



ESAS Website: ESAudubon.org Eastern Sierra 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!

March 12 (rescheduled from February)

Tropical Austrasia: Six Weeks Down Under Bob Steele, Photographer

Inyokern photographer Bob Steele spent six weeks last summer birding and photographing in northeast Australia. He saw over 300 species of birds and photographed nearly 200 species. Bob is a passionate and accomplished photographer. Recent credits include the cover photo for the audio CD titled *Birds of the Pacific Northwest*. Bob was also Photo Editor and major contributor for the National Geographic book *Birding Essentials* coauthored by Bishop resident Jon Dunn. Bob's presentation will take you on a breathtaking ride through one of the most bird-rich continents on earth. For a preview of his work, see his website:

<http://www.bobsteelephoto.com>

April 9

Climate Change in the Sierra Nevada: Adaptation to Protect Natural Resources Joan Clayburgh

If winters are warmer, snow levels higher, fires more frequent, summers drier... what else will change? In this interactive presentation, Joan Clayburgh, Executive Director of the Sierra Nevada Alliance will share the latest on climate change impacts to wildlife, water and natural resources in the Sierra and seven guiding principals for adapting to protect wildlife and other natural resources.

About those cookies...

Do you enjoy coming to the Audubon meetings for the program and for those wonderful and tasty cookies that miraculously show up every month? Would you like to contribute to that miraculous appearance? In the past, board members have brought cookies, but the Cookie Chairman would like to relieve them of that responsibility. If you like baking cookies (or buying cookies), here is your chance to indulge yourself. If interested in bringing cookies and juice to a meeting, please call me at 873-3859 or email me at kymwilsn@aol.com and I will put you on the Cookie Calendar. I will call you to remind you before the meeting. **Kay Wilson**



Yellow-bellied Sunbird

Bob Steele

President's Message – The Energy of Spring

*“Among twenty snowy mountains
The only moving thing was
the eye of the blackbird”
Wallace Stevens*

Earlier in the week, on a false spring day, I worked in the yard removing some of the lawn to make way for some more native plants. A red winged blackbird kept me company with its song and ravens squawked from the treetops. The promise of spring always takes me by surprise. I feel my energy level begin to rise and lists of projects appear as if by magic.

Eastern Sierra Audubon has a lot to look forward to as this new year unfolds. In April, we will help to sponsor and co-ordinate an event in the Bishop City Park on April 20th, the Sunday of Earth Day weekend (see article elsewhere). This will be the first event of its kind in Bishop and ESAS is really pleased to be a part of it. The day before (April 19) Mike Prather has organized the first Big Day at Owens Lake. There has never been an attempt to identify and count birds at the entire lake on a single day. I would expect that the results will provide dramatic evidence of the remarkable comeback of this vital habitat. I am looking forward to being a part of this historical event. Please join us on both days of this weekend.

May will see ESAS conducting its “Birds in the Classroom” program. This program has received praise from throughout California. We bring Bishop’s third graders a classroom presentation about birds and then

bring them face to face with the bird residents of the City Park. Participating in the program is an opportunity for you to enjoy an hour or so of good birding and be rewarded by watching the excitement on the faces of the students as they spot and identify “real live birds.” This year, we are working toward bringing the program to the elementary students of Lee Vining School for the first time.

May 10 is International Migratory Bird Day which is a major event for our chapter. This is our biggest fundraiser as members seek pledges to be based upon the numbers of birds sighted. The resulting contributions allow us to provide programs to the schools, support local conservation efforts, and sustain and hopefully expand membership services. You can help by pledging yourself, securing pledges from friends and family or going out and birding on the day itself. Better yet, do all three and give the chapter a helping hand.

In June, we will hold our annual dinner and membership meeting. The same month, ESAS will again act as a sponsor of the Mono Lake Bird Chautauqua. If you haven’t been to the Chautauqua you have missed a really fun event.

Add in our membership programs in March, April and May, our spring field trips the continuing work to plan for the support of avian resources at Owens, and the Butterfly Garden Project for the Bishop Park and our chapter has a busy spring ahead. I hope that every member will find something of interest and join us at one or more of these events. **Pete Pumphrey**

Upcoming Field Trips

Saturday, March 1 – Pleasant Valley Reservoir Leader: Jerry Zatorski. At this time of year Pleasant Valley Reservoir is excellent for wintering ducks and other waterfowl, along with raptors and songbirds. The trip entails a 3 mile round trip hike around the edge of the reservoir on a paved roadway. This is a great trip for beginning birders. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Y (Wye Road and N. Hwy 395) or 8:00 a.m. at the Pleasant Valley Powerhouse parking lot. For more information call Jerry at 872-3818.

April 19-20, 2008 - Owens Lake First Ever BIG DAY Contact Mike Prather at mprather@lonepinetv.com or (760) 876-5807

Saturday & Sunday, May 24 & 25 - Deep Springs, Inyo County Kerncrest Audubon invites ESAS for a joint trip which will take participants north through the Owens Valley to Big Pine, then east over Westgard Pass at the southern end of the White Mountains to Deep Springs College below. The college is a working agricultural community, set in a desert valley with springs and wetlands. Expect late spring birding at its best in stunningly beautiful surroundings. This is also a prime time for the appearance of one or more eastern vagrant species. We'll camp at the county campground at the turnoff to the Bristlecone Forest, at the north end of Big Pine. For more details and reservations contact Dan Burnett by May 21, email: imdandburnett@verizon.net, phone: 375-8634.

Winter Birds in the Eastern Sierra

Tom and Jo Heindel



Rough-legged Hawk

Debby Parker

Winter brings a suite of birds from the north that are not seen the rest of the year, such as Tundra Swans, Greater White-fronted, Snow, Ross's, Cackling and Canada Geese, Bald Eagles, Rough-legged Hawks, and Northern Shrikes. Tundra Swans are found from early November to mid March in numbers that vary from year to year with daily averages of 10-60 birds. Some years over 100 have been seen but the maximum is 202 (31 Dec 1997 at Klondike Lake and Tinemaha Reservoir). This year there were fewer birds than expected. While the geese are migrants as well as winter visitors, there are birds that, once they find a location to their liking, will spend the winter trying to avoid hunters and photographers. Most numerous are Snow and Canada Geese with Greater White-fronted, Ross's, and Cackling Geese less common, usually fewer than ten but occasionally more.

Bald Eagles are on everyone's "Wish List" and they seldom disappoint. Most arrive in early November and have been seen through April, although they are not easily found after mid March. Most records are 1-2 birds but often 3-4 are seen. Seventeen were reported on the Eastern Sierra January 2008 Eagle Survey, the same number as last year but a different combination of adults and immatures (8 adults and 9 juveniles versus 11 adults and 6 juveniles in January 2007).

The Rough-legged Hawk is an enigma. In the 1970s it was often seen in numbers greater than Red-tailed Hawks, sometimes 8-10 birds in a day. In the last two decades 1-2 birds are usually reported the entire winter although when scarce in the Eastern Sierra there are reports of many more in the Bridgeport and north areas. This past December on the Bishop Christmas Count, 2-3 were seen. One party (Kristie Nelson) saw an adult male and the other party (Jon Dunn and Debbie House) had an adult male and juvenile. It is problematic if the parties saw the same adult male since the two locations are somewhat near each other...then again, they could have been different birds.

Northern Shrikes are rarely reported November through February and all but one record are of single birds; the exception is two birds at different locations, but within flying distance, that may have been one bird moving around. This year one was reported at Big Pine in late December impaling a goldfinch (Earl & Eliot Gann).

The second group of wintering birds is normally seen in the nearby mountains during the year but some winters they can be found on or near the valley floor. Examples are jays, nuthatches, rosy-finches, and chickadees. This has been an excellent winter for some of these lowland invaders, especially Mountain Chickadees, with fewer reports of Steller's and Western Scrub-Jays. Nuthatch and rosy-finch reports have been few but one deep snowfall could change that! It is easy to assume that these species have descended from our nearby Sierra Nevada but that may not be the case since these species are found well north into Canada and are known to leave their "homeland" if there is a food supply failure. Some years the chickadees or jays at your feeder may be from British Columbia, not the Sierra!

Every winter also provides surprises, this year a Short-eared Owl in Deep Springs Valley (Chris McCreedy). Again, it is not known from where this bird came. Is it a resident from the marshes at Deep Springs Lake, or a visitor from the north, or an early migrant?

We are mindful that the more we learn about the birds of the Eastern Sierra the more we are aware of how much more we don't know. Winter isn't over, ornithologically speaking, until the end of February so there is time for more birds to appear providing more opportunities to discover just how much more there is to learn about winter birds in the Eastern Sierra.

"As the radius of knowledge extends, the circumference of ignorance expands." – attributed as a Japanese saying

Volunteer Opportunity:**Bettering Birding in the Buttermilks**

Eastern Sierra Audubon Society, Friends of the Inyo, and a variety of partners have been working for a year now to rehabilitate a stock exclusion fence in the upper Buttermilk Country around a California Department of Fish and Game parcel. This parcel was purchased with bond funds supplied by the people of California for wildlife habitat. It is critical deer migration and winter habitat. It is also one of the most important areas near Bishop for breeding migratory songbirds. This spring we are doing more work parties with ESAS, FOI, and others to fix this fence. April 13th, April 19th, and May 17th are days currently scheduled for this task. We have lots of tools and gloves. Bring sturdy clothes, hats, sun protection and and some energy. More information from Maria Dzul, 873-6500 or maria@friendsoftheinyo.org, or James Wilson, 873-3859 or jkwilson48@aol.com. Hope to see you.

**Thank you, Gordon**

On December 25 Eastern Sierra Audubon Society lost one of our most remarkable members, Gordon Nelson. Gordon, along with his wife June, has been a member of Audubon for many years. Gordon was the consummate Audubon volunteer. His coordination of the Fish Slough Patrol spanned many years, where his warm, quick smile served him well. Countless days were spent patrolling the roads in the Fish Slough area. As most know Fish Slough is an area north of Bishop with springs, marshes, dry hillsides and rare plants and animals that rely on this unlikely wet spot in the dry desert. The Patrol, cosponsored by the Bureau of Land Management and Audubon (and now also Friends of the Inyo), was designed to help inform visitors of the values of the place, and help instill a conservation attitude in them. Gordon and the other volunteers talked to visitors, reminded them of the roads, picked up trash, and alerted BLM when problems arose. BLM's enlightened management of the Fish Slough Area of Critical Environmental Concern and the surrounding tablelands has helped preserve for us a rare lowland area in excellent condition. Gordon's working on behalf of Audubon was central to this. We all owe a debt to Gordon. A healthy group of springs and desert wetland are part of his legacy. From members of Eastern Sierra Audubon, the Owens Pupfish, the Meadowlarks, and the Alkali Mariposa Lily, we thank you again, Gordon.

James Wilson

Central Valley Birding Symposium

The 11th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium was held November 15 to 18th in Stockton CA. I attended for the first time and had a wonderful experience. There were interesting programs and workshops for all levels of birders throughout the three days. Workshops I attended included ID through specimens, digiscoping, an introduction to eBIRD, and birding by ear. There were also three days of partial to full day field trips, ranging from some for beginners to one on gull identification. The Central Valley has lots of fragrant native habitat and is just full of birds. I really enjoyed the Cosumnes River Preserve trip that let us use trails and roads not open to the public. Good looks at a Short-eared Owl and thousands of Sandhill Cranes were highlights. And there was an excellent birder's market and art show. Representatives from the major optical companies gave opportunities to compare many scopes and binoculars. Hope more of our local birders can attend the festival next year. **Kathy Duvall**

New Members, Welcome!

The following are new members for the fall and winter. Welcome to Eastern Sierra Audubon. Hope to see you at the next meeting.

Paul and Penny Burdeno**Diane Cattabriga****Del Chambers****Lindsay Eilts****Sabine Elia****Mary Beth Hennessey****Patty Holton****Christopher Leonard****Gisela Long****Mark Long****Darren Malloy****Sara Meder****Charles Milligan****Janet Reeling****Debie J. Schnadt****Barbara Schneider****Courtenay Sly****Marlene Taylor****Teri Goldner Turner****Marshalle F. Wells****Seeking Woodpeckers At Mono Mills Burn***Burnt black bark upon**white snow lies. Knock, knock. Look up.**Home found. Hairy flies.***Haiku by Rosie Howard**

Helping Hands Needed For Helping Wildlife Cindy Kamler

Ever watch a mother hummingbird feed her two youngsters? Seen her at work at first light or in the dimness of dusk? Did you wonder at the energy she expends in gathering nectar and insects or guess how many trips she makes to fill empty stomachs and crops?

Well, if you've ever raised a baby bird, you have an idea as to the time and effort spent by that mother hummingbird. (In case you didn't know, the dads don't help.) Eastern Sierra Wildlife Care volunteers who help at the Center, or do foster care at home during the baby season, learn what it's like to be a bird parent. Join the **Animal Care Team** and you could find yourself caring for a Lesser Goldfinch or American Robin, a Red-winged Blackbird or a Say's Phoebe. You might be feeding crickets to a Western Kingbird or special "nectar" to a tiny Black-chinned Hummingbird.

If you work at the Center, you might feed all these different bird species and more during your four-hour shift. Most small nestlings are fed every 30-45 minutes; hummingbird youngsters every 15 minutes or so. If you're a Foster Care volunteer, you could have a nest of four House Finches or a pair of Great-tailed Grackles in your home. Babies need to be hand-fed until they are weaned, which in most cases happens in 2-3 weeks depending on the age and species. It's fascinating to watch the young birds discover and develop such necessary abilities as perching, picking up food, preening, flying. Once weaned, the birds practice survival skills—foraging, hunting, flying—in anticipation of release.

The Center houses other babies as well as injured adults. Help feed and clean a pair of young American Kestrels or a Great Horned Owl brancher, or swim a brood of tiny orphaned Gadwalls in a tub of warm water. If you're interested, you might foster a ground squirrel or cottontail rabbit.



Baby Gadwalls raised and released by Center volunteers. Their mother was killed by a car while leading the newly-hatched youngsters to water.

Not interested in being a parent, but still want to help ESWC's feathered and furred patients? **Rescue and Return Team** volunteers answer many calls during the busy season (and year-round). Adult and baby birds and mammals are rescued from roadsides and fields, canals and ponds, buildings and front yards. Nestling and pre-fledge birds can run afoul of high winds or avian baby snatchers and find themselves on the ground. Uninjured youngsters—mostly raptors and corvids—can often be returned to their nests. Some team members do the strenuous tree climbing while others assist from ground level.

Calls come from all over Inyo and Mono counties, but rescuers can't always get the animal to the Center. **Transport Team** members help by picking up the animal and getting it to animal care volunteers at home or the Center. Some animals need to be transferred to other rehab facilities for specialized care; Transport Team members will sometimes drive an eagle to Ojai Raptor Center or a White Pelican to Ridgecrest. Too bad we didn't get a photo of two juvenile White Pelicans ensconced in the back of Art's pickup shell for transfer to Ridgecrest. To allow them to stretch their long necks, holes were cut in their transport boxes. Unperturbed by their strange surroundings, the two birds had a ball peering out of the windows at the scenery rushing by!

What about helping with our two annual fundraising events? It takes money to buy crickets for the kingbird and earthworms for the robin. We need medicine and bandages to treat the goldfinch's broken wing or the mallard's broken leg. Catchpoles and nets are needed for rescues and fuel for the pickups transfers.

ESWC's spring event—Family Fun Day—is just around the corner. The theme for this second annual event is "Everything's Ducky!" A major goal of the fundraiser is to build a much-needed "duck pen" to house the 2 dozen plus orphaned ducklings we raise each season. (These charming downy babies take nearly *four months* to grow in all their feathers and be ready for release.) The pen can also house injured adult waterbirds—ducks, ibis, gulls, and coots—when needed.

Can you make signs? Design a flyer? Know some good games? The **Fundraising Team** is gearing up, looking for sponsors and donations for raffle prizes, planning games and fun activities for the kids, choosing the menu, and planning education exhibits and slide show—and we can use some more volunteers. Help us put more fun in Fun Day!

Whether you want to work with the animals, reunite babies with their parents, provide a ride for a rescued animal, or help throw a great party and raise some money, there is a place for you with Eastern Sierra Wildlife Care. (There are lots of other ways to help, too.) To get involved, give Cindy a call at 872-1487.

Chapter Officers

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Vice- President: Joan Benner 938-2929
Secretary: Barbara Schuck, jbkelly@qnet.com
Treasurer: Bill Mitchel 872-4774
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Chris Howard Phil Kiddoo
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Conservation: James Wilson 873-3859
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Baby Barn Owls in a nest box
at Eastern Sierra Wildlife Care

The curious wisdom of the beginner's mind - *Inside!*

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