



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!

November 12

Climate Change and Bird Conservation in the Eastern Sierra Nevada: What Audubon Can Do **Bill Monahan**

Anthropogenic climate change represents one of the greatest threats to global biodiversity. However, real challenges exist with addressing climate change at a local level. Bill Monahan, a Senior GIS Scientist with Audubon California, will outline what we in our local Audubon chapter can do to promote mitigation and adaptation through bird conservation in the Eastern Sierra Nevada.

December 10, after Holiday Potluck
Birds in Motion
Larry Arbanas

Larry Arbanas has been presenting video about birds to Audubon chapters for 5 years. Now, he says, it's time for a change. He plans to film ESAS members at the December meeting and take this footage into the wilderness to project onto trees, boulders and reflecting pools. He hopes to educate, entertain and amuse the local birds and furry creatures with this look into the lives of birders. Please dress appropriately.... Oh, all right! Larry will present spectacular new avian footage filmed for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Alaska, New England, Florida, Texas and Mexico, with subjects ranging from breeding birds of the tundra to Turtle v. Anhinga.



Sunset, Big Bend National Park, Texas

Larry Arbanas

President's Message – Growing the Future

*Roses become compost, compost feeds the garden
for the growth of new roses - The Dalai Lama*

Fall is my favorite season. The colors, the crisp days with the portent of snow and the first dusting of the peaks ramp up the drama factor of our incredible landscape. The clarity of the air seems to call me to clear my mind and my life. I think this goes back to the time when the return to school brought an opportunity to open up to new experiences and ideas. Now, much of my schooling is done by the trout of Hot Creek and the Upper Owens River.

This is also a time of re-energizing for Eastern Sierra Audubon as we begin another year of service to our community and our landscape. Work has begun on preparing for the Christmas Bird Count, Bishop's second "Celebrating Community Connections" event, a community garden project, another amazing Mono Basin Bird Chataqua and continued outreach to eastside schools. ESAS continues to work toward the development of a collaborative plan to maintain the restored avian habitat of Owens Lake and we hope to complete the second phase of this effort within the next few months.

In the last couple of months I attended the annual conferences of the Sierra Nevada Alliance and the California State Bar Environmental Law Section. Both events focused on the challenges posed by climate change, energy needs, growth and, most recently, economic down-turn. Given these issues, it would have been understandable if these were dour gatherings filled with hand-wringing.

In fact, they were quite the opposite. In each, there was a coming together of people of diverse interests and values meeting to learn from each other in an atmosphere of concern and respect. The overriding sense was that we are in this together whether we are birders, wilderness users, urban commuters, decision makers or citizens who wanted their voices heard. Clearly we must act responsibly, positively and directly, individually and collectively as we work through these issues. Each of us must do what we can to educate ourselves about things we can do that are effective and ways that we can work together.

I truly hope that ESAS can serve a positive effort and example in these efforts. I know that we welcome that chance to do so. **Pete Pumphrey**

December Field Trips

Saturday, December 6 – Crowley Winter Birding Leader: Jon Dunn. This is a great chance to see Bald Eagles, geese, and wintering ducks. Meet at the Green Church at 8:30 AM. Bring binoculars, scopes, water and lunch, and wear clothes for the potentially cold weather. If the weather is bad, meet in Bishop at the Y for birding at Tinemaha. Call Connie for more information at 872-4596 or check the Eastern Sierra Audubon website. (Do real men...? See page 6.)

Sunday, December 14 – 27th annual Bishop Christmas Bird Count This longstanding tradition is a great opportunity to observe wintering birds in the Bishop area and collect valuable bird census data. Anyone with an interest in birding is welcome to participate. In 2007 we saw 101 species including seasonal rarities such as Hooded Merganser, 3 Bald Eagles, 3 Rough-legged Hawks, 1 Anna's Hummingbird, 186 Mountain Chickadees, 3 White-breasted Nuthatches, 8 Western Bluebirds, 1 Townsend's Solitaire, 2 Lark Sparrows, and 2 Golden-crowned Sparrows. Teams will be assembled and areas will be assigned in November, to provide ample scouting opportunities. Ask anyone who has participated on a CBC; it's a lot of fun finding birds in the cold, then warming up at the tally potluck. If you'd like to join the fun, please contact Chris Howard at chris93514@gmail.com or 873-7422 as soon as possible.

Holiday Potluck

Wednesday December 10, 6:00 pm at the White Mountain Research Station Dining Hall

Eastern Sierra Audubon is inviting all members and friends to attend our annual holiday potluck dinner and program. Again we will be having a candlelight dinner in the dining hall of the White Mountain Research Station at 6 pm, with program at 7 pm. We ask each person to bring an ample dish and a beverage to share with the group. Bring your friends and neighbors. We welcome everyone. Audubon will provide coffee, tea and juice. We look forward to good conversation, delicious food and yummy desserts. If you have questions, do contact Joan Benner at 938-2929.

Inyo County Longspurs

Tom and Jo Heindel

Longspurs are a small group of small LBJs, a.k.a. “little brown jobs,” closely related to sparrows in the family Emberizidae. They get their name from the long hind claw they and Horned Larks have. There are four species in North America with the Lapland and Smith’s breeding in Alaska and Canada and the McCown’s and Chestnut-collared in the northern Great Plains. Winter finds all but the Lapland in the south-central states; the Lapland prefers the northern tier states as well as the Pacific Coast. All four longspurs have been documented in the eastern Sierra.

During the breeding season, males are brightly colored and distinctive but when they occur in our area they seldom have bright feathers to help in identification. This task is not for the faint-hearted as recognized by Allen R. Phillips, a famous ornithologist, who advocated a half century ago that the best way to identify them was with a 12-gauge shotgun! Fortunately we have learned much since those days and now know what, where, and when to seek as well as what they sound like as they call while flying overhead.



Chestnut-collared Longspur

The Chestnut-collared Longspur is an uncommon fall migrant and casual, less than annual, winter visitor and spring migrant to the eastern Sierra. The vast majority of records are from late September to early December with an early outlier on 5 Aug (M.A. Patten, *American Birds* 44:165). Since the species was first recorded in Inyo County, 28 Sep 1917 near Darwin (Grinnell, *Condor* 20:87), it has been recorded all months except June and July...when they are bright and pretty!



Lapland Longspur

The Lapland Longspur is a very rare fall migrant with about fifty records most in October and November plus two in winter and two more in spring. The earliest fall record is a photographed bird 12 Oct (2008 at Owens Lake, T&J Heindel). This is only one day earlier than the first time it was ever recorded in Inyo County on 13 Oct 1949 at Deep Springs Lake (McLean, *Condor* 71:434).

The McCown’s Longspur has been recorded just six times since it was first found in Inyo on 16 Oct 1949 near Deep Springs Lake (*ibid.*). All records are between 16 Oct and 11 Nov. The last one added to the county list was ten years ago when Andrew and Leah Kirk found and we photographed it east of Independence.



Smith's Longspur

The Smith’s Longspur, a casual vagrant, is represented by a single record when it was viewed and photographed by the most active birders in the state from 4-11 Oct 1997 at Furnace Creek Ranch.

So how do you find longspurs? Know when to look – October and November are optimal. Know where to look – primarily grasslands, cut alfalfa fields, dry lakebeds and golf courses. Know what to look for – primary extension, bill size and shape, tail pattern, wing covert color, breast color and streaking. The Sibley Guide and the National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America both discuss identification characteristics of each species well. Know the calls – Chestnut-collareds give a distinctive “kittle-kittle” while Laplands give a descending “tew” as well as a rattle. All four longspur vocalizations are on “Bird Songs of the Rocky Mountain States and Provinces” by Righter and Keller. If you see flocks of Horned Larks, look and listen carefully since longspurs hobnob with the other “long, hind claw species.” This chunkier bird often flies to the side or above the larks. Know the calls and listen for a different call or look for white flashes in the tail as the flock whirls. If you find a rare longspur be ready and willing to validate it by immediately notifying others with more experience and photographing it if possible.

2008 Bird-A-Thon and International Migratory Bird Day, May 10

Breezy to windy conditions greeted the 24 volunteers for this year's count to cover all of Inyo County. The number of volunteers dropped by nearly half from 2007 due to the travel plans of a number of participants. This year's counters combined gave about 228 hours of their time and identified 200 species. Some key absentees this year were Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Chukar, Snowy Plover; Brown Creeper; and Swainson's Thrush. Birds seen this year that were absent last year were Dunlin, Oak Titmouse, and Pine Siskin.

Notable Birds! Carl Lundblad observed a Peregrine Falcon at Furnace Creek Ranch; Jerry Zatorski had 27 Black-headed Grosbeaks out on Hunter Mountain; Kelli Levinson had a Hermit Warbler at Sage Flat and a Grey-headed Junco at Horseshoe Meadows; Andy Zdon had the lone Brown-crested Flycatcher at China Ranch. Two Common Moorhens were observed: one by Carl Lundblad at Furnace Creek Ranch and one at Deep Springs by Tom Heindel and fellow volunteers Bianca, Simon and Paul. Jo Heindel had a Northern Pygmy Owl at Glacier Lodge! Barbara Schuck and Mary Beth Hennessy had the lone Lesser Scaup seen that day. Andrew Kirk spotted two Acorn Woodpeckers at the Mount Whitney Fish Hatchery. Susan Steele and Shelley Ellis had 45 Western Tanagers, 30 Lazuli Bunting, 40 Ash-throated Flycatchers, 15 Mountain Quail, 2 California Thrashers, 2 LeConte's Thrashers, 2 Oak Titmouse, 4 MacGillivray's Warblers, and many many others species, all from Nine Mile Canyon! Nancy and Mike Prather had six Virginia Rail including 3 chicks at Cartago Spring and a Whimbrel on Owens Lake. Jim Parker had a 100+ species day birding Pleasant Valley Reservoir, Birchim Canyon, Pine Creek Canyon, Bishop Sewer Ponds, and Aspendell. Debby Parker and Kathy Duvall had the only report of Bank Swallows (60 birds) at Nik-n-Nik. Jan Bowers and Steve McLaughlin had the lone Wilson's Snipe of the day, west of Bishop. The total raised for our chapter project was \$1,400.20! Wow! Many thanks to donors (page 5). **Mike Prather**

Mammoth Lakes Field Trip, September 21

A small but enthusiastic group of birders enjoyed the last full day of summer exploring a few of the great birding areas around Mammoth Lakes. Led by Mammoth local Ken Wells, the group started at the campground at Twin Lakes looking for late season warblers and other high elevation birds. Highlights of the campground were great looks at Cassin's Vireo and finding five species of warblers including a female Hermit Warbler. The group then headed down the Mammoth Rock Trail enjoying scenic views along the high alpine trail. Many "berry birds" were seen enjoying an abundant crop of alpine

currants, including Townsend's Solitaire, American Robin, and Golden-crowned Sparrow. Another unexpected treat was a formation of 30 American White Pelicans flying directly above our group while we walked through the forest at 9000 feet. What a great way to end the summer.

Ken Wells

Rock Creek Field Trip, October 26

It was a cool 39° when 8 intrepid birders arrived at the Rock Creek Sno-Park to join Claus Engelhardt and Bill Mitchel for a walk up Rock Creek. Participants came from June Lake and Mammoth Lakes to the north and from Bishop and Paradise to the south. The morning frost seemed to keep birds out of the meadow but we were greeted by a Townsend's Solitaire perched on a tree top above us. Then followed a female Cassin's Finch.

The group was interested in hiking so we walked up the creek through the woods and campgrounds to the pond just below Rock Creek Lake. We had lunch at the pond and were back to the Sno-Park shortly after 2 pm.

Overall we saw 12 species of birds including the expected Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Chickadee, Oregon Junco and Steller's Jay. We also found a number of Red-breasted Nuthatches, White-breasted Nuthatches, a Brown Creeper, a Red-tailed Hawk and a Belted Kingfisher.

The highlight of the day was spotting two American Dippers in the creek foraging for food. They began displaying aggressive behavior toward each other and vocalizing loudly. We watched them for quite some time as they put on their show.

The day turned out to be beautiful with lots of sunshine and blue sky and little wind. It was a great way to spend a lovely fall morning and afternoon.

Bill Mitchel



Rock Creek Field Trip

Bill Mitchel

**Thanks for the great trips, Ken and Bill!
- Connie Engelhardt, Field Trip Chair**

Bird-A-Thon Donors**Thank You So Much
to the people who pledged this year:**

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Mike Prather - Bird-A-Thon coordinator

Andy Zdon - IMBD coordinator

Eastern Sierra Bird Sighting Forum

After 10 years and thousands of outstanding bird reports to the Eastern Sierra Audubon bird sighting forum, we have finally overwhelmed our website.

EasternSierraBirds is now hosted at a Google discussion group <http://groups.google.com/group/easternsierrabirds>.

To post a sighting, click the New Post button, then you'll need to sign in to Google. You can also upload photos by clicking the Files button. The 10 years of archived sightings are still at <http://esaudubon.org/birds/>.

The 12th Annual Central Valley Birding

Symposium will be held Nov. 20-23 in Stockton, Ca. at the Stockton Grand Hotel. I remember when this event was in its beginnings. It has grown to be one of the preeminent birding festivals in the country and features many skilled and experience experts. There are more than 25 field trips, 10 or so workshops, a banquet, book signings and vendor displays. Field trips roam throughout northern California with the opportunity for some very big days. The symposium is hosted by the Central Valley Bird Club. Information and registration material can be found at the website, www.cvbs.org

Pete Pumphrey

Yard Sale Rakes It In

Fall started with a bang for ESAS at our yard sale which was held on September 6. Thanks to the generosity of those who donated items, the hard work of volunteers before and during the sale, the kindness of Phill and Brenda Kiddoo, and a bunch of willing buyers, the chapter netted more than \$1,200.00. This will go a long way toward the coming year's activities. The highlights of the sale for most were the plants and fresh vegetables from Phill's wonderful garden.

Hats off to Phill and Brenda for donating their yard, pricing and setting items out, and working the sale. Joan Benner, Kathy Duvall, Sara Steck, Chris and Rosie Howard, Bill Mitchell, Roberta Lagomarsini, Pete Pumphrey, Connie and Claus Engelhardt, Barbara Kelly, Derrick Vocelka and James Wilson all helped mark, display, sell and load sale items. It is this kind of unselfishness that keeps a community like ours in motion. Thank you all for your participation. Hopefully, we will do this again in 2009.

And now, a word from Birdwatch Radio

Dear Friends,

I have been a fan and supporter of the Audubon Society since I first started pasting bird stamps into an Audubon book as a child in the early 50s. I guess that is where Birdwatch Radio got its spark.

Birdwatch Radio is a unique audio podcast about birds, birders and conservation. Currently we are producing two full length programs each month featuring some of the best and most interesting people in birding today. We have been getting some very positive reviews on various birding blogs, newspapers and websites.

Our current program features an interview with Ted Floyd, author of the new Smithsonian Field Guide to the Birds of North America. You can hear it and all of our archived programs at www.Birdwatchradio.org/podcast.htm

Our goal is to provide an entertaining and informative approach to birding and conservation that will hold the interest of the backyard birdwatcher and field birder alike. And most importantly, to make a difference so the next generation will have birds to watch and enjoy as we do.

I hope you get a chance to listen and perhaps share this information with anyone else you think may enjoy our program.

Steve Moore

www.BirdwatchRadio.org

Real Men Don't Bird Fake Lakes A Monophile's Conundrum Justin Hite

Note: Everything in this essay is factually true. However, it is not meant to be taken seriously.

A few years ago I scribbled the following intro to a post on www.esaudubon.org/birds detailing a possible Arctic Tern at Crowley and a young Sabine's Gull at Mono Lake: "As a dedicated Monophile (meaning one who loves Mono Lake very much) it took a lot to put aside my jokingly-conceived philosophy that 'real men don't bird fake lakes,' but the temptation of finally seeing Crowley Lake Reservoir in September on Free Fishing Day was too much." I liked the idea of needlessly bringing blatant machismo to birding, if only in jest. But my problem was that the birding at Crowley was phenomenal, and thus began my courtship with that birdy, stinky sump in Long Valley. A year later, in the company of my friend Chris McCreedy and my mother, we found ourselves watching a Sabine's Gull pirouette around a Solitary Sandpiper on Crowley's shore. My mother summed it up nicely: "I guess we're not real men." Shoot.

After six summers of living with and studying Mono's California Gulls, I have a deep affection for the salty wastes, shrimpy waters, and flowing deltas of the Mono Basin. In my early years in the Eastern Sierra, I viewed Crowley simply as just another fishing hole where Los Angeles parked its stolen Mono streams for a while to generate a little extra cash. Perhaps I was a bit

jealous and protective, hearing tales of better birding on a lake not nearly as flawlessly gorgeous as Mono. But how my eyes sparkled when I saw my first Mountain Plovers there with Jon Dunn in 2006! Future trips brought me into contact with more spectacular avian jewels, and I heard tell of birds others were seeing... Ruff, Little Gull, breeding-plumage Red-throated Pipit. The list goes on. And I started to wonder if perhaps I weren't being a little unfair to Father Crowley's birdy mudflats and trout waters.

My real conversion came this fall. I got it in my head to go Jaeger hunting because, well, I think Jaegers are just about the most awesome (and manly) birds there are. Wandering kleptoparasites giving our mountain gulls and terns a taste of pelagic terror, a reminder of what lurks beyond the coastal horizon. Case in point: I found them only with a good luck charm at Mono (a small bottle of Jagermeister in my camera bag that I swigged happily as the Jaegers slammed into hapless gulls and made them toss up their brine shrimp), but found them at Crowley even though I'd forgotten the charm at home.

Now I have a new adage. Real men bird. I like it because it's simple. Simple and true.



Long-tailed Jaeger and Common Tern at Crowley Lake

Justin Hite



Parasitic Jaeger and California Gull at Mono Lake

Justin Hite

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Photo by Justin Hite

Not for the faint of heart...

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