the month, September through June, 7:00 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 13

Refreshments: Ruth Blakely

Main Program: Imagine a place with more bird species than all of North America, north of Mexico. A land with Pacific and Caribbean coasts, tropical places with more forest habitats than are found in North America. A nation of swamps, rivers, and marshes, mountains where it rains nearly every day, and areas as dry as a desert - all of this in a land area the size of West Virginia. A place with over 840 recorded, and 600 permanent resident bird species. This is Costa Rica.



Collared Redstart

Join avid birder and bird photographer **Bob Steele** as he shares a program on the **Wonderful Avian Riches of Costa Rica**. Bob and his family traveled to Costa Rica in April 2002. They spent 11 days discovering this special place.

December 11

December Potluck: Meet at 6 PM in the Dining Room.

Bring a dish to share, and a big appetite. There will be heated ovens for those needing to reheat casseroles. Having an excess to dispose of, the Chapter will provide plates, tableware, napkins, and cups, along with coffee and tea.

Main Program: Our speaker will be noted American ornithologist, and Eastern Sierra resident, **Jon Dunn**, who will talk about **Bird Identification**. When you find a bird that you just can't figure out, who do you go to for help? You ask the experts. But, who do the experts go to for help? They go to Jon Dunn, chief consultant for the authoritative National Geographic Society's *Birds of North America* and co-author of *A Field Guide to the Warblers of North America*. Jon is a Senior Leader with WINGS Worldwide Birding Tours and is currently a member of the California Bird Records Committee, the American Ornithologists' Union Checklist Committee, and the American Birding Association's Board of Directors. If there is any question you may ever have had about any bird on Earth, this could be your best chance to get it answered. It's a program you won't want to miss.

Chapter Notes

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Eastern Sierra Audubon Society has been active in the Owens Valley for over twenty years now. During that time things have changed, in some ways very little, in some significantly. And ESAS has had impact on those changes. And the leadership of ESAS has been important to those impacts.

Jim and Debby Parker are stepping down from their Board positions to make room for others to take their places and hope to concentrate more on birding. We are truly sorry to see them go. Debby has been attending board meetings since she was Historian in 1993 and then formally became a

board member in 1995. She has been instrumental in a long series of exceptionally fine programs. Debby also championed local recycling through her research and articles in the newsletter over the years. She has helped Larry Blakely with the newsletter and been the chair of our very successful Education Committee. Debby has been the super volunteer.

And Jim was President before the current writer of this column and has been a Board member since 1993. He became President when Chris Rumm moved from our area. Before that he was our Vice-president. It was a time of need for ESAS, and Jim

stepped right in. He has also been chair of our Conservation Committee and penned many crucial letters on wildlife conservation issues. His analysis of issues and opportunities will be sorely missed.

The Parkers have been very dedicated to ESAS for the last decade and deserve a rousing thank you for their service, from each and every one of us. ESAS has a mission that includes both education, of both ourselves and the public at large, and of concern and activism on conservation issues. The Parkers have had significant impact on both. Personally they get a big thank you from the current President. Thank

you! And if they could I am sure the local wildlife would thank them also.

If anyone is interested in serving on the program or conservation committees or has ideas for future programs, give me a call.

James Wilson

NEW MEMBERS

A warm Eastern Sierra Audubon welcome to the following new, transfer, and returning members:

Dr. Charles Papp – Mammoth Lakes

Scott King – Malibu

Leah Culp – Lee Vining

Liz Graham – Bishop

Marilyn Pratt – Lone Pine

Cynthia Baird – Lone Pine

Patrick Brown – Lone Pine

Larry Hobbs – Big Pine

Hygi Waetermans – Independence

Kenneth Wells – Mammoth Lakes

Juanita Whelan - Bishop

NEW CHAPTER WEBSITE

ESAudubon.org

Vice-president Chris Howard has arranged for a new host and name for our chapter's web presence. Chapter stuff, newsletters (with color graphics), field trips, and Eastern Sierra birding info are now under one banner. Access to the site is at:

ESAudubon.org

Newsletter Information

Editor:

Larry Blakely

(760) 872-1890

415 Sierra Grande, Bishop, CA 93514

e-mail: larryblakely@sigmaxi.org

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.

Direct access to birding info is here:

ESAudubon.org/birds

Birding info includes recent sightings (frequently with pictures) and Eastern Sierra hotspots.

Enjoy!

REVISION OF CHAPTER BYLAWS

New Directions from National

Our Bylaws, which, with minor revision, are those that have served the Chapter since its inception, were prescribed by National Audubon. Now, National has drastically reduced the activities required for chapter certification (and will also reduce funding for local chapters). We are no longer required (and to so state in our Bylaws) to have a minimum number of field trips, meetings, committees, etc., nor to publish a newsletter. The only thing that must be spelled out in our Bylaws is a statement that we support the Chapter Policy of National Audubon. (The one page policy statement will be put up on the website mentioned below.)

Your Officers and Board have been considering changes to the Bylaws, and will strive to have a new version ready well before the December meeting, when it is planned to ask the members present to vote on acceptance of the revisions.

Rather than go to the expense of printing and mailing the changes to each member, the proposed Bylaws changes will be posted on our website, here:

<http://ESAudubon.org/bylaws-95-changes.htm>

A preliminary draft is there now, but further revisions may be made after the November Board meeting. The final draft should be in place by November 20.

Members who would like to see the proposed changes, but cannot get them over the internet, should contact Larry Blakely (872-1890) to request a written copy.

FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, December 7th - Crowley Reservoir Loons, Ducks, and Bald Eagles with Jon Dunn - Reservations are required for this trip. Call Chris at 873-7422 for reservations, trip info, and meeting time and location.

Christmas Bird Counts (CBC): All skill levels are encouraged to participate in the annual CBCs. They're a great way to become more familiar with wintering birds and meet new people:

Saturday, December 14th - **Bishop CBC** - Chris Howard, 873-7422
choward@telis.org

Saturday, December 14th - **Lone Pine CBC** - Mike Prather, 876-5807
prather@qnet.com

Monday, December 16th - **Death Valley CBC** - Mike Prather, 876-5807
prather@qnet.com



From Bird Sightings website: Chestnut Collared Longspur seen and photographed at Crowley Reservoir by Chris Howard, October 19.



Rosie Beach

Rosie's class at Mono Lake

BINOCULARS FOR SCHOOLS

The ESAS board recently approved the purchase of ten more small Nikon binoculars for use in their "Birds-in-the-Classroom" education program. Seen here is Rosie Beach's third grade class from Pine Street School at Mono Lake on October 22nd. This moment of migration education was made possible through ESAS's continued commitment to this fine program. Excerpts of student writings inspired by this field trip to follow in the next issue.

Conservation

IT'S A WILD LIFE

by Joy Fatooh
Wildlife Biologist

Up on my Fruit Crate

I'm going to take a break from wildlife stories and use this space as a soapbox. Or a fruit crate. I'm going to stand up here and tell you that one of the best things you can do for wildlife is to eat organic.

"Organic" – what's it mean?

We learned in chemistry that everything with carbon compounds is "organic." Gasoline, for instance. Applied to foods, it used to broadly mean "produced without chemical fertilizers or pesticides." Foods could be certified as "organic" under various standards but it was just a few days ago, October 21, 2002, that the U.S. Department of Agriculture began implementing new national inspection and labeling standards (www.ams.usda.gov/nop).

According to the USDA, "Organic food is produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides; petroleum-based fertilizers or sewage sludge-based fertilizers; bio-engineering; or ionizing radiation."

Think of what that means for birds and other wildlife! You've read about how they've been dying outright or struggling with reproductive problems and deformities as a result of chemicals spewed into the environment. You know how mass-production farming depletes soil instead of building it up. We have a choice between supporting the farmers who do the spewing and depleting, or supporting those who enhance environmental quality for future generations.

Okay, so how? Easy. In Bishop, for instance, you push your shopping cart into the north

door of Vons, pass the flowers, make a hard left and you're looking at a whole case of organic produce. Cross the aisle to the bags of pre-washed salad makings, and notice that several say "Organic." Vons also carries organic dairy products, cereals, pastas and sauces, and more, intermingled with the products of the spewers. Whatever you buy, look around and see if it has an organic counterpart on the shelf nearby. Also notice that it costs a bit more. So? The USDA says organic farming has been growing 20 to

25% a year. Let's keep showing them that we're willing to pay extra for their careful stewardship. Often when I unload at the checkout stand, everything but the cat food is organic.

I also make regular visits to those great little locally-owned stores that specialize in healthful foods, including lots of organic items. Holmes Health Haven in Bishop, on West Line a block from Main, sells me a fat bag of groceries every week. Essential item: organic chocolate! They don't have produce but Sierra Sundance in Mammoth does.

Food co-ops are great if you have a big family, a big pantry or a big appetite, as you generally have to buy in bulk – but you can order absolutely anything from Mountain People's Warehouse's thick catalog. There are several co-ops in eastern Sierra communities, all ordering from Mountain People; call 1-800-679-6733 to find the one near you.

Here's another thing: on the average, every dollar you spend means a liter of CO₂ in the atmosphere – from production plus packaging, transportation, advertising. Feeling the effects of global warming? Consider locally-grown. To me, all organically-grown produce tastes better than that other stuff, but the locally-grown items are outstanding. I don't even bother with commercial tomatoes. As my old landlady MaBelle Bramlette used to say, "They taste like coal oil!"

Many of the smaller, locally-owned markets in the eastern Sierra excel at stocking both organic and locally-grown produce, along with other organic groceries. Manor Market, way out on West Line in Bishop, is exceptional. So is Lee Vining's Mono Market. Joseph's Bi-Rite is worth a look; they sometimes make a lie of John Denver's song: "There's only two things that money can't buy; that's true love, and home-grown tomatoes...." In summer, don't miss the farmers' market on Saturday mornings at the fairgrounds.

Now. Go out in your yard. Look for a bare patch – or a bit of lawn you're tired of mowing. What if you spent that dollar on a packet of seed? Local wildlife biologist Terry Russi likes to say that the most radical thing you can do for the environment is to grow your own food. Even a little bit. Be radical: turn the soil this weekend, and plant a few seeds this spring. The birds you're saving will sing to you.



White-throated Sparrow

Photo by Robert Mulvihill, Field Ornithologist and Senior Scientist at Powdermill Nature Reserve, field research station of Carnegie Museum of Natural History.

Bird banding is a major activity at the Station, the results of which, with many tremendous photos, are posted on a marvelous website, listed below the photo. Visit the site for a major bird treat. Thanks to Tom & Jo for telling us of it.



4 Eastern Sierra Wave

THE OWENS RIVER HEADWATERS

Potential Addition to the Ansel Adams Wilderness

Everyone is familiar with the realtor's mantra of "location, location, location." Up on a bluff, a forested glen, next to the transfer station... the setting is often the selling point.

The setting of Owens River Headwaters could not be any more perfect. Located between the towns of Mammoth Lakes and June Lake, the Headwaters sit just to the east of the lowest portion of the central Sierra Crest. This dip funnels Pacific moisture up the San Joaquin River valley to create a unique wet oasis in the midst of the Eastern Sierras' dry sagebrush sea.

This abundant moisture combines with the area's porous pumice soils to form a huge geologic sponge. From this sponge

rise over 100 seeps and springs that feed Glass and Deadman Creeks which eventually combine to form the Upper Owens River.

While on its way down to the most important river in the Eastern Sierra, this water

from increasing off-road vehicle damage, the Headwaters' outstanding values are definitely not secure. We have before us an unprecedented opportunity to ensure that this unique place is preserved for future generations.



Glass Creek Meadow

McFarland

The Headwaters are included in Senator Barbara Boxer's recently introduced California Wild Heritage Act. This bill would protect 14,800 acres of the Owens River Headwaters as Wilderness and preserve Glass Creek, Deadman Creek and the Upper Owens River as Wild & Scenic Rivers.

To help preserve the Headwaters, please write Senator Dianne Feinstein and urge her to support the California Wild Heritage Act. Those, like the Yosemite toads, who realize the true importance of "location", will thank you for your support.

For more information on the Headwaters and other roadless areas in the Eastern Sierra, go to www.friendsoftheinyo.org.

Senator Dianne Feinstein
One Post Street, Suite 2450
San Francisco, California 94104

Paul McFarland
Friends of the Inyo

sustains the Eastern Sierras' largest stand of old growth red fir, as well as the Eastern Sierras' largest subalpine meadow, Glass Creek Meadow, home to over 40 species of butterflies.

Identified for ski area development in the Inyo National Forest Plan and suffering

HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE NEW ZEALAND MUD SNAIL

By Debra Hawk

Wild Trout Biologist, CDFG, Region 6

The New Zealand mud snail (NZMS), a native of, yes, New Zealand, can now be found in the U.S., and sadly, is now known to occur here in the Eastern Sierra. The NZMS is in the main stem Owens River, both upstream and downstream of Crowley Reservoir through the Bishop Area and in Bishop Creek Canal, above Dixon Lane. And just this year, the NZMS made its way to Hot Creek! Complete surveys to determine the extent of its distribution in our waters have not been conducted and while it's likely that this non-native, highly inva-

sive species has spread to other local waters, there's a concerted effort now underway to alert the public to the presence of this unwelcome mollusk.

In order to understand what can be done to slow the spread of the NZMS, one first needs to know a little bit about their life history. The NZMS is "born" with young already forming internally, so only one individual is needed to start a new population. The NZMS in California are likely all clones, possibly from a single individual, accidentally intro-

duced into the Owens River. The NZMS can survive in extremely high densities and often crowd out other aquatic invertebrates, such as mayflies, stoneflies, and native snails.

The NZMS is rather versatile too, living on silt, gravel, aquatic plants and even concrete, and in warm or cold, and still or flowing water. The NZMS has an operculum, (the hard disk that seals the shell opening) which allows it to completely protect its soft body from any undesirable external environment. The NZMS can be transferred to new



waters by attaching to boats, waders, fishing gear, wading boots and gear, hair, pets, pack-stock and construction equipment — virtually anything that enters the water where NZMS's are present.

Besides anglers, what else enters the water and has been identified as possible vectors? Both fish and birds have the ability to unknowingly assist in the spread through ingestion. Fish readily eat snails, but unfortunately don't receive any benefit by eating the NZMS as they pass through the digestive system of fish - unharmed, only to be deposited elsewhere. If ingestion happens to occur during spawning, a NZMS could be transported a great distance upstream. There are a few avian species that also readily eat snails. Fish cleaning stations are a hot spot for gulls, ravens and a few other opportunistic birds, especially during the opener, but any time of year, discarded "fish guts" that may contain NZMS, could easily be ingested. Although it's possible that dippers may ingest NZMS, the rock crush-



ing action the dippers subject their prey to would likely crush the delicate shell of the NZMS. However, dippers feed almost exclusively on larval forms of aquatic insects such as stoneflies, mayflies, and caddisflies - the very invertebrates that NZMS are quickly displacing. So in addition to potential

impacts to the Eastern Sierra sportfishing industry, there are other potential impacts that are less talked about.

All these factors combined have allowed the NZMS to invade and often become the dominant invertebrate in numerous waters in North America and Europe. What can be done? If you're an angler, consider the following:

- Expose all equipment to a 45° C rinse (~114° F) for at least 15 seconds or to freezing temperatures (overnight in a standard kitchen freezer will do it). Studies have proven that both treatments are 100% effective in killing the NZMS.

- If neither are options, completely dry equipment, and brush off all debris. NZMS can survive up to 25 days in a moist media.

- When angling and harvesting fish, properly discard fish guts in either closed receptacles or bury them, as they may contain live NZMS.

- When visiting several waters within a short period of time, visit known NZMS-infested waters last. For example, if fishing June Lake and Hot Creek, fish June Lake first. This will help prevent the possible transfer of the NZMS to non-infested waters.

Although there is currently no known method to control or eliminate the NZMS, researchers are monitoring its spread and its ecological impact. Perhaps through further study, a solution to eradicate the NZMS will be found. Remember, it only takes one NZMS to start a new population! Through a cooperative effort between the Department of Fish and Game, Aguabonita Flyfishers and the Southwest Council of the Federation of Fly Fishers, a presentation on the NZMS is available (in both CD and VHS) from the DFG office in Bishop. Contact Debra Hawk at 760.872.1134, for additional information or to receive a copy.

Ed. Note: Look for a program by Debra early next year.

ESWC'S LONGEST AND BUSIEST BABY SEASON EVER!

By Cindy Kamler

Wildlife Rehabilitator, Eastern Sierra Wildlife Care

Two hundred and ninety wild animals were admitted to ESWC between January 1 and October 20 this year. The first baby—a lesser goldfinch rescued by Rosie Beach and Chris Howard—arrived April 11; the last baby—also a goldfinch—arrived September 15 and was self-feeding by October 2. The 140 youngsters—birds and mammals ranged from day-old nudies to near-fledglings. We saw an increase in higher-elevation birds, raptors, and woodpeckers.

Species new to us included: White-throated Swift, Northern Harrier, Flammulated Owl, Ring-neck Duck, Northern Shrike, Lewis' and Downy Woodpeckers, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Clark's Nutcracker, Williamson's

Sapsucker, Golden-mantled Ground Squirrels, and Blue Grouse.

Here's just a few of our success stories:

Costa's Hummingbird: This single nestling came to us—nest and all—because a Bishop resident observed that the mother had failed to return to the nest. The tiny female flourished under the care of ESWC's volunteer hummer mother and, once she was self-feeding, flying and hovering well, was released.

Flammulated Owl: In late April, this seldom-seen small owl was found outside the Mammoth Visitor's Center, having apparently struck a window. He was treated for a mild concussion and returned to his neighborhood within a few days.

Northern Harrier: Firefighters working the Big Pine fire rescued a young raptor who was found in the grasses

along a streambed. Bedraggled but unhurt, this unusual near-fledgling was a perfect candidate for return to the parents, but they could not be located. Because these birds hunt mainly by hearing rather than sight, we



Northern Harrier (photo by Cindy)

6 *Eastern Sierra Wave*

transferred her—once she was self-feeding—to WildCare in Marin County where they have a 100-foot grass-bottomed aviary. She became a ferocious hunter and a successful release.

White-Throated Swift: This aptly-named insect catcher is one of the fastest birds on the planet, having been clocked at over 200 mph evading a stooping peregrine falcon. Our patient was rescued from the ground in the White Mountains. The possible juvenile bird's first five primaries on the left wing were growing in, but were only about a quarter the length of the other primaries. What caused

this condition remains a mystery. There were no signs of injury and the bird was well fleshed, with good feather quality. Swifts never self-feed in captivity, making them difficult patients. Six or seven times a day, I would literally pry open his beak and, one by one, stuff a combination of twelve insects—mealworms, waxworms and crickets—into the swift's tiny-beaked, large mouth. After 4 weeks, he was transferred to a swift rehabber in Walnut Creek where he remained in the company of other swifts for another 4 weeks until ready for release.

Osprey: On September 16, fishermen and hikers watched as a bald eagle dove upon an osprey, knocking it into the waters of Twin Lakes near Bridgeport. One fisherman rowed quickly to the raptor's rescue. The bird was soon placed in a carrier, ESWC called, and a volunteer from Mammoth was on her way. Although cold and wet, the bird was otherwise unharmed, and following emergency care and a warm night's sleep, the osprey was returned to the lake area where it quickly winged out of sight.

Birding

BOTANY FOR BIRDERS IN THE EASTERN SIERRA

Book Review

Wildflowers of the Eastern Sierra and adjoining Mojave Desert and Great Basin, by Laird R. Blackwell. 2002. Lone Pine Publishing, Renton, WA. 256 pp., Softcover. \$14.95.

This pictorial handbook treats 366 of the more common species of flowering plants in the Eastern Sierra, defined by the author as the region east of the Sierra crest, from just north of Lake Tahoe south to Mt. Whitney, and down to and across valley floors. Coverage does not extend to the White-Inyo Range and Death Valley

N.P. Of course, no field guide of this nature could possibly cover all of the roughly 3000 species and varieties of plants that occur in the Eastern Sierra. The new Jepson Desert Manual covers most of the plants of our region, in a smaller package than the full Jepson Manual, but birders uninitiated into the mysteries of botany may find it daunting. Therefore, books like this serve an important but not definitive role. This book covers an area not well covered by other such field guides (see list below).

The book is divided into 6 sections. The first consists of 25 pages of introductory material. The next four sections take up the plants,

each section corresponding to one of 4 zones defined as 'Mojave Desert Scrub', 'Great Basin Sagebrush Steppe', 'Mixed Conifer Forest', and 'Alpine'. There can be considerable overlap, so if you don't find your plant in one of these, look in adjacent sections. Within each of these sections, the plants are arranged by flower color and number of petals. The sixth section contains a glossary, references, and indices.

Each species gets one-half of a 5" x 8" page, and within that space, both useful and interesting information is conveyed. About half of the allotted space is taken up by 2 photos, half of the remaining space by a description, often with a little lore added, then a few words on the derivation of the scientific name (which definitely makes them more palatable), and one or more locations where the plant may be found. Given the space constraints in a work such as this, the author has done an excellent job.

Other good plant field guides overlap with the coverage of this book, and extend coverage to the east. Overlap can be good. There are some wildflowers so distinctive and unique that pictures can serve to identify them to species. But there are many cases (like those

DYCs, or Dratted Yellow Composites - akin to LBBs, or Little Brown Birds) in which one or two pictures can't do the job and may lead to considerable confusion, as when the pictures of more than one flower in a guide book look just like the one in your hand, or one looks just like yours but it isn't. Additional pictures and written description may help. Other books useful in our area include:

For the eastside of the Sierra Mountains:

Plants of the Tahoe Basin, by Michael Graf. 1999. CNPS Press, Sacramento. 308 pp., Softcover. \$19.95.

Sierra Nevada Wildflowers, by Elizabeth L. Horn. 1998. Mountain Press, Missoula, MT. 215 pp., Softcover. \$17.15. (Mainly covers the west side, but many east side plants are also included.)

For the deserts:

Mojave Desert Wildflowers, by Jon Mark Stewart. 1998. Stewart Photography, Albuquerque, NM. 210 pp., Softcover. \$14.95.

Death Valley Wildflowers, by Roxana S. Ferris. 1983. Death Valley Natural History Association, Death Valley, CA. 150 pp., Softcover. \$9.95.

For the White-Inyo Range:

Natural History of the White-Inyo Range, Eastern California, edited by Clarence A. Hall, Jr. 1991. U. C. Press, Berkeley, CA. 536 pp., Softcover. \$30.95. *Chapter 6*, "Shrubs and Flowering Plants", by Mary DeDecker. 133 pp. of text, plus 234 of Mary's photos.

For many more pictures:

CalFlora.org, a wonderful internet database of 8,363 California wild plants, over half of which are now illustrated with one to many good-sized color photos each.

For the greatest depth in one volume:

The Jepson Desert Manual, edited by Bruce Baldwin, et. al. 2002. U. C. Press, Berkeley, CA. 624 pp. Softcover. \$35.00. Covers the eastside of the Sierra Mountains also (but I've found that some plants this side of the crest are not included). A good illustrated glossary, line drawings for most plants, and 130 color photos, make dealing with the mysteries easier.

Larry Blakely



Bigelow's Helenium, *Helenium bigelovii*
Big Pine Creek

Blakely

WINTER BIRD ALERT

By Tom & Jo Heindel

It is November now, and as we look at the east slope of the Sierra we cannot help but notice that the green riparian in the canyon bottoms is now gold and crimson with touches of maroon. Winter is just around the corner, but what kind will we have this year and what birds will it bring?

Winter is the most unpredictable bird season of all. Some birds would never have been prophesied as potential winter visitors. The **White-winged Junco** that Debby Parker found near Laws on 22 December 2000 is just such an example. It remained into March 2001 and was seen by all the local birders as well as others who came from far and wide to see only the third record for the State of this Great Plains bird.

The **Snow Bunting** found at Scotty's Castle 14 November 1970 was another amazing visitor. Fortunately for science, one of California's premier birders, Guy McCaskie, was there to record it and asked a tourist to photograph it and send him the picture. She did and the rest is history.

Other winter birds that are regular visitors are anticipated with avid watchfulness.

Tundra Swans

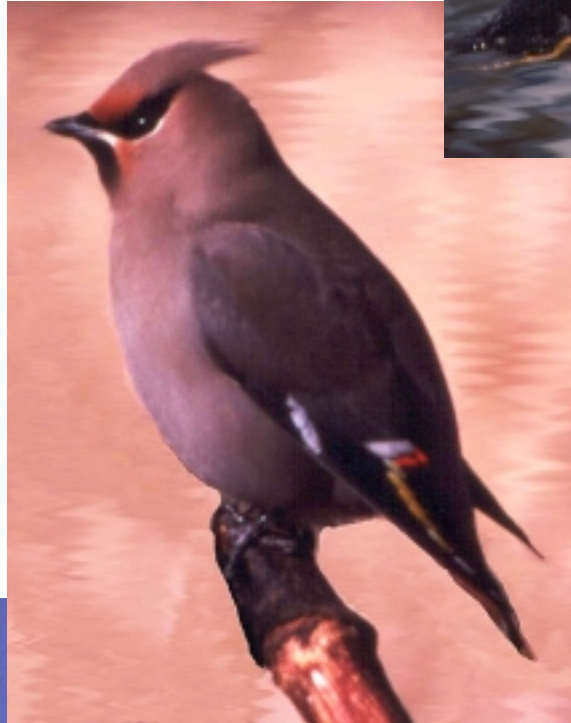
arrive with startling regularity the first week of November, but in 1966, 1996 and 1997, the avant-garde were recorded on 22 Oct.

Barrow's Goldeneye has been recorded about a dozen times in Inyo County and most birds have been found after Thanksgiving although Jon Dunn, of Rovana, found a male at Tinemaha Reservoir on 5 November 1991. Most sightings are from Furnace Creek Ranch, Tinemaha and Pleasant Valley Reservoirs.

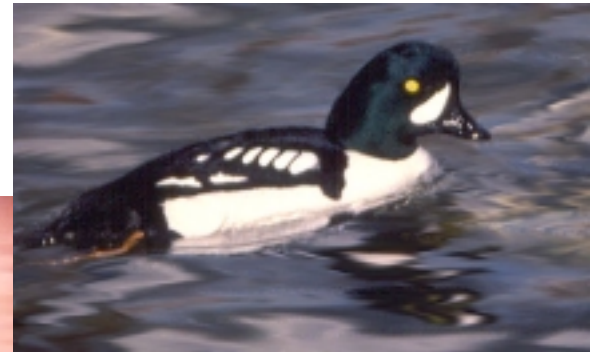
Bald Eagles typically arrive in early November, although in 1992 an immature made an early appearance at Tinemaha Reservoir on 8 Oct.

From the far north come **Rough-legged Hawks**. The 1970s had many more records than the last decade. There were many days when more Rough-leggeds were seen than Red-tailed Hawks! This species typically arrives in the

Bohemian Waxwing



Rough-legged Hawk



Barrow's Goldeneye

Stephen F. Bailey at Big Pine 26 October 1975.

While the colorful **Bohemian Waxwing** is eagerly anticipated each winter, it usually disappoints birders and is not reported. When they do visit, they are not seen until after mid November. On 13 November 1994, Dave Shuford called at 0835 from Lee Vining to tell us that he had just seen about one hundred Bohemians take off and head due south and wanted to alert us. Four hours later we got a call from Bob Toth in Bishop, who knew nothing about the Early Alert, telling us that he had about 20 Bohemians in his yard!

Photos by Tom & Jo

Evening Grosbeak



Will it be an **Evening Grosbeak** year? In 1990, we had dozens in our yard every day for the entire winter. We were thrilled that we were going

to see them each winter of our retirement! It has not happened since.

If ignorance is bliss then winter is the blissful season because we cannot predict what our best birds will be, but there surely will be treasures.

County about mid November but Jon Dunn found one at Furnace Creek Ranch on 27 October 1978.

Some winters this beautiful hawk is seen daily in the Owens Valley and other winters it goes virtually unrecorded.

Will this be a **Northern Shrike** winter? This rare visitor from the far north may occur annually but it is not reported every year. The first sightings usually occur in late November but one was found by

Editor's Grateful Note: This article is the 50th in a wonderful series on Inyo birding which began a decade ago in January, 1993. All 50 of these timeless lore-filled and info-packed pieces are preserved on our website (ESAudubon.org/hndl1ist.htm) for the continued enjoyment and inspiration of birders both local and distant. Thanks so very much for sharing your bounteous knowledge, Tom & Jo!

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Chris Howard

Jon Dunn (nearest camera), renowned ornithologist and Eastern Sierra resident, with ESAS members and guests that he led on a field trip to Crowley Lake last winter. Jon will present the December 11 program (see p. 1), and will lead another trip to Crowley on December 7 (see Field Trips).

Great Programs, Regional Conservation Articles, Botany for Birders, Winter Bird Alert, and Much More!