



ESAS Website: ESAudubon.org ES Bird Sightings: ESAudubon.org/birds/

Meetings

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

Evening Programs

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

January 11

Owens Valley Water Renaissance?

Michael Prather



Red Knot on Owens Lake, September 2003 Bob Steele photo

The controversy surrounding Los Angeles' acquisition of land and water rights for the construction of its Owens Valley Aqueduct in the early 1900s is well known. Less well known is the battle by a handful of local residents known as the Owens Valley Committee, along with the County of Inyo, to save their remaining natural heritage in the face of ongoing groundwater pumping. This program will be a guided tour of two large projects currently underway in which the OVC plays a role. At Owens Lake, dried years ago as a result of water diversions, many square miles are being shallow flooded to control the regional dust hazard and thousands of migrating shorebirds are rediscovering the lake. The second project is the re-watering of 62 miles of the Lower Owens River as mitigation for damage caused by groundwater pumping. Although plagued by delays, the unprecedented re-watering promises miles of riparian habitat in an arid land.

February 8

California Birds in Motion

Larry Arbanas

According to Larry, this big-screen video presentation "could as well be called 'bird stuff I shot in California the last 6 months with the amazing High-Definition camera and lens sent to me by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.'" Larry began his video career as a small business/corporate communications producer, but was converted to nature videography by the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Share his excitement over footage for Cornell's Visual Media Collection: "Would you be interested in watching cool footage of White-tailed Kites, Burrowing Owls, Bald Eagles, Pygmy Nuthatches, Clark's Nutcrackers, American Dippers, Black-necked Stilts and even a Marsh Wren building its nest? How about Wilson's Phalaropes flying around Mono Lake in huge flocks, turning and banking like schools of fish, or one of Mono's resident tufa-dwelling Osprey?"



President's Message – Holiday Tradition Fulfilled

The 24th annual Bishop Christmas Bird Count was held on December 17, 2005. Forty-five intrepid birders bundled up, braving a low of 14F and a high of only 45F. Several groups reported birds were scarce, but we still managed to collectively find 104 species, the third highest in Bishop CBC history. Highlights were two Northern Goshawks, an immature male Anna's Hummingbird at Wilkerson, and an adult male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at the golf course, presumed to be a returning individual found in the same tree on last year's count. Three Barn Swallows at Nik and Nik (Desert Aggregate) mark only the second occurrence on the count. A Western Bluebird was found in Round Valley, an exceptionally late migrant Yellow Warbler was at the golf course, and a Chipping Sparrow was found near the Bishop Sewer Ponds.

New high counts for the Bishop CBC were Common Merganser (40), California Quail (530), Bald Eagle (up to 4), Sharp-shinned Hawk (12), Red-shouldered Hawk (20), Virginia Rail (5), American Coot (511), Eurasian Collared-Dove (67), Red-naped Sapsucker (4), Nuttall's Woodpecker (34), Say's Phoebe (20), Clark's Nutcracker (47), American Robin (428), Orange-crowned Warbler (22), White-crowned Sparrow (1323), House Finch (369), and American Goldfinch (463).

Thanks to all the participants for their hard work and to Steve Shibley of the Bishop Country Club for gracious use of the carts and access to the fairways. And, very importantly, thanks again to James and Kay for hosting the potluck tally meeting. – **Chris Howard**



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker Chris Howard photo

Thanks for the Goodies!

Ed Cereda (January meeting) and Dorothy Burnstrom (February) answered the call for members to help by signing up to bring cookies or cake to our meetings. By not having to buy cookies, your Chapter can spend more money on educational and resource protection projects. We provide coffee, juice and tea and just need your help with the cookie goodies. To sign up, contact Joan Benner at our next meeting or at 938-2929.

January/February Field Trips and Events

Monday, January 2 - Death Valley CBC Vicki & Gerry Wolfe (760) 786-2108 or devawolfe@yahoo.com

Saturday, February 25 - 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 more information call Tom or Jo at 938-2764.

The Eastern Sierra Land Trust will be five years old in 2006! Come join the ESLT to celebrate "Land and Legacy" on Sunday, January 29, 2006. Enjoy live music, a silent auction, food and drink, and hear about our accomplishments and latest projects. Many of you have been an important part of this lasting work, so come be a part of the celebration! This milestone event is open to all and will be held at the beautiful Mountain Light Gallery, at the corner of Main St. and Line St. in Bishop, from 4-7 pm., January 29. Warm up the gallery and bring your friends along. Space is limited, so please RSVP to the ESLT office at 873-4554 by January 24.

Vintage Audubon Prints Still Available! ESAS is selling these beautiful prints of J.J. Audubon bird paintings, originally produced on heavy stock for vintage calendars, to fundraise for Eastern Sierra Wildlife Care. They will be available at the next meeting; or call Jim or Debby Parker at 872-4447.

Broad-Billed Hummingbirds

Tom and Jo Heindel

Photo by Todd Vogel



Broad-billed Hummingbirds (*Cyananthus latirostris*) are common throughout much of their Mexican range with the northern populations being migratory and the southern populations sedentary. During the late spring and summer breeding season the migratory birds move north to breed primarily in riparian washes in the arid Sonoran desert, just barely pusing into southeast Arizona, southwest New Mexico, and the Big Bend portion of Texas. So why write about this species instead of an Eastern Sierra species? Because two immature male Broad-billed Hummingbirds have occurred in Inyo County.

Broad-bills reach Arizona and New Mexico in mid March but are not recorded in Texas until mid May. In Arizona males depart in late August while females and immatures hang around until mid September, with a few lingerers until early October. They are primarily nectar feeders with forays to capture insects in the air or off foliage to meet the needs for amino acids and electrolytes. Studies have shown they prefer flowers whose nectar ranged from 13-32% sugar which mimics the “nectar” found in artificial feeders.

Any hummingbird, regardless of size, can be displaced from a flower or feeder by any other. With that said, there is a dominance factor that reflects size and aggressiveness with the various species. All who watch hummers note that certain species always seem to “win” and guard a feeder with all comers chased off. An Arizona study determined that Broad-bills consistently acquiesced to Violet-crowned and Rufous while they dominated Black-chinned and Costa’s.

In mid September 1992, Marge Irwin and her family pulled into the Lone Pine Campground and set up their temporary home. As part of settling in, Marge, as she always does, hung a hummingbird feeder in a nearby

tree. The following day her family began to climb Mt. Whitney and she busied herself around camp. Very quickly she heard and saw a hummingbird come in to the feeder and equally quickly recognized it as one she was used to seeing in southeast Arizona, a Broad-billed Hummingbird! Knowing the significance of the sighting, she went the extra mile to notify the locals of its presence and a number of people rushed to the campsite to see and photograph Inyo County’s first ever vagrant hummingbird. It remained from 12-14 September.

On 29 October 2005, Tom & Jo were sitting in their backyard enjoying their morning coffee break when they saw a red-billed hummer sitting on the fence near a feeder. When it turned around it obviously was an immature male Broad-billed Hummingbird with a teal and dark blue gorget less than half molted in, dark metallic blue lobed tail, and a red decurved bill. Over the next nineteen days it was well watched by two dozen observers. Many set up telescopes and from twenty-five feet away had in-the-hand views. Chris Howard noted the striations on the bill, which are lost quickly, indicating that this was a very young male; this was substantiated by the underdeveloped gorget. The feeder mixture provided 33% sugar nectar and for a week he would sit right next to or over “his” feeder and chase any hummer who dared to try to drink from it. The two Anna’s and three Costa’s who thought the yard and feeders were theirs found out that one feeder was no longer Open for Business. Even though the nearby hummingbird garden was filled with blooming sages the Broad-bill was never tempted to taste natural nectar, preferring high-octane homebrew. After a week he became secure enough to visit other parts of the yard and then the neighbors’ yards. At these times the Costa’s Hummingbirds would sneak in and guzzle at the forbidden feeder until the Broad-billed returned and used his bill to move them out!

Both the Inyo County birds were immature males but, to add to the story, another Broad-billed Hummingbird, an immature female, was found at Inyokern by Susan Steele just a few days earlier on 26 October and remained to the 31st. Data from Arizona indicates that immatures move by mid September and those born with broken compasses react to the drive to migrate by going in the wrong direction. Vagrants have been found in Louisiana, southern and southeast Texas, New Mexico, west and central Arizona, Nevada, Utah, and California primarily along the coast from San Diego north to Santa Barbara.

A number of Eastern Sierra residents maintain hummingbird feeders and all have the opportunity of seeing some very fancy and rare guests. All it takes is a sharp eye, a nearby field guide to birds, and a little luck!

ESAS Assists LADWP with “Spring Clean-up”

by Debbie House, Watershed Resources Specialist,
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power,
Bishop

A local spring got a big helping hand last Saint Patrick’s Day as the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society and Friends of the Inyo helped Lori Dermody, LADWP (Los Angeles Department of Water and Power) Watershed Resources Specialist, and me clean up trash from a spring east of Laws. The cleanup was done just a few weeks prior to the installation of fencing by LADWP construction crews designed to eliminate trespass livestock grazing and reduce recreational impacts. I contacted Chris Howard, ESAS President to see if the ESAS would be interested in supporting and assisting in clean-up of the spring area prior to the planned fencing. ESAS enthusiastically agreed to help out, and Chris rounded up more help while I continued to lay out plans for the fencing.

I first visited this spring back in the winter of 2001 to look for the “White-winged Junco” that Debby Parker found. I have made a few more visits to the spring over the last several years, and it just seemed that the condition of the site was continuing to decline. It was a spring crying for attention, and I just couldn’t ignore it anymore. DWP management showed full support for the idea of fencing the spring, but did not want to completely cut off human access. Therefore, the fencing has three walk-throughs, and the shaded parking area was retained. People have been using the resources at the spring for many years as evidenced by the ditching, old pipes, and planted black locust trees. Some areas, like the parking area, were unlikely to respond well, so were left unfenced.

From a land management perspective, the process of getting the area fenced was relatively easy, since this patch of land is unleased, which means that the livestock using the site for water and feed were considered “trespass livestock” – i.e. the use was not authorized. This fact made it unnecessary for the landowner (DWP) to find or develop another water source for the livestock. In addition, the site was small enough to make it feasible to fence out the livestock. Because this spring seems to have a fairly reliable water source, it has a good chance at recovering with minimal input, once the “stressors” are removed. Also, there are many native species present, which will aid recovery. Indeed, the response during the first growing season of fencing has been positive. I have made several visits since the fencing was completed, and there are already

cattails coming in and a good response of other wetland species such as sedges and rushes. There are some weeds in the area, but so far the natives have the upper hand. I do go out there and pull a few weeds now and then, and pick up a few bottles, but as of November 2005, the fence was still being respected by humans and cows alike. I think that it will take a few years for us to see how things are going to unfold, but so far, I am very pleased with the progress the spring has made in healing itself. Thanks to all for making this project happen!



Top photo: March 2005, before the project;
bottom photo: same place, September 2005
Photos by Debbie House

Eastern Sierra Audubon welcomes new members

**Jay Bretton
Beverly Schroeder
T. E. Gasior, MD
Eric & Lori Beck
Kenny Scruggs**

A New Life for Your Old Field Guides

Roberta Lagomarsini

As some of you know, ESAS has purchased about 25 binoculars for local children to use to learn more about birds. For example, ESAS does a "Birds in the Schools" program every year for 3rd graders. There is a slide show in the classroom showing different birds and their characteristics; there are discussions about migration, habitat, plumage, etc. Then the kids spend about an hour in Bishop City Park with volunteers from ESAS looking for birds with our "school binoculars." The binoculars are also used during the "birding class" at science camp in Big Pine. I had the pleasure of being a volunteer at both events; it was really fun and we saw lots of different kinds of birds. However, what was most rewarding was the number of 6th graders that had remembered their 3rd grade birding experience with ESAS and how much fun that had been for them.

Which brings me to the issue at hand. During both birding experiences, there was a need to have 4-5 field guides that the volunteers and the kids could use. This was especially true during science camp as we had the kids themselves use the field guides to figure out what birds they were seeing. My co-leader and I brought our own field guides for the kids to use, which after 5 hours a day for a week were a little worse for wear. The third graders and their teachers/parents could use them too. So we are requesting that when you upgrade your field guides (maybe you got the newest edition of the NGS for Christmas) or just get tired of one, consider donating it to ESAS for the "Birds in the School" program. They don't have to be the most recent edition and it really doesn't matter which one it is. In fact, during science camp we had 5 different kinds and it was really interesting to see the differences in each book. You can bring them to any meeting or call me at 872-7846. Thanks so much.

Brainstorming – Need Your Lightning

James Wilson

In November the board of Eastern Sierra Audubon Society, plus committee chairs and friends, met for an evening of brainstorming about our chapter and our direction. As part of this exercise we had a positive energetic discussion of our finances.

In a typical year ESAS takes in about \$4000 and spends almost the same. Expenses include rent for the meeting room, printing and mailing for the newsletter, money for the binoculars for our school programs, refreshments, web site, donations to local conservation efforts, and insurance. Over \$1000 each year goes for our insurance policy. We also spend over \$1000 a year

for printing and mailing our newsletter. They are our biggest expenses.

Our income comes from a variety of sources including money from tee shirt sales, our garage sales, and our annual Bird-a-thon. Since there are no paid employees of ESAS, any money received when you buy one of our shirts, make a donation, or support our Bird-a-thon, go directly to our programs. Except for the first year of your dues, the money sent to National Audubon does not come directly back to the chapter.

As former president and member of the finance committee I would urge all ESAS members to remember your chapter when asked to make donations, support the Bird-a-thon, or work at our garage sale. We need these sources to continue our programs. If anyone wishes to work on funding or has a fund-raising idea talk to Chris Howard, Bill Mitchel, or James Wilson. Thanks for your support.

Charles H. Lee and Leaping Lizards Legal Awards to Pritchett and Bagley

Before an audience of 400 in Bishop, Daniel Pritchett and Mark Bagley were given well-deserved recognition at the November 20th performance of "A Mulholland Christmas Carol." Daniel was presented with the first ever Charles H. Lee Award for his tireless work on the relationship between groundwater and vegetation. The Owens Valley Committee, working with ESAS and Bristlecone Chapter of CNPS, has begun the Grasslands Initiative to focus science and public education on the importance of these disappearing plant communities. This work is important not only to plant species both common and rare, but to many insect, reptile, mammal and bird species. Daniel was presented with an original copy of the Charles H. Lee report on Owens Valley groundwater resources that was published in 1912.

Mark Bagley was awarded the first ever Leaping Lizards Legal Award for his role as the single most effective legal strategist and tactician over more than two decades dealing with the Lower Owens River Project and the Inyo/Los Angeles Water Agreement. Mark has been invaluable in integrating legal efforts of the Sierra Club and the Owens Valley Committee by tracking the details of complex events and agreements over many years. He is responsible for guiding the California Attorney General's Office to finally join in their legal action to force LADWP to begin the Lower Owens River Project. Mark received an original 1913 \$1,000 City of Los Angeles water bond.

The Owens Valley and all of us who love it owe Daniel and Mark our sincerest gratitude for their dedication and persistence... endless pressure, endlessly applied. We live in communities where individuals can truly make a difference.

Chapter Officers

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 Vice- President: Joan Benner 938-2929
 Secretary: Mary Vocelka 873-4480
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The WAVE is now printed on recycled paper!

Eastern Sierra Audubon

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Sharp-shinned Hawk on Brewer's Blackbird
Chris Howard photo

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