

THE 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!**

January 8

Refreshments: **Joan Benner**

Main Program: **New Zealand Mud Snail, Exotic Invader**

We have something new to worry about in our waterways- the New Zealand Mud Snail. Originating in its namesake country, it has now spread (faster than a snail's pace) all over the United States, including our local area. Like all successful invaders, this minute aquatic snail has many tricks up its sleeve. It is virtually indestructible, it can catch various rides to new waterways of any sort, and once it gets there, one snail can propagate a new population. Of course it negatively affects all the native aquatic species, including fish and birds.



We need to be aware of these exotics and learn how to minimize their spread throughout our area. Come hear a California Fish and Game biologist explain and illustrate what is known about the New Zealand Mud Snail. This show is of special interest to all anglers.

February 13

Refreshments: **Dorothy Burnstrom**

Main Program: **Meet some of the wild animals who were brought to Eastern Sierra Wildlife Care for help** - owls, cottontails, loons, eagles, goldfinches and more. Through their stories, you'll learn why and how these animals get into trouble. Tales of rescue, rehabilitation, and release will be told. You'll have

a clearer picture of what rehabilitation is and how it works. Get some tips on how you can help prevent some of the common causes of wildlife injuries.

Cindy Kamler, our speaker, has been rehabilitating injured and orphaned wildlife for 17 years, seven of those in the Owens Valley. She is the founder and director of Eastern Sierra Wildlife Care, a writer, poet, and world traveler.



Volunteer Sheryl Quintana helps Cindy with a Northern Harrier

Chapter Notes

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What gets dozens of local birders out of bed in the dark each December? What causes them to spend hours tramping through town, across pastures, up canyons, and around ponds? It is the annual Christmas Bird Count sponsored locally by Eastern Sierra Audubon Society. This year's count was a delight to participate in. Chris Howard

should receive a round of applause for another count well done. His tremendous organizational skills contributed to a good time had by all. The threatening weather held off long enough for a successful count. All who turned out to seek the birds should be thanked also. Some birds that were seen this year included Osprey, Surf Scoter, Eastern Phoebe, Harris's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, and Varied Thrush, great birds and a great time.

An early Audubon officer, Frank Chapman, instituted the first Christmas Bird Count, held in December 1900. He was concerned about a traditional annual competition, called the "Side Hunt", amongst some hunters, of seeing who could produce the largest pile of dead birds. He proposed counting instead of shooting birds, and the first CBC was born. The first time there were 27 different counts, and nationally a total of 90 species were observed. Interestingly, our

local count produced over 100 species by itself this year. The CBC "is the oldest and largest wildlife survey in the world" (Butcher 1990).

The Christmas Bird Count is a great example of citizen science at work. Over 50,000 people nationwide participate annually in the event. Over 1800 circles exist, mostly in the United States and Canada, but also in Central and South America. The information gathered not only provides local data, but also contributes to a hemispheric database about population trends. While the value of the day is the pleasure the participants have, the long-term value is the tremendous information gathered. This information, part of the monitoring of population trends amongst birds, is another tool in our advocacy for wild birds and other creatures. Access this information for your own education and pleasure at www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/cbc.html. This site has graphs and pages that illustrate the population dynamics and distribution of our wintering birds.

As your local Audubon Society President I see this is another example of your local ESAS chapter working to provide programs for its members and benefits for our local wildlife, something in which we should all take pride. This is an opportunity to spend time with other local Eastern Sierra Audubon folks, and perhaps make some new friends. Thanks to all who participated this year, and to all who didn't; we hope to see you next year.

James Wilson

THANKS

Many thanks to **Sally Gaines** for taking over as Programs chair. Kudos again to

Newsletter Information

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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.

Debby Parker for the outstanding job she did during her tenure.

SOUTHERN INYO CBCs

Our Death Valley CBC Dec. 16th had 56 species and the Lone Pine CBC Dec. 14th had 58 species. Fun was had by all.

Mike Prather

ST. JUDE'S RANCH CARDS

Recycle those Christmas (and other) cards and help the children at St. Jude's Ranch for Children (stjudesranch.org), a non-profit, non-sectarian organization which provides loving homes to abused, abandoned, neglected and other 'at-risk' children from infancy to age 21.

Please send your all occasion used greeting cards to:

St. Jude's Ranch for Children
100 St. Jude's Street
Boulder City, NV 89005-1618



cevl.msu.edu

Cedar Waxwing

BERNASCONI BIRDING

This fall in the first week of November, 6th grade students from Home Street School in Bishop participated in a two and a half day science camp at the Bernasconi Education Center which is located in the Sierra Nevada foothills a few miles southwest of Big Pine. Students were split into small groups and rotated throughout the day to engage in a variety of activities. Topics included ecosystems, geology, animal and plant adaptations, team building exercises and bird study, part of which was watching birds. Point Reyes Bird Observatory's (PRBO) Conservation Science Eastern Sierra Education Program, conducted the bird study workshops. ESAS loaned 20 pairs of binoculars that were used throughout the week, by over 250 students, parents and teachers. Students learned how to properly use binoculars and a field guide as well as the basics of bird watching, migration and the importance of riparian areas. The decadent apple trees, the small creek and a series of small ponds within the Center's

There is no doubt that taking our children into the world with a pair of binoculars increases their sense of wonder for birds and all other creatures.

grounds gave opportunity for the classes to observe over 34 species, including 5 species of woodpeckers and scores of Robins which feasted on the rotting apples. Other highlights included a beautiful male Varied Thrush down from its mountains haunts. A small group of vocal Cedar Waxwings were seen up close for a long time by one group of delighted students. One student ex-

claimed that Cedar Waxwings were the most beautiful birds she had ever seen. There is no doubt that taking our children into the world with a pair of binoculars increases their sense of wonder for birds and all other creatures. A big thank you to the

Eastern Sierra Audubon Education Committee for providing the binoculars that gave many students their first close-up look at a variety of Eastern Sierra birds. If you are interested in participating in PRBO's Conservation Science Eastern Sierra Education Program, with in-class visits or family visits to our summer bird banding stations in the Mono Basin, please contact River Gates (h_river@lycos.com) or (760) 647-6109.

River Gates

BISHOP CHRISTMAS COUNT 2002 REPORT

Many thanks to the participants of the Bishop Christmas Bird Count held on December 14th. The count was an overwhelming success; six species were found that had never been found on a Bishop CBC before. The preliminary total number of species seen is a new count record: 107. Weather was surprisingly good. With the exception of our mountaineering teams, winds were calm.

(Underlined denotes new to count.) Highlights include an EASTERN PHOEBE found by the Carolyn Gann/Wilson/Nahm/Mitchel team at the Bishop Golf Course and WESTERN BLUEBIRDS. The Parkers had OSPREY and SURF SCOTER at Pleasant Valley Reservoir. Dunn and House found HARRIS'S SPARROW, LARK BUNTING, BARN SWALLOW, and SWAMP SPARROW in Round Valley. The Heindels located a COMMON YELLOWTHROAT at the Bishop Sewer Ponds and two WESTERN SCREECH-OWLS. A GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW was found by Gates/Heath/McCreedy near the Owens River and a female VARIED THRUSH in a Bishop yard. A GREATER YELLOWLEGS was found at Nik and Nik Ponds by the Wells/Vocelka/Duvall/Engelhardt group. A whopping 33 EVENING GROSBELLS mobbed the Nelson/Ellis/Miller/Escruceria team up high on Bishop Creek. A BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON was tallied by the Parkers near Birchim Canyon. At least two MERLIN were near Bishop. It's a slow year for CASSIN'S FINCHES, but the Zatorski/Hetzler mountaineers found six at a Starlight feeder. Chris and Rosie's "SOOTY" FOX SPARROW continued to feed on sunflower seeds in their backyard.

Also intriguing was a report by the Wells/Vocelka/Duvall/Engelhardt group of a woodpecker showing many characteristics of LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER on Bishop Creek Canal south of Dixon Lane. Unfortunately, the bird was silent, so the possibility of hybridization with NUTTALL'S WOODPECKER exists. Efforts to refind the bird were unsuccessful. The Gorhams had another intriguing report of a bird exhibiting characteristics of an adult GOSHAWK.

Notable misses were few: Greater Roadrunner, Common Merganser, and Sage Sparrow.

Chris Howard

EASTERN SIERRA AUDUBON SOCIETY FIELD TRIPS - 2003

Check the *Field Trips* webpage, esaudubon.org/birds/field_trips.htm, for additions and updates.

Saturday, January 4th - Mono Basin Bird Count - Sponsored by **Point Reyes Bird Observatory** - all ages and levels of experience are welcome. There are a variety of routes ranging from high altitude possibly skiing routes as well as a canoe route on the lake and islands. We will be having a strategy meeting the evening before, Friday January 3rd, at the PRBO field station in Mono City. People that are traveling from distances are more than welcome to stay the evening before and after the count. We will conclude the count with a Countdown dinner at the field station after sundown. For more information or to RSVP please email **River Gates** or **Chris McCreedy** at h_river@lycos.com or cmccreedy@prbo.org, respectively. Or call 760 647 6109.

Saturday, February 8th - Big Pine Winter Wildlife Tour - leaders **Tom and Jo Heindel** - This is a great driving tour between Klondike Lake and Tinemaha Reservoir. Meet at the Glacier View Campground in Big Pine at 8:00AM. Bring binoculars, lunch, water, scopes. Should last until noon. For further information call Tom or Jo Heindel at 938-2764.

Saturday, February 15th - Furnace Creek Birding - President's Weekend - Meet at the Furnace Creek golf course parking lot at 8:00AM for a morning of desert oasis birding. Contact **Chris Howard** at 873-7422 for more info.

Saturday, February 22nd - Pleasant Valley Reservoir Birding - This is a great opportunity to see ducks, geese, snipe, raptors and wrens. This trip involves a 2 mile walk. Great for kids and beginning birders. Bring binoculars, scopes, snacks, and water. Meet at 8:00AM behind the Wye Shell in Bishop to carpool. For more information call **Jerry Zatorski** at 872-3818.

Saturday, March 8th - Bird Banding Demonstration with **Tom and Jo Heindel** - Tom and Jo will operate a bird banding station where the public is invited to watch wild birds being taken out of mist nets, measurements made, aluminum bands placed on legs and the birds released back to the wild. Stop by between 8:00AM and 11:00AM. Drop-ins may stay for as long or as short a time as they wish. The station is located at 280 Dewey St., Big Pine. Children are welcome; pets are not for obvious reasons. Wind or weather cancels. For further information call Tom or Jo Heindel at 938-2764.

Chris Howard

AFTER SMOKEY: THE BAER

by Joy Fatooh
Wildlife Biologist

One wildfire after another ripped through northernmost Mono County last summer, destroying and threatening human lives and property. Thousands of wild animals also lost their homes - 27,000 acres of wildlife habitat, more than half of which was critical winter range for the West Walker mule deer herd. Who rebuilds for them?

Conservation

In early June the Cannon Fire burned public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Toiyabe National Forest, and California Department of Fish and Game (DFG). BLM botanist Anne Halford was part of a team of resource scientists who came in just a week after the fire was out to plan how to rehabilitate the blackened landscape. A week into their work, lightning ignited the Slinkard Fire nearby.

When Anne told me about "the BAER team" I pictured Smokey and friends until she

spelled it out: "Burn Area Emergency Rehabilitation. They call people from all over the West with BAER experience, and agency people who are familiar with the local landscape. They pulled together a geologist, a soil scientist, hydrologists, wildlife and fisheries biologists, and botanists."

Anne described the scene they found: "It was very black, and kind of ominous-looking with all the charred pinyon and black soil. The higher elevation portions had burned in a mosaic with little fingers of

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sagebrush steppe intact but the lower elevation parts were devastated. The riparian areas were also charred. And what was really horrible to see were all the rabbits, coyotes, chipmunks, birds.... It burned hot and fast, and it was sad to see all their little charred skeletons.

"It was amazing to see how quickly those fires moved, and how many acres they covered."

The BAER team assessed the Cannon Fire's damage and made recommendations, stratifying the treatments based on burn intensity, threat to human life and property from erosion, and mule deer winter range. Anne added another element: anything below 6300 feet elevation was at high risk for invasion by cheatgrass, the non-native fire-adapted annual that so often crowds out slower-growing native plants. "Above that elevation, moisture is not so limiting and native plants have a better chance of competing."

The Slinkard Fire burned mostly BLM lands. By the time it was out, people had been called away to other fires throughout the West. "I basically was the BAER team for the Slinkard Fire, cutting and pasting from the Cannon plan. It was a busy fire season," Anne said. Just last week, in mid-December, she came into the office we share and told me all the work was finally done.

She had spent months writing contracts, bringing people and supplies together, going out with crews and getting them to the right places. The on-the-ground work began in October. The first step was contour felling of burned pinyon pines to try to prevent mudslides on the steep slopes adjacent to the highway. The Silver State Hotshot crew out of Carson City BLM cut pinyons, limbed them and laid them flush to the ground, and built

sumps where debris could collect before reaching Highway 395.

Next was placing straw wattles across erosion-vulnerable slopes and stream channels. What was that work like? "Arduous, soggy!" Anne said. "Some of them were really wet. They came in twelve foot wide rolls, 30-40 pounds apiece, like big sausages, very cumbersome to haul across streams and up slopes. A California Conservation Corps crew out of the

Imperial Valley did nearly all the work, young people who had never had this kind of experience. Derek Watkins, the crew boss, was excellent; he got them really motivated. It was pretty impressive to see how they did the work. They moved 90% of them by hand, the Air National Guard donated a helicopter to transport the last of the wattles where they couldn't be carried, and the CCC crew put them all in place."

Some of the low-elevation, most vulnerable acreage was level enough to be seeded with

best-adapted to the area. Comstock Seed was experienced in collecting from the Walker watersheds. "The seed was ripe and ready and we had less than a week to get all that seed collected," Anne said. "That June window was perfect – if we'd had the fire in August we would have missed the opportunity to collect locally."

Overseeing the rangeland drill was a new experience for Anne. "At first I was pretty leery of having any heavy equipment on the ground, but they were really light on the terrain. The drill left small shallow furrows; it was basically just like small-scale farming. BLM heavy equipment operators out of Bakersfield, Mitch Wiley and Dan Cannon, did the work. My job was hauling and mixing the seed, making sure they didn't drive over archaeological sites we'd flagged, showing them where to drill. By luck we drilled seeded right after the first rain, and then got a little rain after."

Some aerial seeding was included in the original plan, but it would have been too costly per acre. DFG meanwhile got funding to do live plantings of at least 5000 bitterbrush next fall, to be grown in a Nevada Department

of Forestry nursery from local seed DFG luckily had collected a couple of years ago.

"My philosophy is to treat the most important areas first, and then see how things come back naturally. You don't have to treat every acre," Anne told me. "You come back a month after the fire and things are starting to green up: willows, roses, elderberry, sedges and rushes were all sprouting right back along the streams. In fall the upland grasses were starting to come back.

"But not the bitterbrush: it was such an intense fire, it probably won't be resprouting except in places where the water table is a little higher, like adjacent to springs, where it didn't burn as hot so roots were less damaged; and if there's any living tissue left it can take advantage of those moister soil conditions. The higher elevation ecotypes of bitterbrush – slightly genetically different – are more likely to resprout. And wherever intact stands were left, we might see seed caches. Bitterbrush seed is distributed by granivores and it will slowly spread across the landscape, eventually, given good seed



Carrying Straw Wattles

strawwattles.com



Rangeland Drill

truaxcomp.com



Rabbitbrush pioneering among fire-killed bitterbrush, south of Lee Vining

Blackley

a rangeland drill. One of the first challenges had been contracting for a local seed source, to preserve grass, shrub and herb species

production and moist summers. The same is true of pinyon. It was such a phenomenal pinyon year, there's a good chance there will be seed caches. If we get some more rains it'll certainly help. The riparian areas I think will do just fine from a vegetation recovery standpoint, especially by next summer, although in the interim the streams will likely see some increased sediment loads."

One setback is that people are starting to use off-highway vehicles on the burned area.

"They think it's one big open area. I don't know what to do besides get it out to the public that it's hurting their ability to see recovery on those areas." Weed seeds hitchhiking in on their wheels will also be a problem.

Post-fire rehab is expensive—over \$300,000 for the Slinkard fire alone—and a lot of work to patch a few acres, but Anne is optimistic that nature will take it from there.

"There was a lot of deer traffic through the burn. They're starting to nibble on some of the resprouting plants, and definitely moving through. And one thing that was really inspirational: early on, when I was out re-taking photos of our cross-channel stream transects—at points we'd last photographed thick with green willows, now bare rivulets through ash—"I saw four juvenile golden eagles soaring down the canyon."

The Lower Owens River Needs Your Help!

Public Comments on the Draft EIR/EIS Must Be Received by January 14, 2003

HELP WITH YOUR COMMENTS: The Draft Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement for the Lower Owens River Project (LORP) is out for public comment until January 14th. Please help us with comments that will improve this flawed document. The Eastern Sierra Audubon Society, Sierra Club, Bristlecone Chapter of the California Native Plant Society and the Owens Valley Committee are analyzing it and developing talking points for people who want to join us in commenting. We want this project to be as successful as possible and your comments can help. Imagine 62 miles of riparian habitat. Yellow warblers, yellow-breasted chats, least bitterns, red-shouldered hawk and many more species will benefit.

WHAT IS THE LORP: The LORP is a mitigation project that the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) must implement for their groundwater pumping destruction between 1970 and 1990. It will re-water 62 miles of the Lower Owens River between the LA Aqueduct intake and the river delta, the part of the river that was dried up after opening of the LA aqueduct in 1913. It will also create hundreds of acres of wetland habitats at the delta and the Blackrock waterfowl habitat areas. This habitat restoration could be enormously beneficial to wildlife and create many new recreational opportunities such as canoeing, kayaking, birding and fishing. It has the potential to be of tremendous benefit to our region, both environmentally and economically.

WHY COMMENT: LADWP's chief purpose in the Eastern Sierra is the export of water to Los Angeles. The Draft EIR/EIS makes it clear that LADWP is not yet fully committed to making the LORP live up to its enormous potential. Problems with the document include:

- A dispute over the size of a pump-back station that will return most of the river water to the aqueduct just before the river flows into the Owens Lake river delta. LADWP's proposed larger pump station would restrict flows to the delta that are necessary to meet its habitat goals. In addition, water that flows out from the delta on to Owens Lake will be **DRIED UP**. No mention is made that Owens Lake is a Nationally Significant Important Bird

Area or that it is part of the U.S. Shorebird conservation Plan. Thousands of shorebirds and nesting snowy plovers depend on the outflow from the delta.

- Over and over again the document states that funding limitations may prevent the full implementation of the Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan. Monitoring and adaptive management are described as being the key to successful implementation and yet there isn't a commitment to the funding necessary for those management tools. We can't fly the airplane without safety gauges signaling needed corrections.
- There is no funding and little apparent interest in controlling beavers, tules and salt cedar, all of which will severely compromise the success of the project if left unrestrained.
- There is no recreation plan to manage potential impacts from the anticipated large increase in recreational use once the project is established. Potential uncontrolled ORV use damages soil, habitat, and archaeological sites.

WHERE TO SEE THE DRAFT EIR/EIS AND OUR TALKING POINTS: The document is on the web www.lorpeir.com or at any town library in the Owens Valley. See the Owens Valley Committee website www.ovcweb.org for more information and talking points on the issues that should be out by January 2nd.

WHERE TO SEND COMMENTS: Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, 300 Mandich Lane, Bishop, CA 93514 or fax to: 760-873-266. **Comments must be received by January 14, 2003.**

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT: Mark Bagley, 760-873-5326 (markbagley@qnet.com) or Mike Prather, 760-876-1845 (prather@qnet.com)

DONATIONS: To help with the work on the Lower Owens River Project, including copying, mailing and yes, legal efforts at times, please send TAX-DEDUCTABLE contributions to the OVC Foundation, P.O. Drawer D, Lone Pine, CA 93545.

Lower Owens River Project (LORP) Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) Issues

1.) The LORP is based on adaptive management (adjustments along the way), but the is **NO** funding for any adaptive management measures when they are needed other than adjusting the flows.

2.) The LORP requires monitoring for adaptive management, but much of the funding for **monitoring is not funded**. This is like flying your airplane with no gauges and warning devices.

3.) **NO** funding for control of tules, beaver and salt cedar (Tamarisk), all of which could severely impact the project. Each of these could severely interfere with the project's chance of success.

4.) **NO** meeting in the City of Los Angeles where the 3.5 million "owners" of the land live?

5.) **NO** recreation plan that would manage

current human impacts along with anticipated impacts from off-road vehicles, illegal camping and fires, trash dumping and litter. These impacts harm cultural sites, wildlife, soil and water quality.

6.) **Severe impacts** to bird resources at the transition to the brine pool area (delta outflow). Owens Lake is a Nationally Important Bird Area as designated by the National Audubon Society. Water from the delta support much of this bird area and is planned on being greatly reduced if not eliminated.

7.) LADWP's Water Agreement with Inyo County calls for a 50 cfs (cubic feet per second) pumpback station that would send water to Owens Lake for dust or back to the aqueduct. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's LORP DEIR unilaterally triples the size of the pump to 150 cfs and keeps needed flows from reaching the delta thereby harming wildlife and habitat.

PEREGRINE FALCON SURVEY PLANNED

by *Glenn Stewart*

UC Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research
Group

In an effort to quantify the level of recovery of the peregrine falcon population in California and renew baseline studies on an annual, state-wide basis, the UC Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group (SCPBRG) plans a survey for spring 2003. We need the help of people who know of peregrine nest sites, and who are willing to make at least two visits to the sites this spring.

The recovery of the peregrine falcon population in North America has been called the most

successful wildlife conservation project in history. In a collaborative effort, non-profit organizations teamed with agencies and volunteers to accelerate recovery of peregrines after use of DDT was curtailed. On the West Coast, we released almost one thousand captive-reared young hatched from both thin-shelled wild eggs and eggs produced by our captive flock to the wild by hacking, fostering and cross-fostering. In 1964 no peregrines were known to remain east of the Mississippi River. A 1970 survey of peregrines in California revealed just two pairs nesting successfully. After more than two decades of recovery and management work, peregrines were removed from the federal endangered species list on August 20, 1999. They remain listed as state endangered and fully protected in California.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will coordinate required, post de-listing surveys of peregrine falcons nationwide beginning in 2003. Territory occupancy, and nesting success data will be collected by the Service at three-year intervals through 2015. Survey personnel in each state will visit a randomly selected sample of nest sites to fulfill the requirements of the USFWS survey. In California, the SCPBRG will coordinate survey efforts for the USFWS. In addition, we intend to gather information from as many nest sites as possible and to repeat the survey annually. We have maintained the most comprehensive peregrine falcon database in California since 1975 but there are currently many additional unknown territories.

Given known increases, we estimate there are more than 250 breeding pairs of peregrine falcons in California today, but no comprehensive survey has happened since 1992. Since the breeding season comprising intense courtship through fledging is approximately 100 days long, and peregrines often nest in very remote areas, we are asking for help from those who know of, or suspect, peregrine breeding activity in their area. If you wish to report a site known to you, or even better, wish to commit to observing the site, please contact us. Given the audience of this newsletter, it goes without saying that peregrine falcon nest sites are sensitive so all nest territory locations remain confidential.

To participate:

1. Contact us at falconet@cats.ucsc.edu to express an interest in participating and describe the site you wish to observe.
2. Go to, www.scpbrg.org and click on the "Peregrine Survey" button to learn more about survey protocol and guidelines, detailed descriptions of peregrine behavior and vocalizations, and print a survey form to complete and return.

The UC Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group is a non-profit organization supported by contracts, grants and gifts—your financial support mailed to SCPBRG, 100 Shaffer Rd., Santa Cruz 95060, allows us to do more. We wish to thank Orion Telescopes and Binoculars at TELESCOPE.COM for their support of this project through product donations.



Corsi, courtesy CA Acad Sci.
Peregrine Falcon

Birding

FALL 2002 HIGHLIGHTS IN INYO COUNTY

By Tom & Jo Heindel

As happens every season, some birds arrive exactly as expected and, happily, some very unexpected birds arrive to add warmth and excitement to our cool months.

The only Pacific Loon of the fall was at Owens Lake 22 Oct while Common Loon was scarce although one at Ruwau Lake, 11,044, on 20 Oct set a new County high-elevation record.

This was the best year ever for scoters with nine Surf Scoters found throughout the Owens Valley and two White-wing Scoters at Tinemaha Reservoir and Furnace Creek Ranch (FCR). This scoter movement was part of a big picture of their movement throughout the western states. Two Long-tailed Ducks (Oldsquaw) were found. The one seen at FCR on 1 Nov was the first ever reported in Death Valley National Park and the other was found at Tinemaha Reservoir 30 Nov to 1 Dec.

A White-tailed Kite near Blackrock 10 Oct was a surprise. An immature Bald Eagle at FCR 2 Nov was exciting as there are only a few records from there. A Northern Goshawk at South Fork Bishop Creek 2 Sep and an adult Broad-winged Hawk at FCR 1 Nov were unexpected. Nine Merlin and seven Peregrine Falcons caused heart rates to race as fast as they did.

An adult and immature Common Moorhen spent the fall at FCR. Shorebirds provided many stimulating moments when Mountain Plovers were at Blackrock 10 Oct and Owens

Lake 11 Oct, Ruddy Turnstones at Owens Lake 28-30 Aug and 23 Sep, many Sanderlings including an amazing 11 at Owens Lake 23 Sep, a Stilt Sandpiper near Independence 25 Aug was the 5th record ever, and two Red Phalaropes at Owens Lake 28 Aug and FCR 11 Oct. Most stunning was a juvenile Long-tailed Jaeger at Owens Lake 19-21 Aug only the 3rd record for the County.

A White-winged Dove spent most of Aug into Sep in Big Pine and a male and female Ruddy Ground-Dove were at FCR. A rarely seen Short-eared Owl was at Owens Lake 22 Oct. Three juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were found at Big Pine 19 Oct, FCR 4-7 Oct and 3 Nov. An Eastern Phoebe was at FCR 12 Nov and a Western Kingbird there 6 Oct was the latest ever for Inyo. Two Northern Shrikes appeared at Bishop 28 Oct to present and FCR on 3 Nov.

A Bell's Vireo was found in Bishop 4-7 Dec an amazing sighting since the last report for the Owens Valley was in 1976. A Red-eyed Vireo was in Birchim Canyon 21-25 Aug. Two Purple Martins were seen, one at Owens Lake 28 Aug and the other at North Haiwee Reservoir 21 Sep. Remarkable were the Barn Swallows that have lingered into Dec. Five Winter Wrens and three Varied Thrushes brightened the fall. A Gray Catbird was at Birchim Canyon 27 Oct and a Brown Thrasher was at Shoshone 28 Sep. Several Northern Parula were at Birchim Canyon from mid Aug into Sep. Five Palm Warblers were reported after 11 Oct. Among the rare (but expected in very small numbers) warblers were reports of 1 Blackpoll, 2 Black-and-white, 4 American Redstarts and 4 Northern Waterthrushes. Two very rare warblers also joined the crowd, a Mourning Warbler at Birchim Canyon 22 Aug and a Canada Warbler at North Haiwee Reservoir 8 Sep.

Many exciting sparrows were found with up to 4 American Tree Sparrows at FCR 1-30 Nov and up to 3 Clay-colored Sparrows there 29 Sep – 5 Nov. However, the sparrow of the fall was a Le Conte's Sparrow at FCR 6 Oct. There were the expected reports of 6 Swamp Sparrows, 10 White-throated Sparrows and 1 Harris's Sparrow. Five Chestnut-colored Longspurs were found in FCR and the Owens Valley along with a Painted Bunting in Bishop 5-6 Sep and a male Dickcissel at FCR 29 Sep. Blackbirds added excitement with a Bobolink at Inde-

pendence 29 Sep, 2 Rusty Blackbirds at Death Valley in early Nov and a very rare Common Grackle at Panamint Springs 3 Nov. Rarely seen Purple Finches were in Rovana 20 Oct, China Ranch 2 Nov and FCR 2-5 Nov. A female Lawrence's Goldfinch was at FCR 6 Oct and a male there 11-12 Oct while six colorful Evening Grosbeaks were at Aspendedell 12 Oct.

All these reports are the result of many hours of hard work on the part of a number of observers: Rosie Beach, Todd Easterla, Rick Fridell, Jon Dunn, Debbie House, Chris Howard, Bob Hudson, Andrew & Leah Kirk, Guy McCaskie, Todd McGrath, Jim & Debby Parker, Jim Pike, Mike & Nancy Prather, Chris Rintoul, Miko

Ruhlen, Zed Ruhlen, Mike San Miguel, Susan Steele, Kevin Wheeler, Kerry Wilcox, and James & Kay Wilson.

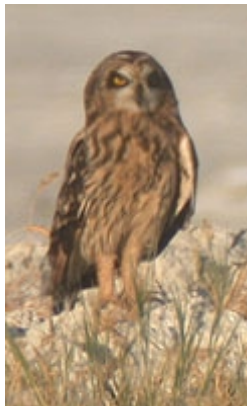
Now its time to don our woolens and search for the special expected and unexpected winter birds that will be here!



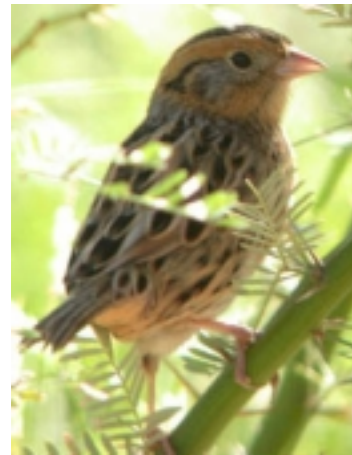
Pacific Loon
22 Oct 02
Rintoul/Ruhlen



Long-tailed Jaeger
21 Aug 02
Jon L. Dunn



Short-eared Owl
22 Oct 02
Rintoul/Ruhlen



Le Conte's Sparrow
6 Oct 02
Chris Howard

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Chris Howard

This Eastern Phoebe was found on the Bishop Christmas Bird Count. President James Wilson writes about CBCs in his President's Message and Field Trip Chair Chris Howard gives a detailed report on p. 3.

Winter Programs and Field Trips, Christmas Bird Count Results, Emergency Habitat Rehabilitation after this Summer's Fires, Fall Birding, The LORP, and more!