

# THE SIERRA WAVE

## EASTERN SIERRA AUDUBON SOCIETY

ESAS Website: [www.csupomona.edu/~larryblakely/ESAS/](http://www.csupomona.edu/~larryblakely/ESAS/) ES Bird Sightings: [www.wmrs.edu/birds/](http://www.wmrs.edu/birds/)

### 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!

### January 10

Refreshments: **Marty Voght**

*Main Program:* Mono Lake will be the focal point of this program. The Mono Lake Committee Regional Outreach Coordinator, **Craig Roecker**, will present a slide program, entitled, "**The State of the Lake**", which will give an overview of the natural, social and economic indicators of the health of Mono Lake and its surroundings. Many of these indicators are quantifiable in terms of recent changes in visitation and other economic factors, numbers of fish in the basin streams and birds around the lake, and educational opportunities in the area. Mr. Roecker has a background in Environmental Policy and Environmental Economics. He is currently a member of the policy team at the Mono Lake Committee and lives with his family in Mammoth Lakes.



Section of "Rising Waters", MLC Calendar photo for Aug. 2000, by Jim Stimson.

### February 14

Refreshments: **Dorothy Burnstrom**

*Main Program:* **Terry Russi**, Biologist with the Bureau of Land Management, Bishop Field Office, will present an **Update on the Status of the Greater Sage Grouse of the Eastern Sierra** and other information from a radio telemetry study of the species in northern Mono County. Mr. Russi has lived and worked as a biologist in the Bishop area for many years, and with BLM being one of the lead agencies monitoring the status of local sage grouse populations in Mono County's Long Valley and Bodie Hills, Terry has been deeply involved in this process. This is a pertinent and timely presentation, considering the possible listing of the Greater Sage Grouse by USFWS in the future.



Dr. Lloyd Glenn Ingles, California Academy of Sciences

## Chapter Notes

### NEW MEMBERS

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

**Donald Constans - Big Pine**

**Susan Kranz - Mammoth Lakes**

**Claus Engelhardt - Bishop**

**Karl Hinrichs - Bishop**

**Sherry Hudson - Independence**

### POTLUCK THANKS

Our potluck dinner December 13 was a great success - warm fellowship and the best food ever (and it was followed by one

of the best natural history slide shows in many a year). Very special thanks are due to **Dorothy Burnstrom** and **Bonnie Reed** for organizing the event. They arrived early to set up tables and chairs, set out decorations, and then, when all had moved to the lecture hall, cleaned up. Thanks also to those who helped Dorothy and Bonnie.

## Chapter Notes, cont'd:

### CONDOLENCES

Member Bill Warshawer recently passed away. He was memorialized in a \$100 donation to our chapter by Peter and Marilyn Hoijer. In a letter to Mrs. Warshawer, President Jim Parker wrote: "We are saddened to hear of the passing of another avid birder and wish to offer our sincere condolences to you. ... This donation will be used in the Audubon Society's efforts to ensure the health of California's native bird populations and their habitat. We will make every effort to ensure that our work creates a fitting memorial to Bill Warshawer's love of birds.", and, in a letter to the Hoijers: "It is an inspiration to all of us on the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society Board of Directors that you would choose to memorialize your friend's passing in this way."

### MORE THANKS

Many thanks to chapter member Karen Gaines for attending the Forest Service Reception in Mammoth for the new District Ranger Kathleen Morse on behalf of ESAS. The reception was held on the same day as our potluck and program, so the ESAS board could not attend. Karen and the new ranger visited some of our issues and talked about Alaska where Kathleen last worked for the USFS on the Tongass NF. Welcome Kathleen!

*Debby Parker*

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### *CNPS Talk*

In late January, the Bristlecone Chapter of the California Native Plant Society will fea-

ture a program by Tom Locker, Fuels Management Officer for the Inyo Nat'l Forest. His talk is entitled "**Fire Management and Prescribed Burning in the Inyo National Forest.**" The talk is at 7:00 pm, Wednesday, January 31, at the White Mountain Research Station.

*Stephen Ingram*

#### *Eastern Sierra Wilderness Coalition*

Local citizens have recently come together to begin a public education campaign on potential wilderness in the Eastern Sierra. The Eastern Sierra contains spectacular and unprotected wildlands, such as the White Mountains and the San Joaquin Roadless Area. Many of these lands are in the Great Basin, which is under-represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. If you would like to get involved in this grassroots effort please contact Paul McFarland of Friends of the Inyo at 647-0079, pmcfarland@qnet.com, or Sally Miller of The Wilderness Society at 647-1614, sally\_miller@tws.org

*Sally Miller*

#### *Newsletter On-line in PDF*

Recent issues of the *WAVE* will be on-line on the ESAS website I maintain (<http://www.csupomona.edu/~larryblakely/ESAS/>) in PDF (Portable Document Format). In this format, the on-line newsletter looks just like the printed form members receive in the mail. Issues can be both viewed and printed using the free Adobe Acrobat reader. Most of the pictures will be in color in the PDF version. The only hitch is that it takes a while to download them. The simpler HTML versions (archives back 3 or 4 years) do come up much faster.

*Larry B.*

### OPEN LETTER TO CHAPTERS

#### *From Dan Cooper, Audubon-California, on IBA*

This letter is to introduce myself, and to inform you of recent developments within Audubon-California's **Important Bird Areas (IBA) program**. I'm Dan Cooper, a biologist with the National Audubon Society, working in Los Angeles. Recently, I have been asked to take over the IBA pro-

gram in California from Bob Barnes, who will devote more time to issues in the Kern River Valley. A native of the Los Angeles area, I came to Audubon with over a decade of birding experience in the state, and have conducted fieldwork on birds throughout southern California.

Since California's IBA program began in 1996, over 60 IBA nominations have been received, which have resulted in nearly 50 sites being designated Global, Continental, or National IBAs. Chapter members spent long hours on the phone, gathering information from local experts and filling out nomination forms. Many of the sites are familiar to you, since they are also famous birding and bird research areas, including Big Morongo Canyon Preserve in Riverside County, the Farallon Islands off San Francisco, and Tule Lake/Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern California. All are well-defined, defensible properties with an active constituency of conservationists working together to ensure these areas stay attractive and vital to birds.

A network of IBAs can become a cornerstone of Audubon's conservation activities throughout California. Aside from showcasing bird-friendly land use decisions, their identification will help guide conservation activities, both at the chapter and national levels of Audubon, as well as those of other groups and agencies. Over the next few months, I will expand our IBA program to eventually include 150-200 sites that are representative of the diverse habitats in the state. This process will culminate in a website, similar to one launched in 1998 by New York State Audubon (<http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ny/ny/iba/index.html>).

The certification of IBAs had been overseen by the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), the U.S. arm of Birdlife International, which, until recently worked closely with several states to identify IBAs. Since the ABC is no longer devoting attention to the program, Audubon-California will assume sole responsibility for the identification of new IBAs, and will devote more attention to coordinating conservation activities among them where possible. Future IBAs will be identified using criteria already developed by the New York State IBA Program, nearly identical to those developed by Bob Barnes and a team of advisors a couple years ago.

### Newsletter Information

#### *Editor:*

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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.

Over the next year, I will be meeting with experts on California bird distribution to plot the locations of future California IBAs, including David Fix, Don Roberson, and Mike San Miguel. The next step will be connecting sites with interested individuals - monitors and defenders of the IBAs. Please feel free to contact me directly for more information on nominating IBAs anywhere in California, or if you are involved in groups already working as stewards of particular sites.

I would like to thank Bob Barnes and Kathy Gilbert of Audubon-California, and to the Audubon members and others who have already contributed their energy to this effort. I look forward to developing a first-rate IBA program in California. I can be reached at (323) 254-0252 or email at dcooper1@pacbell.com.

Sincerely,

Dan Cooper  
Audubon-California, Los Angeles

### AMPHIBIAWEB

In recent months the Chapter has heard two talks about endangered or threatened amphibians in regional waters: the Mountain Yellow-legged frog described by Curtis Milliron, January, 2000; and the Yosemite Toad, by Gary Milano, September, 2000. There is now a UC Berkeley-based website devoted to amphibian biology and conservation, inspired by global amphibian declines. It's AmphibiaWeb, <<http://elib.cs.berkeley.edu/aw/>>



A photo from AmphibiaWeb: *Bufo canorus*, Yosemite toads, mating. ( Photo by Dr. Lloyd Glenn Ingles, California Academy of Sciences)

## Field Trips

### CALENDAR

**Jan 20 - Owens Valley Hawks - Earl Gann** - 878-1914. Meet behind the Wye Shell gas station in Bishop at 8:00AM. We will look for hawks on the drive up to Benton. Expect to see eagles, falcons, and hawks, plus large flocks of Mountain Bluebirds and Horned Larks. Bring binoculars, scopes, food and water. Should finish around 1PM

**Feb 17 - Big Pine Winter Wildlife Tour - Tom and Jo Heindel** - 938-2764 - Meet at the Glacier View Campground in Big Pine at 8:00AM. Bring binoculars, lunch, water, scopes. Lasts until noon.

**Feb 24 - Furnace Creek Birding - Chris Howard** - 873-7422 - Meet at the Furnace Creek golf course parking lot at 7:30AM for a morning of desert birding.

**Mar 3 - Bird Banding Demonstration - Tom and Jo Heindel** - 938-2764 - Stop by between 8:00 AM and 11:00 AM. Drop-ins may stay for as long or as short a time as they wish. Tom and Jo will operate a bird banding station where the public is invited to watch birds being taken out of mist nets, measurements made, aluminum bands placed on legs and the birds released back to the wild. The station is located at 280 Dewey St., Big Pine. Children are welcome;

pets are not for obvious reasons. For further information call Tom or Jo Heindel at 938-2764.

**Mar 10 - Pleasant Valley Reservoir Birding - Jerry Zatorski** - 872-3818 - Join Jerry on a 2 mile stroll looking for ducks, geese, snipe, wrens, cormorants, and dippers. Meet behind the Wye Shell gas station in Bishop at 8AM to carpool or 8:20AM at the power house parking lot at the upper end of the reservoir.

*Chris Howard*

Eastern Sierra Audubon Field Trip Coordinator

### REPORTS

#### Lake Crowley trip

On Dec 9th, twenty-five or so Eastern Sierra Auduboners were led by Jon Dunn to one of the most impressive birding jewels east of the Sierra crest, Crowley Lake. We started at the NW arm where highlights were 3 sub-adult **Bald Eagles**, two late-migrating **Double-crested Cormorants**, a dozen or so **Tundra Swans**, and a raft of ducks that included **Ring-necked ducks** and at least a few **Canvasbacks**. On the NE arm, everyone was fortunate to have great looks at two nearby sub-adult **Ross's Geese** and **Common Loons**. Thirty or so **Common**

**Mergansers** kept to themselves on the far shore. During the drive around to the NE arm to the eastern side of the lake was one of the most spectacular sights of the day: a congregation of ~6 additional **Bald Eagles** and at least 4 **Golden Eagles** on the ground and soaring over two kills. The east side of the delta was productive: Jon gave us all a distant, yet convincing view of a juv **Pacific Loon**, uncommon to rare in winter, six more **Tundra Swans** and 3 more **Bald Eagles**. A good time was had by all. Many thanks to Jon!

*Chris Howard*

#### Saturday, October 28th, 2000 Highway Cleanup

We had a great turnout for this pickup - 15 people. Breakfast at Tom's Place was as good as ever and our table was full. Fall is a great time of year and hard to keep one's mind on the trash - always looking around at that Fall color. We thank all those great volunteers who make it so easy - Larry & Ruth Blakely, Dorothy & John Burnstrom, Gordon & June Nelson, Sandra & Nathan Whitehouse, Bea Cooley & Chuck Washburn, Martha Kramer, Pete Bakuses and Larry Nahm.

*John & Ros Gorham*



# Conservation

## IT'S A WILD LIFE

By Joy Fatooh  
BLM Biologist

### Hooray for Tui Chubs - A Lesson in Applied Genetics

My boss Terry and I were strolling along a tiny stream. I was new to the job and he had brought me on a routine check of the warm springs that trickle from the floor of the Long Valley caldera, filling the meadows with wisps of steam like gentle ghosts of its volcanic past. Each spring is a mini-ecosystem and some harbor interesting organisms, Terry explained. We have to see that they're not being disturbed - by people making them into bathtubs, for instance, or by too many cows.

Suddenly Terry stopped in his tracks. "Holy s—!" He raised his binoculars to his eyes and peered straight down into the miniscule stream. "Those are tui chubs."

I knew why that was exciting. One of my first tasks had been to check on a new artificial pond that had just been stocked with Owens tui chubs. It was desperately needed because this endangered minnow species was surviving in only two known natural locations: Hot Creek near Mammoth and Cabin Bar Ranch near Olancho, at extreme opposite ends of the Owens river system that it once occupied throughout.

The morning after chubs had been poured into the new pond I raced back to the office with alarming news: "There's a big fish in there!" The Owens River system originates in mountain snowmelt, tumbles through the Owens Gorge into Owens Valley and

ends at Owens Lake. In the wet Pleistocene it was connected with other systems but now it is isolated in its high desert valleys. Only four fish species are native: Owens pupfish, Owens speckled dace, Owens suckers, and Owens tui chubs. Any fish without Owens in its name was introduced for sport.

Remarkably, someone had plopped a trout into the artificial pond just after the tui chubs arrived. My colleagues promptly dispatched it. Fish big enough for sport fishing are big enough to have devoured whole populations of Owens tui chubs.

Now Terry and I crouched beside a cow-trampled stream small enough to hop across on one foot, watching the silvery ripple and flash of perhaps the third known remaining population. But we couldn't be certain, Terry told me. He pointed out the characteristic narrow shape, silver body and deeply-forked



Submitted by a Lee Vining high school student

reddish tail and explained that while fish big enough to eat an Owens tui chub are part of the problem, so are fish similar enough to breed with them. Anglers using closely-related minnows for bait had dumped their unused remainder into the Owens system. While sport fish devoured Owens tui chubs, bait fish diluted those that remained. Hybrids were ubiquitous. And yet, just possibly, this puny rivulet far from any river or lake might harbor pure Owens tui chub genes.



A Tui Chub. (Photo by Jay DeLong, North American Native Fishes Association)

Just in case, Terry said, we should fence the stream. The chubs, numbering no more than perhaps sixty, were in a deep hole precariously sheltered by overhanging banks. At one point the banks actually met and the stream ducked underground. One cow hoof could cave it in. As part of my essential training as a wildlife biologist, Terry assigned me the task of erecting my first barbed wire fence.

I eagerly set about drafting an environmental assessment and lining up a crew of convicts to do the heavy work. Meanwhile, Terry learned that researchers were sampling tui chubs throughout the Owens system to study the extent and degree of hybridization. Excellent! Terry invited them to sample his new-found population.

He and I went out with the fish biologists. I guess you could call them ichthyologists, but I've never heard it said. Mostly you hear "fish head," or "fish squeezer." The fish squeezers carried backpack shockers and were skilled at inserting anode and cathode into water and scooping up the stunned fish that surface. A stunned fish can be measured and tested and returned to the water, but not our chubs: they went into an ice chest.

The technique to be used at the lab was gel electrophoresis, a way of determining genetic differences by looking at proteins. DNA is nothing but a string of templates for protein manufacture; each gene makes a unique protein, and those proteins do ev-

erything else that makes a living organism. Gel electrophoresis involves putting a slurry onto a strip of gel medium and applying electric current. The current drives different proteins different distances along the gel, forming bands that can be read like a bar code for different genes.

"So... what happens to our chubs?" I timidly asked.

"Basically they go into a blender," the fish heads said.

"And... how many do you need?"

"At least thirty," the fish heads said.

Terry and I exchanged helpless glances. What a price to pay! This little population had been isolated for who-knows-how-long, perhaps guarding the pure genes, perhaps further evolving their own adaptations. Now half of this gene pool was going to be whipped, pureed, crumbed, chopped, grated, blended and liquefied

Alas, the study found that gel electrophoresis could not distinguish purebreds from hybrids. And even as our chubs were going into the blender, methods were being developed making it possible to look at DNA itself using only a bit of fin or scale.

Fence construction went ahead. The convicts were mystified: "We're doing this for minnows?"

My sister Kassy, when I told her about it on the phone, understood. Those of you who read my last column know I have an unfortunate tendency to burst into ridiculous doggerel on short notice. Now I must confess it is a genetic flaw. Without a moment's

pause my sister sang to the tune of "Hooray for Hollywood":

Hooray for tui chubs!  
Hooray, hooray, hooray for tui chubs!  
If we don't fence the cows out,  
The species bows out  
And all the ecosystem flubs!

We generated two more verses without hardly running up a phone bill. Won't you sing with us?

Hooray for tui chubs!  
Hip, hip hip hooray for tui chubs!  
And if the stream banks cave in,  
We still must save 'em;  
We'll have to keep them all in tubs!

Hooray for tui chubs!  
Hooray for tui, tui, tui chubs!  
Although they may be slimy,  
Their homes are grimy,  
They're not allowed to join your clubs –

But, hooray for tui chu-u-bs!

## BIRDS & PRESCRIBED BURNS

Chuck Washburn and Derrick Volcelka participated in a prescribed burning field trip sponsored by the Inyo NF in the Casa Diablo area, visiting areas that have been burned as part of the Inyo's burning program. Some of ESAS's concerns are doing this burning during bird nesting season when fledglings are helpless to escape smoke and flames. Owls and raptors are especially at risk as they are earlier nesters in our area. Also, burning in areas where sage grouse might be wintering is a concern, and we are unsure about different species of sage brush response to fire, i.e., how soon will it grow back. With the Division Creek controlled burn, which escaped due to high winds, a long-eared owl was located on her nest, and as part of a group that got to see this and inspect where the fire had gone out of control, we were encouraged that the firefighters had been able to stop the fire before it got to her nest, but it was a close call. Thank you Chuck and Derrick for attending this field trip and we look forward to your report to the Audubon board in the new year.

Debby Parker

***"The beauty and genius of a work of art may be reconceived though its first material expression be destroyed. A vanished harmony may yet again inspire the composer, but when the last individual of a race of living beings breathes no more, another heaven and earth must pass before such a one can be again."*** – American naturalist Charles William Beebe (1906), from the website of the North American Native Fishes Association ([www.nanfa.org](http://www.nanfa.org))



# 6 *Eastern Sierra Wave*

## MONARCH MYSTERY

It was in October, only a month since buying a small *Asclepias fascicularis* (narrow-leaf milkweed) at the CNPS native plant sale, that we discovered that a Monarch Butterfly female had found it and laid eggs on it. Debby and Jim Parker were consulting on composting in our garden, and Debby noticed two small larvae (caterpillars) and correctly identified them. They molted several times (evidenced by their gradual increase in body size) over the next 2 weeks and then disappeared. Did they pupate? Did they get eaten by one of the many birds that also visit our garden? What happened to them?



Photo by Joseph Dougherty, Society for Environmental Education

We may never know, but we now know more about Monarch Butterflies than we did last October. For example, we know that these larvae were probably from the population

that summers inland and winters on coastal California. Another, larger population summers across the middle and eastern US and winters in Mexico. Those that migrate to Mexico are the newly metamorphosed butterflies from eggs laid during the summer and fall, with parent generation left behind. From that information, we might suppose that the

parent generation of our larvae has died and perhaps our larvae pupated, metamorphosed and is now spending the winter at the beach in Pacific Grove.

At least we hope that our tiny milkweed plant was available when needed to foster a couple of these wonderful creatures and help maintain their numbers. They certainly need help for they are dwindling from habitat destruction in both summer and winter habitats and likely are more endangered because of genetic engineering.

Some areas of the US were planted to significant acreages of modified corn, designed to emit *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) toxin, usually

toxic to larvae of many species of insect pests. Bt is unfortunately toxic to Monarch Butterfly larvae as well and it has been shown in preliminary studies that the pollen from genetically modified corn drifts onto milkweed plants where butterflies are feeding, decreasing the numbers of butterfly larvae and stunting growth of survivors.

There is much more to know about Monarch Butterflies, both from our personal perspectives and from that of the scientists and farmers involved in producing genetically modified food. Our interest is certainly piqued and the scientists and farmers have created a problem for which there may be no easy solutions.

For us, it was a joy to see the little creatures, watch them grow and hope they are fat and happy in Pacific Grove. We'll have their milkweed plants ready – plus a bunch more wildlife-attracting natives – when they come back through next year.

For more information about Monarchs, [www.monarchlab.umn.edu](http://www.monarchlab.umn.edu) has great information, ways to get involved monitoring them and lots of activities for teachers.

*Bea Cooley*

## Birding

### BIRD PORTRAITS

#### *Rescued, Rehabilitated and Released*

Numbers tell a story, but too often that story fails to touch our hearts. Eastern Sierra Wildlife Care volunteers helped nearly 150 birds last year. But who were these animals? where did they come from? why did they need help? Here's a few of their stories.

**Lesser Goldfinch:** Arriving on May 4, this little bird was the first baby of the season. The day-old goldfinch was snatched from its nest on NIH grounds by a raven or crow. The rescuer saw the large black bird "playing" with something and rushed over to find the naked nestling lying in the grass. When I received the goldfinch, I placed him in a tiny "nest" lined with tissue and supplied heat and fluids. He was soon eating voraciously and quickly recovered from some slight bruising that affected his left leg. Nearly 10 weeks later, he was successfully released into the resident goldfinch flock at Keoughs.

**Golden Eagle:** A call to Fish and Game sent Warden Pat Woods to the shoulder of 395 just north of Aberdeen where an adult golden eagle lay stunned, struck by a passing car. At Bishop Vet Hospital, Dr. Fallini and I exam-

ined the bird. No fractures were found and the eagle was treated with heat, steroids, and fluids for head trauma and shock. Within 24 hours the birds was standing; by the next day, eating. ESWC volunteer Janet Titus drove the eagle to UC Davis Raptor Center where it stayed for almost 6 months; the head trauma had affected the eagle's vision and it was unwilling fly any distance or to high perches. After a last test in a 150-foot flight cage at the CA Foundation for Birds of Prey in Roseville, the eagle was picked up by two volunteers. On a cold and windy April morning, we watched this magnificent golden eagle burst out of its carrier and take off into a head wind. When last seen it was climbing a thermal framed by the sky and the Sierra.

**Common Raven:** This adult came from Lone Pine via Animal Control. Her right femur was badly shattered. The bird was thin and frightened. Prognosis with such fractures

is rarely good, even if pinning is possible, which it was not. However, I observed that the bird was able to stand and even rest her



Dr. Lloyd Glenn Ingles, California Academy of Sciences House Wren

foot on the ground and decided to give her a chance. The raven was confined to a small cage for nearly 2 months, at which time the fracture appeared healed, if lumpy. Several weeks of conditioning followed as she worked to get flight muscles back in shape. Despite a permanent limp, she did well; a supporter volunteered her property (no resident ravens) and the raven was released in a hacking situation where food was provided in case she failed to find enough. She flew well and, after a few weeks, moved on.

**Mallard:** Two twelve-year-old boys heard shooting at a pond near their home and rescued a tiny duckling who had been hit. It was

*(Cont'd bottom of next page)*

**ANOTHER SPECTACULAR FALL IN INYO COUNTY**

*by Tom & Jo Heindel*

It seems that each fall report starts by stating that some spectacular birds were seen and this recent fall is no exception. The fall season for birds extends primarily from August through November when most of the birds are heading south but a few begin in Jun (e.g. shorebirds) and finish in Dec (e.g. hawks and warblers).

This fall was noteworthy as three species new to the county list were found, a few very rare species were seen, a sprinkling of rare species as well as an invasion into the lowlands of mountains species rounded out the exciting season.

On 14 Aug, Judy Wickman and Mike Prather of Lone Pine and Bob Hudson of Independence were conducting one of their regular shorebird surveys on Owens Lake near Keeler when they discovered a **Pacific Golden-Plover**, the first ever for the county. Many observers saw and photographed the bird thanks to Judy and her cell phone.

One month later to the day, 14 Sep, Jon Dunn of Rovana, was leading a birding tour at the same location and discovered Inyo County's first ever **Western Gull**. This is a strictly coastal species usually seen within a few miles of shore but this juvenile wandered far inland. The bird remained through the month and many were able to see and photograph it.

On 2 Oct, Noah Hamm from Bishop found a different looking plover at the Bishop Sewer Ponds. He and Chris Howard identified it as an **American Golden-Plover** a species long overdue for the county as this species has been found north and south of

Inyo. It remained into the next day and most local birders had great views of this beautiful juvenile.

All three of these sightings were accepted as scientific records because the initial observers followed the protocol necessary to meet the higher standards by calling other observers, writing descriptions, and photographing the birds. A century from now there will be no doubt in researchers minds as to the authenticity and correctness of the identification.

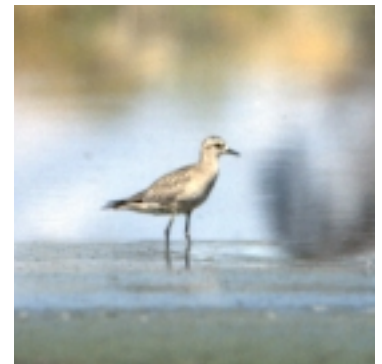
On 12 Sep, Jo Heindel found an immature male **Ruff** at Owens Lake near Keeler, the 2<sup>nd</sup> ever recorded in Inyo. It remained for six days to the delight of many. A **Field Sparrow** was reported from Furnace Creek Ranch in Oct and, if accepted, could become the 2<sup>nd</sup> county record. This is a one observer only sighting which makes acceptance a little more difficult. Hopefully the documentation will be excellent. On 14 Oct, Jerry Zatorsky and Chris Howard both of Bishop found the only **Pacific Loon** for the fall at North Haiwee Reservoir. Recently the species has proven to be of annual occurrence with one or two found each fall. Two **Red Knots** were reported with one at Tinemaha Reservoir 27 Aug found by Chris Howard and Rosie Beach and one at Keeler 24 Sep found by Judy Wickman, Bob Hudson, and Mike Prather. It was a good fall for the rare **Sabine's Gull** with seven reported because in some years we have no reports. On 15 Sep at Deep Springs College Jon Dunn found a **Least Flycatcher**, the first in a decade for the county, and a **Prothonotary Warbler**. On 9 Oct, Jo Heindel found a **Philadelphia Vireo** at China Ranch that was later refound by a group of birders visiting from northwest CA. On 3 Oct, Debby Parker from Bishop, Judy Wickman, and Bob Hudson found a **Blackpoll Warbler** at

North Haiwee Reservoir. During a nine-day period in late August, five **Painted Buntings**, 4 females and 1 male, were reported with two together in a Big Pine backyard!

And, finally, it has been an exceptional fall for mountain species moving into the lowlands. Observers from all over the Owens Valley are reporting Mountain Chickadees, Steller's Jays, Western Scrub-Jays, Pine Siskins and Cassin's Finches at their feeders.



*Western Gull, photo by Jon Dunn*



*American Golden-Plover, photo by Jo Heindel*

late when they reached me and I arranged to pick up the bird in the morning. The baby duck was housed in a warm nest, and the boys slept nearby, checking on it several times during the night. The duckling had been shot in the wing and the head, just above the eye. Once the bird was stabilized and, fortunately, able to eat and drink, I placed it in the care of volunteer Trudie Millerburg. "Gunnie" slowly recovered—growing flight feathers, swimming, and eating well. Later, accompanied by a second duckling, about 10 days younger, he was "soft-released" at a volunteer's home with a fenced yard and pond. He was miraculously able to fly and fend for himself.

**House Wren:** Mammoth residents came home to find a wren's nest torn up, one parent dead, and only 2 babies surviving. Volunteer Carmen Van Noy took the tiny nudies (each weighed about 1 gram!), providing warmth, fluids and, finally, food. We lost one of the little ones but the second one prospered. As it neared the weaning stage, I took over the bird's care. With small birds such as wrens and goldfinches, this is a critical time. With an adult weight of only 14-16 grams, the wren could not lose much weight while learning to pick up small mealworms and waxworms. This charming bird quickly became self-feeding, then spent two weeks in an inside flight

pen. She was frighteningly good at disappearing into small crevices and under pieces of bark. Another "soft release" was arranged where the raven had been hacked out earlier. A large cage was hung in excellent wren habitat (willows, water, and lots of insects); after a few days, a tiny door was opened and the bird left the cage for the nearby willow thicket. Subsequent checks showed that the supply of mealworms in the cage slowly dwindled and then vanished. The wren had a backup food supply to fall back on and used it while perfecting her hunting skills.

*Cindy Kamler*



CHAPTER OFFICERS

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