



ESAS Website: [ESAudubon.org](http://ESAudubon.org) Eastern Sierra Bird Sightings: [ESAudubon.org/birds/](http://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 14

### Important Bird Areas of Mono and Inyo Counties Andrea Jones

We all know the Eastern Sierra has many important bird areas. How much do you know about its officially designated IBAs? Andrea Jones, IBA Coordinator for Audubon California will present the IBAs of Mono and Inyo Counties. She will discuss their locations, status and significant birds, and how Audubon California works with local chapters on behalf of the IBAs.

February 11

### Adventures in Peru Denise Waterbury

Walking through the Andes, kayaking on Lake Titicaca, visiting pre-Columbian ruins, hiking to mysterious Machu Picchu, and the wonderful people and culture of Peru – these are some of the highlights of a memorable month-long trip by several Bishop friends, as photographed and presented by Denise Waterbury. Come and vicariously join in the adventure and the camaraderie at our February meeting.

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**Owens Lake and Mono Lake are just two of our region's designated Important Bird Areas.**



Stilts and gull, Owens Lake

Mike Prather



California Gull chick, Mono Lake

Selena Humphreys

## **President's Message – The Flow of Life**

*“We create our future, by well improving present opportunities, however small and few they be”*

Lewis Howard Latimer

This year, we held a Solstice dinner. We gathered to acknowledge the longest night of the year and reflect upon the unfolding of rebirth to come. As birders, Audubon folks are tuned into the seasonal processes of life. Migrations, courtship colors and behaviors, nesting and fledging all mark the emergence of new life. The return of the birds is totally predictable, and yet it is a source of wonder and reassurance for me every year. Even as we humans thrash about grappling with all our compelling issues and crises, the flow of life moves forward.

To be sure, the pattern does not repeat itself exactly. There are valid concerns about what changes in the timing of events mean about the future and what steps need to be taken to minimize the negative effects of those changes. Still, birds migrate, insects emerge and plants flower.

To me, it is often important to remember that our activities, regardless of the importance that I attach to them, are set in a vastly larger context. My consternation with a broken garage door fades into the sunrise creeping down the Sierra flank. My belief that only I understand the need to do this or that, is quickly lost in a budget crisis that threatens the existence and vital activity of community agencies all over the state. My sense of urgency has to give way to the flow of events over which I have no control.

The flow of life reminds us that we have room for false starts and changes of direction. We have the capacity to help one another; the ability to sacrifice our own short term needs in favor of a greater goal, the ability to come together to find common value and less need to validate our own position, and the capacity to be far-sighted and compassionate. A new year calls on us to determine how we want to make use of these capacities and abilities. How do we want to be the change we seek?

Eastern Sierra Audubon provides a setting in which folks can come together and experience their interest in birds and their habitat, learn from each other, exchange information and ideas, find commitment to concerted action, and enjoy each other's company while being together in a beautiful place. Because we are like-minded, we sometimes believe that everyone thinks like we do, or should. There are time when we can remember that the world around us holds an incredible diversity of creatures and actions. Some seem, and in fact are, antithetical to each other, but the whole package works and move forward.

I hope that our organization will be able to move forward into this new year and remember that we can share our blessing, our skills and knowledge, our enthusiasms and even the extra vegetables from our gardens with all of our community. I look forward to seeing you all at our meetings and to sharing a trail, or a cookie, or a bird or a story.

**Pete Pumphrey**

## **February Field Trip**

**Saturday, February 28 - Big Pine Winter Wildlife Tour** Join Tom and Jo Heindel for this ever popular driving tour between Klondike Lake and Tinemaha Reservoir. Meet at the Glacier View Campground in Big Pine at 8:00 AM. Bring binoculars, lunch, water, and scopes. Should last until noon. Call Tom or Jo at 938-2764 for further details.

## Field Trip to Crowley Lake and vicinity Jon Dunn, 6 December 2008

Despite the December date, this year's trip to Crowley Lake encountered truly beautiful weather, a windless clear and rather warm day. With Debbie House's guidance we weaved our way around gates to the McGee Arm of Crowley Lake. Here we checked through the numerous waterfowl which were highlighted by the 39 Tundra Swans. Of particular note was one adult with extensive yellow at the bill base that was squared off. It showed all of the characters of the Old World "Bewick's Swan" (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*). Another adult, that appeared to be paired with it, also had extensive yellow, but had somewhat more dark. It was likely a hybrid. Tom Wurster and Liga Auzins found a "Bewick's Swan" at Crowley Lake on 11 November 2004. We refound it on 4 December 2004 on the ESAS Field Trip. One wonders if it could be the same bird, as apart from these sightings, this distinctive subspecies remains unrecorded in the eastern Sierra (other records for the Central Valley). In 2004, its mate appeared to be a typical "Whistling Swan" from North America, not a hybrid, and it had accompanying young. These birds were still present on 12 December when the pure "Bewick's Swan" was photographed.

Apart from the swans we had a good variety of other waterfowl to carefully review. Two distant Red-breasted Mergansers were notable. We had a single Rough-legged Hawk. Amongst the gulls we found two somewhat uncommon Herrings. A juvenile Pacific Loon at the Owens arm was certainly notable too, although it's of annual occurrence in fall in the Eastern Sierra region.

After lunch we headed north to try for Justin Hite's White-winged Scoter at Grant Lake. It was "on location" as promised. This bird appears to have been an adult female, and therefore perhaps a different bird than the juvenile he had here earlier in November. All three merganser species were present as were several Bald Eagles and a number of Common Loons. We concluded our trip at Twin Lakes above Mammoth where Ken Wells has been keeping track of an adult male Eurasian Wigeon. We located the bird fairly easily and had excellent comparisons with over a hundred American Wigeon.

Although early December often brings blustery weather, birding on the east side can be very exciting in the days and weeks preceding "freeze-up." For waterbirds, fall migration continues throughout the month. I'm still waiting for that Glaucous Gull.

## Bishop CBC adds 3 new species to list Chris Howard, Bishop CBC Compiler

Forty-seven courageous birders braved the elements on December 14, 2008 to participate in the annual Bishop Christmas Bird Count. It was cold with a low of 3F and a high of 40F. We were fortunate that the winds of the previous day had subsided and the snow of the following day held off. It's always a good count when we collectively observe 100 species, so we felt well-rewarded by attaining a total species count of 103. It is exciting to find a species that has never been observed on the count before, so we were especially surprised to have observed no less than three new species. The rarest of the three was a Long-tailed Duck (formerly Oldsquaw) at Pleasant Valley Reservoir. The duck was in winter plumage and well-photographed. The most unlikely of the three new species were 10 Marbled Godwits circling over Round Valley. Godwits are large shorebirds that migrate though the Eastern Sierra in spring and fall, but by December they are usually on Mexican shores. Further, Marbled Godwit are usually not observed away from mud-margined water bodies, so seeing a flock over the pastures of Round Valley must have been a sight. Finally, while the Bishop count now has a few Barn Swallow records, this year was a first for Tree Swallow; three were observed looking for (and hopefully finding) insects along the Owens River. Many thanks to the intrepid observers and to James and Kay Wilson who warmly hosted the post-count tally potluck.



**Long-Tailed Duck found by Steve McLaughlin,  
photo by Debby Parker, Bishop CBC 2008**

**Thank you, Jon and Chris! - ESAS**



## Fall Birds Did Not Disappoint Tom and Jo Heindel

“Wow, I wouldn’t have put that bird on the list of what I would see today!”

“Me either!”

This conversation is repeated every season and is much of the stimulus responsible for making people want to go birding. After a time, birders know what species to expect, where to go, and what numbers are considered normal. Finding the unexpected provides the rush of choice for many. Fall 2008 did not disappoint.

Most of the records came from two general areas: water and oases. Luckily for Inyo County birds and birders, there are many of both habitat types. A casual species is not expected to occur in the county every year and is recorded less than 6.5 years per decade. The following are all casual species and the size of the list of unexpected visitors is staggering.



Barrow's Goldeneye

Jim Pike

Birds found at watering holes were a juvenile blue morph Snow Goose and a Thayer’s Gull at Owens Lake (both SLS), a White-winged Scoter at Pleasant Valley Reservoir (BJK), a female Barrow’s Goldeneye at Furnace Creek Ranch (JEP), 2 Franklin’s Gulls, one at Klondike Lake (T&JH) and another at Tinemaha Reservoir (JLD), and a Lapland Longspur at the edge of Owens Lake (KHL, T&JH).

Also casual species but preferring oases were a Hutton’s Vireo at China Ranch (ADeM), a Red-throated Pipit at Shoshone (JEP), and a wealth of warblers. There were 2 Blue-winged Warblers, one at Crystal Springs (JEP, et al.) and the other at China Ranch (SLS). Three Northern Parula Warblers were found, 1 at Birchim Canyon, n. of Bishop (J&DP), 1 at Shoshone (JEP) and 1 at Furnace Creek Ranch (JMH).



Black-throated Blue Warbler

Bob Steele

A Black-throated Blue Warbler was at China Ranch (SLS), a Blackburnian Warbler in north Bishop (J&DP), a Bay-breasted Warbler in Tecopa (TEW, LLA, SJM), and a Worm-eating Warbler at Furnace Creek Ranch (C&RH).



Blackburnian Warbler Debby Parker

Other oasis birds were an Ovenbird at Death Valley Junction (JEP), 2 Grasshopper Sparrows at Furnace Creek Ranch (JLD, C&RH), a Snow Bunting near Emigrant Pass (PJ), and a Baltimore Oriole at Furnace Creek Ranch (JLD, C&RH).

The list of rare species, annually seen in very small numbers (often one bird), was many times the number of casual species. It really was a Fall to remember. The status and distribution of Inyo bird species was greatly enhanced by the efforts of Al DeMartini (ADeM), Barb Kelley (BJK), Chris & Rosie Howard (C&RH), Jim & Debby Parker (J&DP), Jim Pike (JEP), Jon Dunn (JLD), Justin Hite (JMH), Kelli Levinson (KHL), Liga Auzins (LLA), Phil Johnson (PJ), Stephen Myers (SJM), Susan Steele (SLS), and Tom Wurster (TEW). What “Wow!” birds will excite us this Winter?



Bay-breasted Warbler

Stephen Myers



Lapland Longspur

Kelli Levinson

### **Raven Boy – a solstice story**

One night in a dream a gatekeeper told me I was Raven Boy. But I'm an adult human female! So after flying like a raven I woke and looked it up, and kept on looking:

The story is told in many ways among natives of the Northwest Coast and Alaska, where the winter night is long indeed. The Old Man hid the Sun in a cedar chest inside his house. Some say he was angry at us humans for hunting too much. We don't hunt so well in the dark. But all living things grew sad in the long, long darkness.

So Raven watched, and when the Old Man's Daughter bent to drink, he flew upstream and dropped in a spruce needle – or a salal berry – or a twig – or in one version, "bird dirt"! The Daughter scooped it up and drank, and so became pregnant, and Raven Boy was born.

Once he lost his baby down, he was an odd-looking toddler with tufts of black feathers; but Raven Boy's grandfather doted on him. As soon as he could speak he pointed to the cedar box and cried "Ball! Ball! Ball!" and the Old Man smiled indulgently, unlocked the box and gave the desired toy to Raven Boy.

In a flash Raven Boy took on his fully feathered Raven form, and up the chimney he flew! He restored the Sun to the sky, and made a deal with the Old Man: Half the time daylight, half night, from now on.

Am I Raven Boy? Are you? Are we all, when we give Light to living things?

**Editor, winter solstice 2008**

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Song Sparrow and Yellow Warbler, Mono Basin Sacha Heath

**All our bird areas are important!**

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