

**Eastern Sierra Audubon
P.O. Box 624
Bishop, CA 93515**

Postmaster: Address Service Requested

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
BISHOP, CA
PERMIT NO. 54



Dust mitigation at Owens Lake will also bring great benefit to birds. Learn more about it at the January meeting.

Programs, Field-trips through September, Children's Corner (new!), plus lots more, including several timely Conservation articles - inside!

THE SIERRA WAVE

EASTERN SIERRA AUDUBON SOCIETY

ESAS Website: www.csupomona.edu/~larryblakely/ESAS/

ES Bird Sightings: www.wmrs.edu/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 9

Refreshments: **Sally Gaines**

Main Program: May the Birds as Well as the Dust Settle at Owens Lake, by **Mike Prather**. Mike Prather will take you on a tour of the National Audubon's Owens Lake Important Bird Area highlighting the current dust control efforts of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and how a measure of habitat restoration for wildlife may simultaneously be taking place. Join us and look into the future wildlife possibilities at Owens Lake and find out how you can visit the lake and view its many birds.

February 13

Refreshments: **Dorothy Burnstrom**

Main Program: Even the Eastern Sierra has mushrooms, and **Dr. Jack Murphy**, Biology Professor at Deep Springs College, will teach us about this myriad-of-shapes family, including the eye-catching red-capped *Amanita muscaria* and its poisonous fam-

ily members, and the massive sized (as big as a one-year baby!) Boletus that can be found in our Sierra canyons. Some fungi glow in the dark, some are used to dye wool, and others are coveted and sold for \$100 each. Dr. Murphy will present a slide program entitled "**The Natural History of Mush-**

rooms", in which he will discuss the life cycle and ecology of mushrooms and present a primer on mushroom identification.



River, granddaughter of Jim and Debby Parker, delights in a giant mushroom found in the Rock Creek drainage in a recent wet year. Photo by River's mother, Sarah Jewett.

Chapter Notes

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

At our Christmas meeting we had a thought-provoking program given by Louis Thompson, chairman of the Walker Lake Working Group. It was wonderful to see slides of the water birds we all love, but it was sobering to realize that water diversions will doom the biological productivity of this wonderful desert lake unless wisdom prevails over man's dominance. The next week I received a letter from National Audubon Society that explained the threats to migratory birds from proposed oil drilling in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge. Some of these Alaskan birds use Walker Lake when they are migrating. Places that are critical for bird's survival need to be protected for both summer and winter habitat. The Alaska

National Wildlife Refuge, ANWR, including the coastal plain where the drilling is proposed, is a natural phenomenon, with teeming migratory wildlife.

Many arguments have been put forth, economic, social, and environmental, about the values the refuge contains. There is no doubt that sprawling industrial development will negatively impact wildlife populations. Within the existing Prudhoe Bay oilfields, the populations of ravens, foxes, and other predators, who supplement their diet with human food, has skyrocketed with a consequent effect on other creatures. The potential for oil spills is of great concern in the cold, moist, fragile arctic environment. Members of our local chapter that spent time in Alaska this summer related to me

that they went to Prudhoe Bay, and it was an industrial dump, despite all of the oil industries' claims to the contrary.

What this means to me is we have to think globally when we try to protect habitat for wildlife. Our birds are a river of life that ebbs and flows across the continent of North America. That is why it is important to be advocates for wild places, wildlife, and habitat they depend on, not just locally, but at Walker Lake, and in Alaska. Common loons, golden eagles, and caribou cannot go to meetings and write letters, but we can.

At our next meeting we will have information on both ANWR and Walker Lake. Join, send letters, and help if you can.

James Wilson

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fish Slough Volunteers Needed

A number of Audubon members continue their weekend patrols of Fish Slough, a designated "Area of Critical Environmental Concern". This endeavor is done with the cooperation of the Bureau of Land Management. Along with other duties, five petroglyph sites are monitored.

Appreciation is due the following dedicated volunteers: Sam Glasser, Dorothy Burnstrom, Derrick and Mary Vocelka, Martha Kramer, Earl Gann, and Dick Schneider.

Persons interested in joining our group should call Gordon Nelson at 873-7489.

Gordon

Prop 40

Governor Davis recently signed AB 1602, placing a \$2.6 billion park bond on the March 5, 2002 California ballot. The California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 40) will improve the quality of life for all Californians by providing recreational opportunities, new wildlife preserves, cleaner air and water, and safe places for children to play. Audubon-California has endorsed this important measure. Fact sheets, information and the text of the measure can be found at <http://www.pcl.org/bonds/bonds.html>.

This was sent to us by Jennifer Palyash, Research Director, Planning and Conservation League Foundation, 926 J Street, Suite 612 Sacramento, CA 95814; jpalyash@pcl.org; 916.313.4516

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.

The Aleutian Goose Festival

March 22-25, 2002; Crescent City, CA. A Celebration of Wildness offers participants a dawn spectacular from coastal headlands as more than 30,000 geese rise from their offshore island's rest and fill the sky overhead with voice and wing. How the geese made it back from the brink of extinction, and how they will coexist with human populations in future years,



will be a featured story during the festivities. The Aleutian Geese are unique in that virtually their entire world population gathers, and can easily be seen, in California's northwestern most county every March. They feed in local pastures, fattening up for their 2,000 mile nonstop journey over the ocean to their remote breeding islands in the Aleutian chain. For more details, call 1-800-343-8300, or visit the website: www.redwoodlink.com/soar/index.html

Our Chapter's 20th Anniversary will be in April, 2002 - *Sylvia Colton*.

Field Trips

REPORTS



The **Mono Lake Canoe Tour**, October 20, was limited to 12 people, who clambered on board the 4 canoes to paddle among the Eared Grebes, and to peer into the shrimpy depths. Photo by Joan Benner.



Highway Cleanup, November 3, 2001. Our merry group met for breakfast at Tom's Place at 8AM, as usual. It's a great way to catch up with the doings of your friends and enjoy a very good breakfast as well. The weather cooperated, and we had a perfect number of people for the pickup. Thanks go out to Larry & Ruth Blakely, Gordon & June Nelson, John & Dorothy Burnstrom, Martha Kramer, Pinky Alsup, Joan Benner, Norma Kervin and Bill Mitchell.

John & Ros Gorham

Bishop CBC

The annual Bishop Christmas Bird Count on December 15, 2001 was easily the most successful ever. In a 15 mile wide circle centered on Rocking K, twenty-nine ambitious participants in eleven parties tallied 104 species, plus 8 additional subspecies.

Although the weather was mostly cold and breezy, birds were found in good numbers and diversity. Unexpected rarities were a COMMON GRACKLE in a mixed flock of blackbirds near Millpond, a continuing SANDHILL CRANE in the Sunland Rd. alfalfa fields, a "WESTERN" PALM WARBLER on Indian Creek Drive, a continuing AMERICAN REDSTART in Birchim Canyon, a COMMON YELLOWTHROAT below the Pleasant Valley/Gorge Powerplant, a VARIED THRUSH at the horse stables on hwy 168 opposite the Plant 5 turnoff, and a continuing male VERMILION FLYCATCHER at the Bishop Sewer Ponds. Amazing birds seen during the previous week in the count circle were a NORTHERN PARULA and WINTER WREN in Birchim Canyon.

Other notable species recorded on the count were a BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON in Birchim Canyon, 2 GREAT EGRETS, a NORTHERN FLICKER intergrade (RED-SHAFTED X YELLOW-SHAFTED), and GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS at Plant 4. Interestingly, no CASSIN'S FINCHES were found this year compared to last year when they outnumbered HOUSE FINCHES 55 TO 47.

Many thanks to all the participants: Penny Ashworth, Rosie Beach, John and Dorothy Burnstrom, Jon Dunn, Kathy Duvall, Carolyn Gann, Eliot Gann, John and Ros Gorham, Phill Kiddoo, Bob Maurer, Bartshe Miller, Bill Mitchel, Larry Nahm, Jim and Debby Parker, Steve and Lynn Peterson, Richard Potashin, Bev Shroeder, Barbara Shuck, Bob and Barb Toth, Tessa Van Diggelew, Lynna Walker, James Wilson, and Jerry Zatorski.

A special thanks goes to Kathy Duvall for graciously hosting the Post-CBC Tally Meeting.



Ros Gorham looks for rarities along the Coyote Rd. during the CBC

If you get this in time and you are interested in participating in the Death Valley CBC, it will be held on Friday, January 4th. CBCs are open to birders of all skill levels. Call Mike Prather at 876-5807 for more info.

Chris Howard

CALENDAR

Here's the field trip calendar through mid-Sept 2002. Fall trips are lined up too, but I'll put them in the September/October edition. Field Trips are now on-line at a new website (along with other birding stuff): http://www.wmrs.edu/birds/2002_field_trips.htm

Chris Howard

Saturday, January 12th - Hawks, Hawks, and more Hawks - Join Earl Gann and his traditional driving tour to see the hawks, falcons, and eagles on the way to Benton. Besides birds of prey, this is also a great trip to see flocks of hundreds of Horned Larks and Mountain Bluebirds. Meet at 9:00AM behind the Wye Shell gas station in Bishop to carpool. Should last until mid-afternoon. Bring binoculars, water, lunch, and dress for the elements. Call Chris at 873-7422 with questions.

Saturday, February 9th - 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 16th - 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. Camping is on your own at Furnace Creek Campground (800) 365-2267. Contact Chris at 873-7422 for more info.

Saturday, February 23rd - Cross-country Skiing with James Wilson - Destination is leader's choice and depends on conditions. Meet at 9:00AM behind the Wye Shell in Bishop to carpool. Bring ski gear, lunch, water, etc. Call James at 873-7520 for more information or to arrange for ski rental.

Saturday, March 2nd - Pleasant Valley Reservoir Birding - This is a great opportunity to see ducks, geese, snipe, raptors and wrens. This trip involves a 2 mile walk. 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 9th - 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.

Saturday, March 15th - Bighorn Sheep Field Trip - The Eastern Sierra Audubon Society is pleased to sponsor a field trip to search for Bighorn Sheep. Leader John Wehausen will teach us about the status of Bighorn Sheep populations in the Eastern Sierra and their conservation issues. Meet behind the Wye Shell gas station at 8:00AM. Should last until early afternoon. Call John for more information at 873-4563.

Saturday, April 13th through Sunday April 14th - Join the local chapter of the Califor-

nia Native Plant Society this weekend for birding and botanizing Panamint Valley - Jerry Zatorski and Kathy Duvall will lead us to some of the canyons and springs in and around Panamint Valley. Expect to see springtime wildflowers at their peak and migrating and breeding birds. We'll explore from Darwin Falls to the canyons just east of Ballarat. 4WD may be necessary for Panamint Canyons. There is an optional Saturday night camp at Ballarat and a Sunday tour up Wildrose Canyon. Meet at Panamint Springs parking lot at 8:00AM on Saturday, April 13th. Call Jerry Zatorski at 872-3818 or Kathy Duvall at 872-1466 for more information.

Sat. April 20th - Join Mike Prather on a shorebirding trip onto Owens Lake. Mike will show us the new shallow flooding projects to see what birds they have pulled in. This is the peak of spring shorebird migration, so birds should be plentiful if not abundant. Meet at 8:00AM at the Diaz Lake parking lot 3 miles south of Lone Pine. Bring a lunch, binoculars, scope, hat, sunscreen etc. Call Mike at 876-5807 for more info.

Saturday May 4th - Spring Migration at Baker Meadow - Join Earl Gann to witness spring migration in all its splendor. Meet at 7:00AM at the Glacier View Campground in Big Pine. We'll walk around Baker Meadow until noon. The meadows are frequently wet or muddy so wear appropriate shoes. This is a great trip for beginning birders. Call Chris at 873-7422 with questions.

Saturday May 11th - International Migratory Bird Day

Saturday, May 18th - River Springs Field Trip - This is a magical area of vast grasslands and marshes. Many uncommon Eastern Sierra breeders, such as American Bittern and Wilson's Phalarope breed here. Meet in Bishop behind the Wye Shell gas station at 8:00AM. The trip will last until mid-afternoon. Wear irrigation boots or other mud-worthy shoes. Bring lunch, binoculars, insect repellent, and sun protection. Call Chris at 873-7422 for more information.

Saturday, June 15th - Highway 120 Birding Tour - Join Eliot Gann on a drive through one of the most scenic areas of the Eastern Sierra. This tour winds its way through Benton, across highway 120 and ends at Mono Lake. Meet in Bishop behind the Wye Shell gas station at 8:00AM. The trip will last until mid-afternoon. Call Chris at 873-7422 for more information.

Friday, July 12th through July 14th - Big Pine Basin Overnight - Jerry Zatorski and Kathy Duvall will lead this joint backpack with the California Native Plant Society up into the North Fork of Big Pine Creek. Excellent summer montane birds in full breeding plumage and prolific breath-taking wildflower displays. We'll bird and botanize the scenic Lakes Loop and visit Sixth Lake's yellow-legged frog population with biologist Phill Kiddoo. All participants are responsible for their own backpacking needs including a wilderness permit. From the trailhead, expect a steep climb (2000') for 3.5 miles to the base camp below Third Falls. Saturday's hike will include additional elevation gain to Sixth Lake at 11,100'. Please, no beginning backpackers. Limit to 10 people. Call Jerry Zatorski

at 872-3818 or Kathy Duvall at 872-1466 by July 7th.

Saturday, July 20th - Sierran Hike - Join John and Dorothy Burnstrom on a birding hike to Mary Louise Lake. Meet for carpooling in Bishop behind the Wye Shell gas station at 8:30AM. Bring water, bug repellent, lunch, and sun lotion. As with all Audubon field trips, no dogs please. This 5 mile trip should take between 3 and 4 hours round-trip. Call John at 873-3091 with questions.

Saturday, August 10th - Crowley Reservoir Shorebirds - Mid-August is the peak of fall shorebird migration, and Crowley Reservoir is an exceptional place to find them. Join leader Jon Dunn at the Green Church at 9:00AM. Bring mud-worthy shoes, water, hat, sun and insect protection, and binoculars. Call Chris at 873-7422 for more information.

Friday, August 23rd through August 25th - Hunter Mountain Banding Overnight - Tom and Jo Heindel have operated a bird banding station on Hunter Mountain for several years. This is a good chance to observe fall warbler migration. Car camping at a primitive, 'dry' campground. For more information, call Tom and Jo Heindel at 938-2764.

Saturday, September 14th - Fall Shorebird Migration on Owens Lake - Mike Prather - The fall shorebird spectacle at Owens Lake can be truly amazing. Mike will show us the best spots on the lake for birds. Meet at 8:00AM at the Diaz Lake parking lot 3 miles south of Lone Pine. Bring a lunch, binoculars, scope, hat, sunscreen, etc. Call Mike at 876-5807 for more info.

Conservation

NEWS FROM THE SOUTH

By Mike Prather

New Owens Valley Committee Website

One of the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society's environmental partners, the Owens Valley Committee, has just put up its new website. Visit it at www.ovcweb.org and learn about all of the water related issues that OVC works on here in the Owens Valley. Water affects everything that Audubon cares about, and the partnership between these two organizations goes way back. Learn about the Lower Owens River Project and Owens

Lake, two of the most critically important bird areas in our valley. Also learn more about the Long-term Water Agreement between Los Angeles and Inyo County that regulates ground water export and contains protections and mitigations for our local environment.

Shallow Flooding at Owens Lake Dedicated November 17th

On November 17th along the shoreline of Owens Lake, citizens and dignitaries gathered to officially observe the shallow flooding for dust control begin over 10 square

miles of the lake's surface (zones 1 and 2) near Keeler. Although the flooding is expressly for dust control only, at least two speakers over the course of the day's events spoke of the benefit for birds as well. In fact the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has agreed, as part of its permitting requirements, to dedicate in perpetuity 1,000 acres of Zone 2 for shorebird habitat. Up to another 1,000 acres is hoped for elsewhere on the lake in future years. These bird benefits are the direct result of efforts by the California Department of Fish and Game, the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District and data supplied by local Audubon members who have been con-

ducting shorebird surveys at Owens Lake since the mid 1980's. During past research on shallow flooding it was demonstrated that algae begin to colonize the playa surface and are in turn colonized by brine flies (as at Mono Lake) which attract thousands of migrating shorebirds and foster the nesting of the Snowy Plover. Come to the January 9th Eastern Sierra Audubon program about Owens Lake and learn more. Also join us for spring and fall 2002 chapter fieldtrips to Owens Lake that will visit the shallow flood areas looking for shorebirds.

Lower Owens River Project Draft EIR Delayed AGAIN!

For the third time LADWP has missed a deadline to release the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the rewatering of 60

miles of the Lower Owens River. This document originally required to be out in June of 2000 is now projected to be released to the public "possibly" in February of 2002. As one LADWP staffer stated in the past, "Every day that there isn't water in the river is money for us. You do the math". We here in the Owens Valley will remain patient.

National Audubon Important Bird Areas Report Released

Our chapter has several National Audubon Important Bird Areas (IBA's) within its boundaries. These include Mono Lake, Owens Lake, Owens River, Saline Valley, Deep Springs, Furnace Creek Ranch, Mesquite Springs/Scotty's Castle and Shoshone/ Tecopa. View a report on these IBA's just released by going to the website

www.audubon.org/chapter/ca/ca/IBA.htm. Here you can learn about all of the IBA's in the state and become involved in their protection and promotion. Important Bird Areas have become the backbone of the Audubon conservation efforts here in California with a list that will approach 200 sites. Eastern Sierra Audubon is excited about being a part of this important work.

Some See Nature as a War Victim

Policy: Since Sept. 11, the White House is tipping the balance to business, environmentalists say.

LA Times headline; Dec. 26, 2001

WALKER LAKE'S SURVIVAL

By Glen Strouse

For years, people have come to Walker Lake from all over Nevada and other states for fishing, camping, hiking, and boating. Walker Lake, Nevada, is a turquoise jewel in the desert. Walker Lake is also an important factor in the economy of the area, this lake provides a substantial percentage of Mineral County's revenue, due to tourists. Walker Lake also provides habitat for the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, as well as migratory birds, including American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, White-faced Ibis, gulls, herons, grebes, avocets, and visits of up to 1400 migrating Common Loons.

The only significant source of water for Walker Lake is the Walker River. For years, the state has over-appropriated the water of the Walker River System for ranching and other economic interests. Therefore, there is little water left for Walker Lake during most years. The surface of Walker Lake has dropped over 130 feet in 120 years. Mike Savon, of The Nevada Department of Wildlife, declared that, if the conditions of the Walker Lake did not change, we would lose Walker Lake as a trout fishery. People were greatly alarmed by the dropping lake level and disintegration of water quality, so the Walker Lake Working Group was formed.

A crisis came in the fall of 1996; the lake level dropped to its lowest point in years. The salinity or Total Dissolved Solids in Walker Lake had increased dramatically, and jeopardized the lake's entire aquatic ecosystem. Several species of invertebrates disappeared, and the Tui Chub did not reproduce. The fishermen complained that the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout were small, deformed, and diseased. These signs indicated that trouts' food-chain, and the lake's ecosystem, were in great danger.

Fortunately, 1997 was a wet year and water rose and TDS level lowered. By November 1998, the lake level was at an elevation of 3,956 feet, 14 feet above the Lake's lowest lake level.

The Walker Lake Working Group rejoiced at Walker Lake's gain, but knew that their job of protecting Walker Lake was far from over. In May 2000, the Walker Lake Working Group and Mineral County bought land with water rights in Mason Valley. For the first time, Walker Lake and Mineral County was able to have say during Walker River Irrigation District meetings as a member. In June 2000, the Walker Lake Working Group filed a petition for a Writ of Mandate with the Nevada Supreme Court to force the state to protect Walker Lake. The Nevada Supreme Court rejected the petition, saying the issue belonged in a federal court.

The Walker Lake Working Group thought that if they could get the Nevada Legislature to set water quality standards on Walker Lake, that would solve a lot of the problem. The TDS level proposed was 12,000 mg of Total Dissolved Solids per liter. This is not an ideal level, but the lake's ecosystem would survive at that level. The TDS level in 1996 was 14,000, which is almost fatal to the trout and other wildlife. The legislature turned down the proposal.

At a Walker Lake Strategy Meeting three weeks ago, Mike Savon once again warned us that the trout fishery at Walker Lake is in real danger. The surface is dropping quickly and TDS is rising. Somehow we must get water down Walker River to Walker Lake to save the ecosystem. Court Trials and law suits are costly and not practical. The Walker River Working Group is more than willing to discuss differences and solutions with the other Walker River users. Through negotiations and good will on each side, the Walker Lake water problem can be solved. So far the state of Nevada has been almost unresponsive to our pleas. Mike Savon, a biologist with Nevada Department of Wildlife, says that if Walker Lake drops four more feet, it will be the lowest it is has been in recorded history.

The Walker Lake Working Group may be contacted at PO Box 867, Hawthorne, NV 89415. Their website is: walkerlake.org

EASTERN SIERRA NOW HOME TO TWO IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

Excerpts from the Mono Lake Committee Press Release, Dec. 3, 2001. Contact: **Lisa Cutting**, Environmental Resource Coordinator (760) 647-6595 www.monolake.org

The Eastern Sierra can now boast of two Important Bird Areas or IBAs as they are commonly called - Owens Lake and the Mono Lake Basin. . . "IBA designation is a good thing for the world, the country, and your community," said Michael Rands, president of Bird Life International, the organization responsible for scientific review and endorsement of each IBA site. "Proximity to an IBA tells visitors that you live in a great place." . . . Migratory shorebirds have especially come to

depend on these two lakes as places to rest and feed before continuing, in some cases, their transcontinental journeys. Owens Lake hosts large numbers of Snowy Plovers, Least and Western Sandpipers, and nesting American Avocets. . . Mono Lake is critical habitat for large numbers of Eared Grebes, California Gulls, and Wilson's and Red-necked phalaropes. Over 100 species depend on Mono Lake and its shoreline environs while over 325 total species have been recorded within the Mono Basin watershed. "There are few places worldwide that can rival the Mono Basin for birding, thanks to the wide variety of protected habitats," said Frances Spivy-Weber, executive director of policy for the Mono Lake Committee. "America's birds are in trouble, and this is a chance for individuals to make a difference," said John Flicker,

Audubon President and CEO. "Through stressing action by people at the local level, the IBA program offers ordinary Americans an opportunity to protect globally-important places and help save the birds from decline and extinction." . . . The program imposes no regulations, restrictions, or costs. In fact, with the increasing popularity of recreational birding, IBA designation may help to boost the economies of local communities. . . . Although the program originated in Europe in the early 1980s, it received its U.S. kickoff this past month. Officials at National Audubon Society, the organization leading the Important Bird Area (IBA) program in the U.S. launched the initiative with events across the country, highlighting areas critical to the survival of birds and the individuals who helped identify these unique places.

EASTERN SIERRA WILDLIFE CARE HELPS GROWING NUMBERS OF ANIMALS

by *Cindy Kamler*

2001 was a record year for Eastern Sierra Wildlife Care; 235 wild animals needing help were rescued by nearly 200 compassionate people and brought to us for medical or maternal care. ESWC volunteers counseled more than 100 people on wildlife questions or emergencies, rescued animals, raised 125 orphaned birds and mammals, provided medical and recovery care for injured animals, and transported animals to other rehab facilities as needed. Volunteers are the life blood of Eastern Sierra rehabilitation efforts.



This semi-altricial kestrel is about a week old. He was raised and released.

We admitted a wide variety of animals, including many never-before-seen species. Singles of new species included a Pine Grosbeak, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Western Tanager, Horned Lark, Common Loon, Green-winged Teal, Marmot, and a Red Crossbill. Among other first-timers was a nest of chickarees, three gadwalls, two Clark's Grebes (both an adult and a two-day old), and two Brewer's Sparrows. It was a bumper year for corvids (ravens, crows and Steller's Jays), and we saw robins, House Finches, blackbirds, Cliff and Barn Swallows, kingbirds and orioles, mallards, Eared Grebes, Great-horned Owls and Golden Eagles, hawks (red-tail,

Swainson's, kestrel, sharp-shinned and Cooper's) White Pelican, cottontails, ground-squirrels, gopher snake, and a partridge in a pear tree.

They came from a wide-spread geographical area - as far north as Bodie and as far south as Haiwee. One nest of six pin-feathered house finches rode beneath a travel trailer all the way from Sherman Oaks - and lived to be released!

Our new "bird room" at the Center, funded in part by Eastern Sierra Audubon, saved the day for me by providing a roomy and cooler space for housing the babies. An unplanned benefit was the space's suitability for fledgling birds who were still being hand fed. Cliff Swallows, kingbirds, robins, grosbeak and orioles flew or foraged freely and hunted for ants, worms and flies. Swallows and kingbirds would dive for a worm held aloft and snatch it in mid-flight.

Special thanks to Debby Parker, Chris Howard, the Heindels, and other Audubon people for information on suitable release sites, wild diets, and migration deadlines. Our gratitude goes out to all the people who gave generously to the animals in a variety of ways - money, transport help, contributions of cages and carriers, and other expressions of support. Thank you.

ESWC Sees Increase in Wildlife Encounters with Fish Line and Hooks

More animals than ever before were admitted to ESWC with problems caused by fishing line or fish hooks. In April, a Common Loon was res-

cued from the canal near Collins Road. Fine monofilament line was wrapped tightly around his beak and a sinker found in his mouth. Stress, starvation and dehydration caused a rapid onset of respiratory distress, and the loon died about 18 hours later.

One juvenile gadwall was sent by the Devil's Postpile rangers with a hook imbedded in its tongue. Thanks to Dr. Stanton of Bishop Veterinary Hospital, the hook was removed and the bird successfully reunited with its family. Several mallards were brought in with fishing line wrapped around legs and wings. Removal of the line and hooks ensured a prompt release.

We received many other reports of birds tangled in fishing line - Topaz Lake Trailer Park, Bishop City Park, and Devil's Postpile were some of the locations. In some cases the callers were able to capture the birds and remove the line; rangers at the Postpile became experts in retrieving waterbirds and freeing them from the line.

One report was of a Bald Eagle tangled in fishing line seen the evening before on the east side of Tinnemaha. After a morning call from Fish and Game, volunteer Susie Goss (boss Dick Perry gave her leave from work at Perry Motors) and I drove down and combed the area. After a 45-minute search, we saw a bald eagle take flight from behind a sandy rise. Binoculars revealed no apparent fishing line and we assumed that, thanks to his sharp beak, the eagle had been able to free himself.

While we were able to help some birds, others - like the stunningly beautiful loon - died miserable and unnecessary deaths. It is our hope that concerted education will cut down on the amount of fishing line and hooks that defile our waterways and entrap or injure wildlife.

Birding

BIRD TOPOGRAPHY

By Tom & Jo Heindel

At the beginning of every field guide is an illustration of a bird with all the parts named. Some such as the Peterson guide limit this to a single bird, while others, such as the Sibley Guide to Birds, devote seven pages to show bird parts of different groups of birds. This reflects the importance that Sibley attaches to this aspect of bird identification. Many people are unaware that knowing the different parts of a bird helps immensely in their ability to identify a confusing species.

The task of learning these terms is not as daunting as it might seem. Many of them, such as crown, nape, bill, belly, toes, tail, etc., are everyday words that would baffle few, leaving a smaller, more manageable group to incorporate into our vocabulary.

Years ago an enthusiastic student excitedly inquired about an amazing bird he had just seen. He felt it was probably very rare, as he had never seen it before. "It was yellow and red and black!" he bubbled. After encouraging him to relax and slow down a bit, we asked where on the bird was it yellow and red and black. After a few seconds he burst forth, "Wow! It was yellow and red and

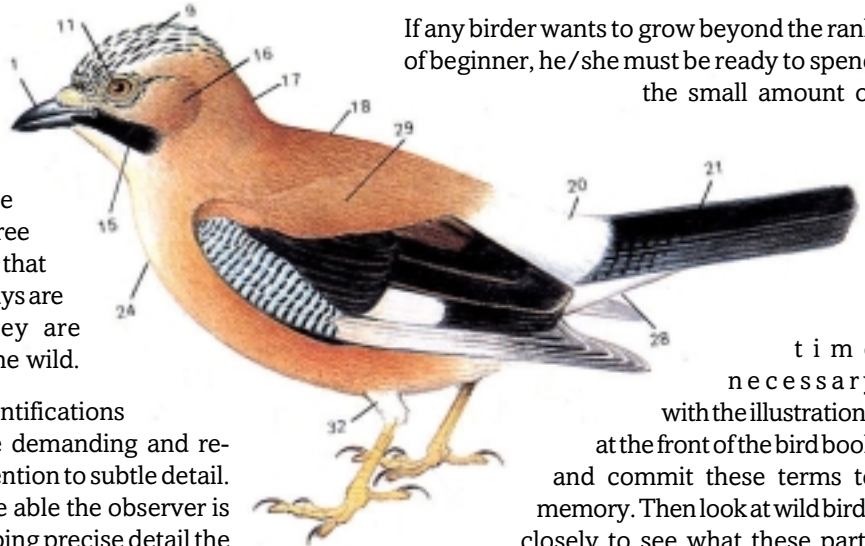
black!" He was so excited he could not remember where the colors were. As it was mid May and we had been seeing many Western Tanagers in the yard, we pointed out the illustration in our trusty field guide, and he excitedly said, "That's it! That's it! But my bird

was even brighter and more beautiful!" We had to agree with him that they always are when they are seen in the wild.

Some identifications are more demanding and require attention to subtle detail. The more able the observer is in describing precise detail the more likely the end result will be successful. Many species are very similar to others but differ in ways that may require close attention to detail to separate the rare species from the look-alike fairly common species. Did the supercilious end at the eye or extend well beyond

the eye? Were the lores black or the same color as the rest of the head? Were the auriculars bordered in black? Were the greater secondary coverts rusty or cream? Were the tertials broadly or finely edged in white? Were the undertail coverts streaked or unstreaked?

If any birder wants to grow beyond the rank of beginner, he/she must be ready to spend the small amount of



time necessary with the illustrations at the front of the bird book and commit these terms to memory. Then look at wild birds closely to see what these parts look like on a moving bird. It is really an easy task and opens up a completely new level of identification and appreciation of these treasures with which we share the world.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

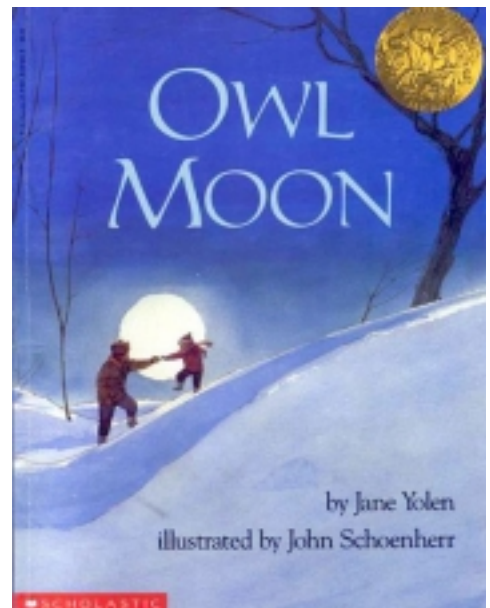
OWL MOON, Caldecott Medal winner by Jane Yolen, Illustrated by John Schoenherr.

Owl Moon is a beautifully written and illustrated book about owling on a snowy winter night. A young child narrates a first trip at night with Pa to look for owls. "When you go owling you have to be quiet." And, "when you go owling you have to be brave." And one never knows if an owl will be found or not. Read the book to find out what happens to Pa and the child on this expedition. This picture book can be enjoyed by all ages.

I read his book to my son Michael when he was quite small, and then he always asked when he would be able to go owling, too! Then Michael's kindergarten class studied owls this year, read *Owl Moon* among other owl books, and Audubon member Dorothy Burnstrom told me about an owl that was often out on Mummy Lane. So I went on (daytime) owl hunts with Michael and some of his friends. We never saw the owl, but the kids sure were excited to look, probably as a result of reading "Owl Moon". From this book it is clear that you may not see an owl on an owling expedition!

This book is available at the public library, at your favorite bookstore, or at Spellbinder Books where you can also get a hot coffee drink and purchase an Audubon T-shirt!

Sara Steck



CHAPTER OFFICERS

President: James Wilson873-3859
 Vice-President: Joan Benner938-2929
 Secretary: Mary Vocelka873-4480
 Treasurer: Sandra Whitehouse873-6314
 Board Members: Warren Allsup873-4375
 Larry Blakely872-1890
 Carolyn Gann 872-4125
 Chris Howard873-7422
 Phill Kiddoo872-8016
 Bill Mitchel872-4774
 Debby Parker872-4447
 Jim Parker872-4447
 Sara Steck873-4320

Committee Chairs

Birdathon: Michael Prather876-5807
 Conservation: Jim Parker872-4447
 Education: Michael Prather876-5807
 Debby Parker872-4447
 Sara Steck873-4320
 Field Trips: Chris Howard873-7422
 Fish Slough ACEC: Gordon Nelson873-7489
 Historian: Carolyn Gann872-4125
 Membership: Jim Parker 872-4447
 Newsletter Editor: Larry Blakely872-1890
 Co-editor: Debby Parker872-4447
 Newsletter Mailing: Mary Vocelka873-4480
 Kathy Duvall872-1466
 Programs: Debby Parker872-4447
 Publicity: Debby Parker and Joan Benner
 Refreshments: Sally Gaines934-9782
 T-shirts: Sara Steck873-4320

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

National Audubon Society

Chapter:

Eastern Sierra Audubon Society

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER
\$20 / yr (\$35 / 2 yrs) FOR NEW MEMBERS
FULL MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS!

Name _____ (Please print)

Address _____ **C-53**

City _____ State/Zip _____ Chapter _____

Mail Application to:
 National Audubon Society
 Membership Data Center
 P.O. Box 51001
 Boulder, CO 80322-1001

For Gifts:

 Your Name

 Your Address

 Your City/State/ZIP

- Payment enclosed.
 (make checks to National Audubon Society)
- Bill me later.

7XCH

For membership status call: 1-800-274-4201
 OR, *click on Customer Service at www.audubon.org*