



Meetings
2nd Wednesday of the month
September-June, 7:00 PM,
usually at
White Mountain Research Station
3 miles east of Bishop on
East Line Street.
Check local media for possible
changes.

ESAS Website: ESAudubon.org Eastern Sierra Bird Sightings: ESAudubon.org/birds/

Evening Programs

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

May 14

Rainforest Butterflies in Costa Rica:

**Where are the passion vines?
John Smiley**

Biologist John Smiley spent much of the 1970s working in the Central American rainforest looking for the passion vine host plants of uniquely colorful *Heliconius* butterflies. What he found was an intricate world of interacting colors, chemicals, predators, and unusual plant structures, illustrating the creative power of evolution in action.



*"Beautiful and graceful, varied and enchanting, small but approachable, butterflies lead you to the sunny side of life." - Jeffrey Glaseberg
quote contributed by Joan Benner*



June 11

Annual ESAS Picnic

Join us and bring a friend to our Chapter's annual picnic at the home of board member Phill and Brenda Kiddoo. We will meet at 6 p.m. at 2281 Longview Street, off of South Barlow, in west Bishop. Please bring your own table settings, folding chairs, and food and beverage to share. This is a friendly and pleasant event and gives all of us the opportunity to talk to fellow Audubon members and share what wildlife and wildflowers we have seen. At past potlucks we have run out of food before everyone has been served, so we ask that everyone bring a bit more. We will also elect the board of directors and officers for the coming year. If interested in being a board member, please contact us at the May membership meeting. Questions? Call Joan Benner at 938-2929 or Phill and Brenda Kiddoo at 872-7226.

Heliconius images licensed under Creative Commons

President's Message – Passion and Perseverance

Give your heart to the hawks

- Robinson Jeffers

Wow, it has been quite a year. I am so grateful for having had the opportunity to serve as ESAS president. I have learned a lot, especially about what I don't know. I have had the chance to meet and work with amazing people whose knowledge, passion, creativity and hard work are reflected over and over in our ability to understand and appreciate this beautiful place and its birds and to hopefully pass both intact to our children's children.

It has been a wonderful experience to participate with the very talented members of our chapter in the Christmas Bird Count; to talk with Jack Laws about looking at nature; to join with many other members of our community to launch what we hope will become an annual spring gathering in the Bishop Park; to be a small part of putting together the Mono Basin Bird Chataqua; and, most recently, to work with a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties to develop ways to protect the bird resources at Owens Lake.

This week, more than twenty people with seemingly disparate interests found common ground in their commitment to the lake. These good people worked for two days to identify and catalog the site's valuable resources. Differing views were expressed and respected as the process unfolded. Positive steps were made and everyone made a commitment to continue the work to bring a plan to the community.

This I will always remember. Throughout those two days of meetings, I thought again and again of Mike Prather and his remarkable dedication to spreading the word about the resurgence of the birds. Would this conference have occurred without Mike's amazing work? Maybe, but not at the time or in the positive way in which it did. I learned a big lesson about the good that can come from one person's willingness to persevere; at the sacrifice of their own resources and time, in search of a greater good. In the future, when I despair about being able to make a difference, I need only remember the slide showing a bearded man leading a group of birders at Owen Lake. From all of us, thank you, Mike.

Pete Pumphrey

Upcoming Field Trips

Saturday, May 3 - Baker Creek Birding Leaders Carolyn Gann, Larry Nahm (872-4125) A short, popular annual walk reliably turns up flycatchers, buntings, warblers, vireos, tanagers and other visitors. The great spring migration will be nearing its peak. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Triangle Campground just north of Big Pine off U.S. 395. Bring binoculars, water, snacks and sunscreen. Trip should end by noon.

Saturday & Sunday, May 24 & 25 - Deep Springs Valley Kerncrest Audubon invites ESAS for a joint trip which will take participants north through the Owens Valley to Big Pine, then east over Westgard Pass at the southern end of the White Mountains to Deep Springs College below. The college is a working agricultural community, set in a desert valley with springs and wetlands. Expect late spring birding at its best in stunningly beautiful surroundings. This is also a prime time for the appearance of one or more eastern vagrant species. We'll camp at the county campground at the turnoff to the Bristlecone forest, at the north end of Big Pine. For more details and reservations contact Dan Burnett, imdandburnett@verizon.net or 375-8634 by May 21.

Saturday July 26 - Rush Creek with Greg Reis (647-6595) Visit the Rush Creek bottomlands, where returning water, removing grazing, and restoration has brought back vegetation, trout, and birds! Meet at the June Lake Junction at 8 am (parking area west of gas station) and carpool/caravan 7 miles north to a 2WD dirt road that will take us down into the little-visited (except by researchers and wildlife) bottomlands. We'll cross the channel (less than knee-deep) to see revegetated and rewatered areas. Wild and rough, but inspirational: willow thickets, lush grass, cattails, cottonwoods, Yellow Warblers, Song Sparrows, and if we are lucky a Willow Flycatcher! Return by 1 pm.

Saturday, August 16, 2008, Owens Lake - Leaders: Mike Prather and Jon Dunn Meet at 7 am at the parking lot on the northeast side of Diaz Lake, south of Lone Pine. Thousands of shorebirds, many at close range. We should see 15 to 20 species, and perhaps scarcer species such as Baird's and Semipalmated. There will be an emphasis on learning how to identify the species we see. Rarities on past field trips at this time of the year have included the County's first Buff-breasted Sandpiper and the second and perhaps the State's first adult in fall American Golden-Plover. Please make reservations for this trip. Contact Mike Prather at mprather@lonenetv.com or 876-5807

First Ever Owens Lake Big Day

Mike Prather

On April 19th the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society, Audubon-California and the Owens Valley Committee held the first ever Owens Lake Big Day. Never before has this been done. A Big Day in birding is when a group of birders surveys an area and identifies as many species and individual birds as possible in a single day. April 19th was chosen for Owens Lake being a date when high numbers of migrating shorebirds are moving north from wintering areas as far south as Argentina (Patagonia) and Tierra Del Fuego. They are moving north to breed in the boreal forests of Alaska and Canada as well as the high north along the Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean.

For hundreds of thousands of years birds have flown north and south following traditional routes. Along the way they stop at rich feeding sites such as coastal wetlands and estuaries, and inland lakes in the Great Basin like Mono Lake, Great Salt Lake and Owens Lake. Geologic records show that for at least 800,000 years they fed at Owens Lake. Feeding stopovers are few and far between even for the species that make a marathon-like trip each year. Necessary fat reserves must be put on to enable the migrants to reach the next stop, maybe hundreds or even thousands of miles away. Birds stopping in April at Owens Lake must be on their breeding grounds to the north by the first half of May.

Meeting at the Lone Pine Film Museum theater at 7 am, 49 birders from all over California arrived to help with the first ever Owens Lake Big Day - from the San Francisco Bay area, San Luis Obispo, Los Angeles, Pasadena, Pomona, Santa Barbara, Ridgecrest, Lone Pine, Big Pine and Bishop. Working in eight groups they surveys all bird habitats at the lake. Wind speeds were from zero to gale force off and on during the day and yet all groups completed their assigned surveys. One part of the lake would 'blow up' while another area would quiet itself. Birds on the ground and water stuck tight, not wanting to have to battle the winds to relocate.

At day's end everyone gathered at the Bonanza Mexican Restaurant for a tally, storytelling and lots of good food. A total of 112 species were seen, totaling 45,650 individual birds. It was the highest total number of birds ever recorded at Owens Lake. Some 15 species of waterfowl (ducks and geese) and 22 species of shorebirds were identified. Some of the individual species high numbers were 13,873 California gulls (an inland nester at Mono Lake and elsewhere), 9,218 American Avocets, 1,767 Eared Grebes, 13,826 'peeps' or small sandpipers such as Dunlin, Western and Least Sandpipers, 2,882 individual ducks, White-faced Ibis ,

Black-bellied Plovers in breeding plumage (on their way to the land of the Inuit and polar bears), Snowy Plovers, Long-billed Curlews and many more.

1917 September 24: "Great numbers of water birds are in sight along the shore – Avocets, Phalaropes and Ducks. Large flocks of shorebirds in flight over the water in the distance, wheeling about show en masse, now silvery now dark, against the gray-blue of the water. There must literally be thousands of birds within sight of this spot. En route around the south end of Owens Lake to Olancha saw water birds almost continuously." Joseph Grinnell, University of California.

Owens Lake dried nearly completely by the 1920s due to completion of the first Los Angeles Aqueduct in 1913. But beginning in 2001, with the onset of the enormous Los Angeles Owens Lake dust control project, wildlife in large numbers are once again using the lake as a migratory stopover and breeding location. Water for dust control has re-created a rich California wildlife resource. Beginning in early July and peaking in late August, shorebirds begin their fall migration. Waterfowl begin to move south somewhat later. The fall Big Day is planned for August 23 when birds appear in even larger numbers than spring and linger longer after the intense breeding season in the north.

The habitats to be surveyed in the fall will be fewer due to the dust project being shut down for maintenance and because native springs and seeps dry back during the summer heat. However, extensive ponds linger on in September and are heavily used by hungry migrants. Contact Mike Prather to volunteer or to have questions answered, mprather@lonepinetv.com



Kingbirds of Inyo County

Tom and Jo Heindel

There are 400 species of Tyrant Flycatchers, family Tyrannidae, all found only in the New World. The kingbirds belong to the genus *Tyrannus*, one of fifty-two genera that make up the family. Ten species in *Tyrannus* are found in the U.S. and six of those have been reliably documented for Inyo County.



Western Kingbird

Tom and Jo Heindel

The most common kingbird in the Eastern Sierra is the Western Kingbird, *Tyrannus verticalis*. It migrates throughout most of Inyo County and breeds annually in the Owens Valley towns and ranches as well as Deep Springs College. Arriving in April, they set up their territories in towns, often using electrical boxes as nest platforms, and in cottonwoods at ranches. They regularly begin singing before daylight with an electrical song that resembles a tape recorder playing on fast forward. Early in the breeding season they may sing all night long eliciting amazement from some people and anger from others. When they have nests with young they attack any and all birds, people, and cats and are vigorous defenders against much larger birds like jays, crows, ravens, and even hawks that try to predate their young. By September most have departed for their wintering grounds from Mexico to Costa Rica where the insect supply is bountiful. Don Nikolaus, a Big Pine old-timer, called this bird "Bee Martin" as a youth, since bees are a prime prey item in the Owens Valley.

The other breeding kingbird in Inyo County is the Cassin's Kingbird, *Tyrannus vociferans*, which has bred at Deep Springs College but not annually. There are a few countywide reports of migrants in areas inappropriate for breeding but any sighting of this species is noteworthy and should be reported with substantiating details to the Eastern Sierra Birds website. During the fall when birds are molting, a kingbird

without white outer tail feathers is not necessarily a Cassin's since that is the time when a Western can lack the otherwise distinctive tail feathers. Attention should be directed at the contrast and colors of the cheek, throat, breast, back, and wings.

The Eastern Kingbird, *Tyrannus tyrannus*, unsurprisingly, is primarily an eastern kingbird but regularly wanders west and breeds in eastern Oregon and eastern Washington. There are over one hundred records for Inyo County with most birds reported mid May to early June.

The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, *Tyrannus forficatus*, is a kingbird since it is in the kingbird genus but for reasons known only to a few, and not us, its common name remains flycatcher. This species is found most regularly in southcentral U.S. but has been found twenty-one times in Inyo County with sixteen records between late April and early June and five scattered from late July to late October.

The Tropical Kingbird, *Tyrannus melancholicus*, is usually found in the New World tropics but has been recorded along the West Coast in fall and winter. There are two records for Inyo County with one at Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley National Park, in late May and another photographed at Panamint Springs, Death Valley National Park, in mid September.

The Thick-billed Kingbird, *Tyrannus crassirostris*, a tropical species usually found from Mexico to southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico, made it to Inyo County once. Its appearance in Lone Pine on 24 December 1991 was a very fancy Christmas present for the many birders who saw it. No one could have predicted that it was going to remain through 1 April 1992 since the insects it normally eats disappear during the winter. The temperatures dropped into the teens but it survived by snuggling up to a nearby greenhouse for added, although not tropical, warmth and when the ambient temperature increased a little it would fly out to a perch over a bee hive and wait for the bees to exit the hive to drink nectar out of a dish placed at the edge of the hive. Few bees made it to the dish, much less back inside!

Two other kingbirds have been reported in the state, each only one time. A Couch's Kingbird wintered in southern California and a Fork-tailed Flycatcher spent early September in Sonoma County (another Fork-tailed sighting in Sutter County is under review by the California Rare Birds Committee). Needless to say, the phones will be ringing off their hooks if any kingbird, other than the expected species, shows up in the Eastern Sierra!



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

Tom and Jo Heindel

New Members, Welcome!

These new members joined us this spring. Welcome to Eastern Sierra Audubon and we hope we'll see you at the next meeting!

Larry Arbanas
Lila Bauter
Keri A. French
Lacey Greene
Betty Hinga
Harold D. Huxley

Pleasant Valley Reservoir Trip Report

The day began with not a single person meeting me at the Y in Bishop. I wasn't too worried as I knew that my friend Larry would at least meet me at the Pleasant Valley Powerhouse parking lot, and much to my surprise seven more people showed up at the parking lot. After the ritual group introduction and a brief description of what we were going to do, the nine of us were off. The water level in the reservoir was low and we had to walk a bit to even see our first ducks. Once we were at the reservoir the low level of the water concentrated the ducks nicely so many species could be seen at once. The male ducks in their stunning breeding plumage along with the females nearby made for ease in identification of the species of both sexes. We walked to the boat ramp and beyond. A large group of Common Mergansers are usually down in the deeper end of the lake and there were mergansers by the dozen. All totaled we had ten species of duck, three species of wrens and an array of other species expected at this time of year. As the name of the reservoir implies we had a calm warm half day birding oblivious to the windy weather outside of the canyon. - **Jerry Zatorski**
 (Thanks, Jerry, for another great field trip!)

IMBD Bird-a-Thon

Please Help Secure Pledges

May 10 is International Bird Day and Eastern Sierra Audubon members will participate in a count of Inyo County species. As a part of this effort, we ask you to pledge a contribution to ESAS for each bird sighted and secure a pledge to go along with your own. Pledge forms are available on our website, or call Pete Pumphrey for information on how to pledge.

We know that chapter members probably grow weary of being asked to do things in support of ESAS, but this is the activity whose success drives the chapter for the year. Please take a moment to pledge and to ask a friend, family member, co-worker or business or organization to do the same. ESAS will work to express its appreciation all year long.

Fund Raising Yard Sale

The most important source of funding to cover our Chapter expenses and projects is our annual yard sale. This year's Yard Sale will take place on Saturday, September 6th at the home of board member Phill and Brenda Kiddoo, the same residence where we will be having our June picnic. If you have items to donate now and want to clean out your garage or shed, you can bring your donations at the time of the picnic. As Pete Pumphrey says, "You can do a two-fer: bring your yard sale donations to the picnic and have both a great evening and a clean house." Phill has generously offered the use of his garage to store yard sale items. You can also bring donations to 2281 Longview, in Bishop, on Friday September 5th, the day prior to the yard sale.

If possible, place a price on the donation. If you need help getting your donation to the yard sale, contact any board member and we will transport up your items to the sale location.

Plants sold well at our last yard sale. If you have extra garden or house plants that need dividing, please pot them up and plan to donate them to the yard sale. We ask that you do not donate clothing or items that are not saleable. It is just extra work for us if we have to cart useless items to the dump. So please dig through your closets, sheds and garage for "treasures" to donate to the Audubon cause. If you have any questions, contact board member Joan Benner at 938-2929 or alpinezone@suddenlink.net.



Chapter Officers

President: Pete Pumphrey 872-7846
Vice- President: Joan Benner 938-2929
Secretary: Barbara Schuck, jbkelly@qnet.com
Treasurer: Bill Mitchel 872-4774
Board members: Kathy Duvall Connie Engelhardt
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Roberta Lagomarsini
Ron Smith Sara Steck
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Conservation: James Wilson 873-3859
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Eastern Kingbird

Tom and Jo Heindel

**Resident in the Eastern Sierra or just passing through?
You're welcome to come along, have fun, help and learn!**

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION	
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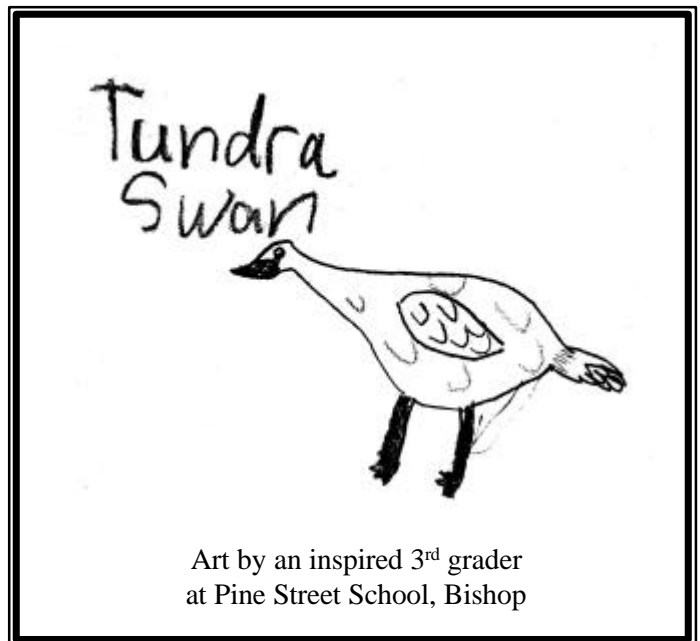
BIRD-A-THON 2008

May 10th

Spring has returned and excitement fills the air. Thousands of birds are migrating northward through the Eastern Sierra. Many grace our trees, meadows, and lakes in full breeding plumage. How many can we find in one day? Last year, Eastern Sierra Audubon birders tallied 212 species!

The ESAS Bird-a-thon is a fun challenge, but the challenge doesn't end in one day. The challenge of our Birds-in-the-Classroom program is to educate youth about the importance of our natural environment and protecting important habitat in the Eastern Sierra. The ESAS Bird-a-thon is the most important fundraising campaign for the ESAS education programs, newsletter, and outreach.

Thank you for your support!



Support this great event with a flat donation or choose a sponsorship level.

All donors receive a detailed summary of the Bird-a-thon.

- Spotted Sandpiper: 10 cents per species
 - Western Tanager: 20 cents per species
 - Green Heron: 30 cents per species
- or
- Flat donation: \$ _____

Please clip and return to
Bird-A-Thon, Drawer D,
Lone Pine, CA 93545
or
email Mike Prather at
mprather@lonepinetv.com

Your name _____

Your phone _____

Please make checks payable to Eastern Sierra Audubon Society.
All contributions are tax deductible.