

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!

May 8

Refreshments: **Sally Gaines**

Main Program: John Hadder, of Citizen Alert from Reno, will be presenting a program about the proposed **nuclear waste dump site at Yucca Mt.** which would be located near the southeast border of Inyo County in Nevada. Citizen Alert is a 26 year old grassroots environmental group based in Nevada providing education, advocacy, and empowerment to citizens on matters of environmental policy and environmental justice. Their mission is to: "Assure Public Participation and Government Accountability on Issues that Affect the Land and People of Nevada". Their website is at www.citizenalert.org.



Yucca Mountain

earth.fhda.edu

June 12

Potluck Picnic Dinner, **Millpond Park. MEET AT 6:00 PM.** Bring a dish to share, something to drink, and your tableware.

Barbecuers bring your barbecues. Come enjoy fellowship and good food, and vote for next year's officers.

Chapter Notes

NEW MEMBERS

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

Paul McFarland – Lee Vining

George Vest – Mammoth Lakes

Katie Bellomo – Lee Vining

Jon Goodwin – Mammoth Lakes

Karen Johnson – Bishop

Marian Lemke – Mammoth Lakes

Margaret Gulick – Lone Pine

Robert & Bonnie Fanti – Bishop

Ervin Lent – Bishop

Gwen Lew – Bishop

P.J. Anderson – Bishop

Santiago Escruceria – Lee Vining

Edward & Dianne LaPlount - Bishop

Daniel Haydon – Mammoth Lakes

Ron Smith – Bishop

Vicki & Gerry Wolfe – Death Valley

Stuart Clark – Bishop

Ann Fulton – Bishop

Roberta McIntosh – Bishop

Allen Wiedner – Bishop

Howard Yandell – Bishop

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Spring is definitely in the air in the Owens Valley, shorebirds are traveling through, and the first warblers, tanagers and orioles are showing their bright feathers. There is still snow up high but not for long. As well as the seasonal change, politics is also in the air. The politics of wilderness has been a hot button issue for many years, and locally it has become so once again. As many of you know, Eastern Sierra residents have been working for many months on a proposal to create or add to several new wilderness areas in Inyo and Mono counties. This is part of a statewide effort to preserve some of the remaining wild lands in California that are unprotected. We are joining our energy with groups in Southern California, the Great Central Valley and on the north coast to save places that are important to us

personally, and to the future of our wildlife populations.

While this effort in Eastern California has been controversial, the coalition of local people that have put significant energy into this is significant. Backpackers, climbers, birdwatchers, scientists, elected officials, businesspeople, professionals, educators, and retired folk have all contributed ideas and energy. People from many disciplines, areas of influence and concern have been contacted to gain input and help make decisions. This is not to say all are satisfied. There is a very vocal group that is opposed to all additional wilderness, or perhaps to the concept of wilderness itself. But our job as citizens who are concerned for wild places and creatures is not to find consensus, not to satisfy all, but to be at the table and speak

for those creatures that can not be there. This brings to mind a quote from Richard Dawkins, "When two opposite points of view are expressed with equal intensity, the truth does not necessarily lie exactly halfway between them. It is possible for one side to be simply wrong." Birds, lizards, squirrels and butterflies can not speak for themselves. We must do that. And that is what Eastern Sierra Audubon Society is all about. Being a force for education and speaking out for wild creatures are our main jobs. And I think we are doing that.

Senator Boxer has indicated she will introduce a bill in the Senate in the near future. It will take our energy to get it passed. Hopefully you readers will be inclined to help. If you have questions or ideas give me a call.

James Wilson

ESAS ELECTIONS

A proposed slate will be announced at the May 8 meeting, at which time nominations from the floor will also be accepted. The proposed slate will consist of current officers, except that Bill Mitchel has agreed to run for treasurer, replacing the retiring Sandra Whitehouse. Elections will be held at the June 12 picnic potluck.

HATS OFF!

Sandra Whitehouse, retiring Treasurer

Sandra leaves her post, which she has held for seven years, with the Chapter in its best

financial shape since its founding. Not only has she managed the books, but she has also taken an active role in fund raising efforts, and in reducing expenses. The cost of producing this newsletter has been drastically reduced by her work along the latter lines. So, Sandra, many thanks, and may you fare deservedly well in all your future endeavors.

Warren Allsup, retiring Board Member

Warren, retired from the CA Fish & Game department, and former Inyo County Supervisor, will step down after several years on the Board. His wise counsel and expertise on a variety of matters will be very much missed. Many thanks Warren for your service to the Chapter!

co-sponsoring a lecture "Success Stories in Restoration of California Native, Perennial Grasses" by Mark Stromberg on Thursday, May 16, 7:00 PM at the Green Church (Hwy 395 and Benton Crossing Road.) Mark Stromberg is Reserve Director at Hastings Natural History Reservation, University of California Natural Reserve System. The lecture is free and refreshments will be served.

... and

"How to Find Birds in the Desert" by Steve Hartman, Wednesday, May 29, 7:00 PM Methodist Church, Independence

Many people think the desert is a lifeless wasteland of scrubby plants and cactus. Steve will explain that many areas of the desert are literally bird oases - of course, if there is water. But even if there isn't water on the surface, there are important desert tree and shrub species that only occur where water flows underground - particularly in desert washes. Steve will review the various desert plant communities and habitats that seem to attract birds, as well as identify particular areas where birdwatching can be very rewarding. But this is not a program about "where" to find birds in the desert - there are many guidebooks for that. This program is about "how" to find birds in the desert. Where do they roost, where do they feed, where do they make their nests? These and other issues such as seasonality and human impacts will be discussed.

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Field Recording

Interested in recording bird or other sounds in the field? Two workshops, one in May and one in June, may be of interest. For details contact the Nature Sounds Society (in Oakland, CA) at (510) 238-3393, or see their website at: <www.naturesounds.org>.

News from the Bristlecone Chapter of the California Native Plant Society

The Bristlecone Chapter and Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Laboratory (SNARL) are

Steve Hartman is a business executive and multimedia artist. He has served on the CNPS board for a decade, is a long-time activist of the Los Angeles / Santa Monica Mountains chapter, and is also a member of two local Audubon Societies. He served on BLM's Calif. Desert District Advisory Council for 6 years representing CNPS. His local project is the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area, in the San Fernando Valley. Steve is an avid native plant gardener.

Land Trust Forums

The Eastern Sierra Land Trust is sponsoring two public forums entitled "Programs and Benefits of a Local Land Trust" on **Tuesday, May 7 at 7:00 pm in Bishop and Wednesday, May 8 at 7:00 pm in Mammoth Lakes.** The featured speakers

will be Harriet Burgess, president of the American Land Conservancy and Jacques Etchegoyhen, rancher and Nevada Director of the American Land Conservancy. Topics will include conservation easements, working landscapes, and other land trust programs. Public comments and questions will be welcomed and refreshments will be served.

The May 7 forum will be held at the Patio Building of the Tri-County Fairgrounds in Bishop and the May 8 forum at the Rec Room at the Mammoth Mountain RV Park across HWY 203 from the Forest Service Visitors Center. Please call Karen at 387-2913 or Tony at 924-8742 for more information.

Karen Ferrell-Ingram
387-2913

Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without.

Quaint old saying, not exactly our current ethic!

Field Trips

Here are the field trips scheduled through the summer. For possible changes, please check the field trips website page:

www.wmrs.edu/birds/2002_field_trips.htm

or contact Field Trips Chair Chris Howard at 873-7422 / choward@telis.org.

CALENDAR

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.

Birding

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL- WILDLIFE REHAB SUCCESSES

By *Cindy Kamler*

Eastern Sierra Wildlife Care admitted 235 wild animals last year and another twenty-



Clark's Grebe chick, feather duster "mom" in background.

seven since the first of the year. We'd like to share some of their stories with you. Horned Lark: This nestling was rescued by Lone Pine residents and cared for by them for 2 weeks until they learned about ESWC. The lark stayed with us for several weeks for

weaning and flight training. Debbie Parker helped out, finding a horned lark flock and releasing him there.

Clark's Grebe: On Labor Day weekend, Jennifer Allred (Pet Friendly) saw a tiny, velvet-gray bird swimming toward her boat.

Fortunately, she rescued it and got it to ESWC. The 2-day old bird was identified as a Clark's Grebe, a rarely seen baby in rehab circles. Alternating between an incubator with a feather duster taking mom's place and a pan of water for short baths, the grebe ate tiny live fish and mealworms, grew quickly, and nearly doubled its weight in just a few days. After about 2 weeks, ESWC volunteer Carmen Van Noy drove the bird to International Bird Rescue, experts in waterbird rehabilitation, where the grebe would have access to deep-water pools and, possibly, the company of other grebes. It was ultimately released.

Cinnamon Teal: Found lying on the snowy Mammoth slopes in March, this lovely bird was rescued and taken to ESWC volunteer Donna Shelley. A few days of rest, warmth and food, and the teal was ready for release.

Gopher Snake: This foot-long, pencil-thin baby was rescued from an inappropriate place-The Highlands-probably brought in from the fields by a cat. Rescuers provided heat and food. Unfortunately, the snake slithered out of its cage and became imbedded in duct tape. Upon its arrival at ESWC, Cindy Kamler began research into removing duct tape from snakeskin. Vegetable oil and patience were the solution. After a few days of recovery, and aided by advice from local snake experts, an appropriate release site was found. It was November and time for the little guy to hibernate.

Hoary Bat: On April 18, ESWC received a call from Fish Lake Valley, where the rescuer found a bat lying on the ground outside her door. She had the bat for two days, while seeking help, and the bat had not flown or eaten. At ESWC, the bat was identified as a hoary bat; large, solitary and migratory, this species is rarely sighted. Warmth, hydration, and lots of mealworms soon revived this pregnant female. Local bat experts provided helpful information; these bats are found locally and may even remain in the area all year. Return and release will take place soon.

SIXTH GRADE CAMP

By *Troy D. Kelly*

Wildlife Biologist, retired from the CA Department of Fish and Game

Recently, I had the pleasure to participate in the *Scientist in the Classroom, Students in the Field* docent program*. My assignment was to lead a bird walk for the Home Street School's Sixth Grade Camp. I had never led a bird-walk for kids before, but I have led tours for the public at large and for state senators and Undersecretaries of Interior. How hard could it be to lead a dozen or so sixth graders at a time on an hour and a half walk to look at birds? Well, 14 bird-walks and 180 kids later, I am a humble man. I no longer question the patience and dedication of every sixth grade teacher in the country! I think it was the most challenging week I've had in many years, yet one of the most rewarding. There is nothing more exciting than to see the look in a kids' eye when you play a Bewick's Wren song and have one respond live, up close and personal, to defend its territory! I don't make

a habit of challenging male Bewick's Wrens, but it made for a powerful learning tool for these kids. That little wren helped to teach those kids about bird topography, songs and calls, breeding behavior and territoriality, and little bit of birding ethics (of which we were fudging on in the name of education).

We made our way around the Bernasconi Camp (just west of Big Pine) hunting for as many birds as we could find. Obviously, we weren't going to set any records in late winter, but I had the kid's competitive juices flowing nonetheless. We started slow on a very cold Monday morning with seven birds and picked up steam as the weather improved, and by Thursday observed 19. Not



bad considering I had compiled a cursory list of 32 for the kid's to shoot for. I had more fun walking through riparian forest, sage scrub, deciduous woodland, and grassland than I ever had as a graduate student. I tried to point out everything that I could to reinforce ecological concepts to the kids-habitat, habitat, habitat...! We observed cavity nesters, seed-eaters, insect-eaters, birds-of-prey (raptors, not the velociraptors of Jurassic Park fame), scavengers, carrion, and even four-legged predators, as evidenced by their scat (fancy word for poop). It's not easy holding a sixth-grader's attention for 90 minutes, but I found it hard to make it back to camp by our assigned time. How can you urge the kids to move on when two Red-tailed Hawks display for you and then mate just yards from their future nest! Ah, the giggles and laughter when adolescence witnesses nature at it's very essence. And to think, I had no idea what I was going to tell those kids on Monday morning.

Special thanks to the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society for loaning us the binoculars. Congratulations, you just turned 180 kids onto birding!

**Scientist in the Classroom, Students in the Field* is a science education program run cooperatively by Eastern Sierra Institute for Collaborative Education, Inyo County Office of Education, White Mountain Research Station, and Inyo County Schools.

CHOOSING A FAVORITE BIRD

By Tom & Jo Heindel

Do you have a favorite bird? Countless times that question has been posed to birders, usually by non-birders or relative newcomers to birdwatching. This innocuous inquiry is an almost impossible question to answer. The more one learns about any species the more fascinating it becomes, and the more questions arise resulting in a deeper appreciation of the uniqueness of that bird.

Most birders have had an exciting bird encounter that directed them to books to find an explanation or description that further enriched the experience. Without exception, this is true of all species, making the selection of a favorite just about impossible. The greater your experience with birds the greater your difficulty in selecting just one favorite.

Many birders prefer certain groups or families of birds. Some love warblers because of their bright colors while others prefer raptors with their dashing attacks on mammals, birds, or other prey. Some even prefer the more difficult groups such as gulls, shorebirds, or sparrows for the identification challenges they offer.

While it is not uncommon for a professional ornithologist to concentrate on one group of birds such as swifts, hummingbirds, or gulls, it is very uncommon to find a birder who is only interested in a single group of birds. Those who do, tend to concentrate on the more scientific aspects of their choice. Concentrating on one group allows the non-professionally trained individual to make valuable contributions to the scientific community. However, the vast majority of birders enjoy most groups of birds with as many reasons as there are individuals.

Who cannot marvel at hundreds of American White Pelicans circling low overhead while listening to the swooshing of their fixed, unmoving wings, slicing the air? Who can fail to get excited listening to a flock of bugling, rattling Sandhill Cranes lifting off a field on a crisp November morning? Who cannot be impressed by the fine feather detail and intricate pattern on a closely observed Townsend's Warbler in early May? Who can remain calm and collected when viewing a Red-faced Warbler or Cerulean Warbler in Inyo knowing they are not supposed to occur here?

While it may be impossible for most birders to list one favorite bird, they will have no trouble answering the question "What are your favorite birding experiences?" Be ready for a lengthy response!

CHILDREN'S CORNER



POOF! By John O'Brien. Boyds Mills Press, Inc., PA, 1999.

Wizards, babies, cats, dogs, and ducks! This story looks at laziness and habitats appropriate for the above-mentioned characters! It is actually more fun than instructive, but kids with duck experience will relate to conditions that ducks can tolerate. So as not to spoil the ending, I won't say any more, but read it for yourself to find out how they live happily ever after!

You can find this book at the Public Library, or ask for it at your independent bookstore. If you go to Spellbinder Books, don't forget to check out the Audubon T-shirts. We will have more summer short sleeve shirts in more colors available soon, and the proceeds to toward our local bird education program.

Sara Steck

Edward Abbey on the Great-horned Owl

From the vicinity of Balanced Rock comes the cry of the great horned owl. Suppertime, for the owl. The mice, squirrels, gophers, rabbits know what I mean. What is he up to? Rather than hunt for his supper the owl seems to be calling his supper to come to him. He calls again and again, always from the same place, not moving, in a voice which seems to come from not one spot alone but--anywhere. A war of nerves. His nervous,

timorous prey, terribly insecure, hear that cry and tremble. Where exactly is the owl? Perhaps the next shrub, the next rock, would offer better concealment than this. They hesitate. The great horned owl cries again and a rabbit breaks, dashes for what might be a better place, revealing his position. Quiet as a moth the owl swoops down.

(from *Desert Solitaire*, 1968)

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

Adopt-A-Highway John & Ros Gorham938-2023
 Birdathon: Michael Prather876-5807
 Conservation: Jim Parker872-4447
 Education: Michael Prather876-5807
 Debby Parker872-4447

Sara Steck873-4320
 Chris Howard873-7422
 Field Trips: Sam Glasser873-3111
 Fish Slough ACEC: Carolyn Gann872-4125
 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

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



Blakely

Spotted Towhee, photo'd in Wilkerson in late March. The photo was manipulated in Photoshop to take on the appearance of a painting.

Summer Field Trips, Yucca Mtn. Program, 6th Grade Birders, Rehab Successes, Children's Corner, and More!