



Meetings

2nd Wednesday of the month
(1st Sunday this June)
September-June, 7:00 PM,
usually at
White Mountain Research Station
3 miles east of Bishop on
East Line Street.
Check local media for possible
changes.

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

Evening Programs

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

May 9

An update on the status of the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep

Tom Stevenson

Dep't of Fish & Game biologist

Refreshments: Roberta



Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep John Wehausen photo

June 3 (note: 1st Sunday in June)

Spring Potluck Picnic Bishop City Park

Help ESAS celebrate 25 years at 4PM for birding and socializing, 6 PM for potluck. Meet at the picnic tables behind the Bishop City Park. Bring table settings, binoculars, drinks. Dessert will be provided.

Join the ESAS Board

In June we will hold our annual elections and there's room on the Board for you! If you'd like to make the Eastern Sierra a better place, the ESAS Board is the place for you. We hold monthly Board meetings to act on conservation issues and plan events. Contact any current Board member (see back of this newsletter) if you'd like to help.

Field Trip Report: Pleasant Valley Reservoir, March 3 2007

Bill Mitchel

On a cool and clear Saturday morning eleven enthusiastic birders joined field trip leader Jerry Zatorski on a walk along the bank of Pleasant Valley Reservoir. We were immediately greeted by the descending notes of a Canyon Wren and during the day heard several more. We saw 3 wren species including Rock Wrens and a Bewick's Wren. The Rock Wrens were unusually friendly and posed while singing as we viewed them with our scopes. The most unexpected bird of the day was a female Northern Harrier flying through the canyon just below the power plant.

The water in the reservoir was high which left little room for shorebirds but we managed to spot one Wilson's Snipe on a bank. Overall we spotted 12 species of ducks including Green-winged Teal, Bufflehead, Ring-necked, Common Goldeneye, Lesser Scaup, Canvasback, Ruddy Duck, Redhead, Mallard, American Wigeon, Gadwall and Common Merganser. The Mergansers entertained us with their animated behavior in the water.

A few other birds such as Spotted Towhee, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black Phoebe and Great Blue Heron topped off the day for us and brought our total species count to twenty-nine.

President's Message – Kids Meet Birds

Can you imagine taking 150 third-graders birdwatching? ESAS volunteers will do just that over the course of 4 days in mid-May at the Bishop City Park. It's not as daunting a task as you might imagine and it's actually a lot of fun. We partner classes of 20-25 students with 4-5 ESAS volunteers, so the groups are small. First we demonstrate how to properly use the ESAS binoculars that each student gets to use. Then we discuss general birding practices: be as quiet as possible and move slowly. We lead discussions covering migration, predator and prey, bill types, what birds eat, and the importance of different kinds of habitat. We teach the kids how to use bird books and how to read bird distribution maps. Then, many for the first time in their lives, we take the students birding. There are often Western Tanagers at the park in mid-May. It's so rewarding when a student finds one in the binoculars... "OOOOOohhhh I see it! It's big and... and it has a red head... and a yellow body and... and black wings!!!!" It's the kind of impression that can last a lifetime, spur curiosity, and create a deep-rooted appreciation for birds. We do need additional volunteers. If you'd like to help out, please contact Sara Steck at 873-4320. It requires

only a couple hours of time and basic bird knowledge. It really is a hoot.

On another note, if ESAS had a dollar for every Audubon's Warbler that has landed in the trees behind our house, ESAS would be rich. Unfortunately, the warblers aren't giving hand-outs, and this is my plea for support. ESAS expenses include 1) classroom rent for presentations at White Mountain Research Station, 2) ESAS T-Shirts, 3) liability insurance, 4) refreshments, and 5) WAVE newsletter printing and postage. If your membership has lapsed, please consider renewing. Also, we have a Bird-a-thon coming up, which is a fun way to support ESAS, plus you'll receive a tally report (see insert). Another way to help reduce our costs is by electing to receive only the online version of the WAVE. It's the same as in print, but in color (email me at chris93514@gmail.com). Donations and membership checks should be sent to Eastern Sierra Audubon Society, P.O. Box 624, Bishop, CA 93514. I hope to see you at the June picnic, if not before. Enjoy Spring! – **Chris Howard**

May, June and August Field Trips

Saturday, May 5 - Baker Creek Birding - Leaders Carolyn Gann, Larry Nahm (872-4125) A short, popular annual walk reliably turns up flycatchers, buntings, warblers, vireos, tanagers and other visitors. The great spring migration will be nearing its peak. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Triangle Campground just north of Big Pine off U.S. 395. Bring binoculars, water, snacks and sunscreen. Trip should end by noon.

Saturday June 23 - Mountain Walk - Leader Joan Benner (938-2929) A moderately-paced morning walk along the South Fork Trail of Big Pine Creek to enjoy wildflowers and the cascading creek. Even in drought years, this trail has a good flower display. We'll see evidence of the 1983 flood and discuss the geology of the canyon. Walk will end by noon. Bring water, snacks, and sunhat. Meet at 8 A.M. at gate at the end of the Glacier Lodge Road (not the hiking parking lot below the pack station); In Big Pine, turn west on Crocker Street at the MobilMart for the nine mile drive up canyon.

August - Fall Shore Birds - Leader Jon Dunn Place and date to be announced. Check the web for details.

Plan Ahead: Donate Your Stuff to Fall ESAS Garage Sale

ESAS is planning a Fall garage sale to help raise money for our chapter. When cleaning your house and garage this spring and summer, please consider donating to our garage sale. Check the September newsletter for date and location.

China Ranch: An Emerald Isle

Tom and Jo Heindel

One of the most beautiful jewels in Inyo County's crown is China Ranch, a hidden oasis in the southeast corner of the county near Tecopa and the Amargosa Canyon. The privately owned date farm shares China Ranch Wash with Willow Creek and is an emerald of Fremont cottonwoods, tree and streamside willows, honey and screwbean mesquite, and date palms surrounded by the Mojave Desert. The owners, Brian and Bonnie Brown, have developed the land both as a commercial property and a unique natural history preserve. Interpretive signs explain the history of the canyon and farm and provide information on dates they grow. The Browns encourage everyone who enjoys the outdoors to come to China Ranch; long and short-term scientific studies are welcome. They ask that they be copied on any data collected for their archive. This will allow them to gain a better understanding of the complexity of the biosystem they have chosen to protect and allow them to provide additional information to visitors and researchers.

From a birder's perspective, this is a stunning location with a wonderful collection of birds. China Ranch hosts a suite of regular breeders whose range just barely reaches the southeast corner of Inyo County. Least Bell's Vireo, an endangered species, still breeds there as well as nearby Amargosa Canyon, West Talc Road and several other nearby locations. While there are isolated reports of non-breeders to the Owens Valley, one should plan a visit to the Ranch between April and early September to see this plain plumaged but personality packed species. The Black-tailed Gnatcatcher is a permanent resident and hides in the mesquite thickets. The Crissal Thrasher sings from the top of trees and shrubs in early spring when easy to see. Later they are seen scooting across the trails or roads disappearing in the dense understory. The Brown-crested Flycatcher is sometimes reported to Owens Valley as a vagrant but is a regular breeder, usually seen in the cottonwoods and willows. The Summer Tanager is another species that is widely reported over the county as a vagrant but is a regular summer visitor to China Ranch. The Yellow-billed Cuckoo has also been found with some regularity in the riparian of China Ranch between June and September. Other widespread species are easily found at China Ranch, such as Gambel's

Quail, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Phainopepla, and Lucy's Warbler.

Then there are the vagrants that are unexpected anywhere in the county that have been found at China Ranch: White-winged Dove, Common Ground-Dove, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Gray Catbird, Prothonotary Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Blackpoll Warbler, Pine Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Hooded Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Le Conte's Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Bronzed Cowbird, Baltimore Oriole, Orchard Oriole, and Purple Finch. And this list was garnered with minimal coverage by birders!

Trails reveal the ridges and recesses of the farm and signs explain much of what you will see on trails from a couple hundred yards to four miles long. After a hike, treat yourself to the gift shop where dates, date bread, and the famous date shakes can be purchased. Tables and chairs are just outside where one can enjoy the hummingbirds and orioles that visit the nectar feeders April to September. A B&B is available for those who wish to enjoy China Ranch for longer than a day. This precious gem is priceless and guaranteed to take your breath away!

Website: <http://www.chinaranch.com>



Summer Tanager

Jo Heindel

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Horned Lizard, Volcanic Tableland

Joy Fatooh

Why hide? Join the fun, make a difference - *Inside*

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