



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!

March 11

### **The Big Picture in a Small Frame: Natural History of Kern County and the southern Sierra Nevada** Alison Sheehey

Learn about the natural history of Kern County and portions of Tulare and Inyo Counties from its beginnings: geology, tectonics, paleontology, Floristic Provinces, Native Americans, early settlers, and the diverse flora and fauna of the modern day. This whirlwind journey is the result of 20 years of searches of literature and museum collections, interviews with experts, and "Nature Ali's" own field work. Alison Sheehey is the Outreach Coordinator for Audubon California's Kern River Preserve. Her deep appreciation of all things Kern began with her explorations of the desert environs of the Temblor Range, where she fell in love with the intricacies of the geology, flora and fauna in a place many regarded as an ugly wasteland.



Left, Alison's photo of a Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch at Aspendell (see page 5); below, Mountain Chickadee

### **April 8 Program To Be Announced**



## President's Message – Winged Gifts

*“Now darkness falls,  
quail chirps  
What uses hawk-eyes.”*  
Basho

I talked with Bill Mitchell who told me about his having seen belted kingfishers and his enthusiasm was so contagious that we set off for the East Line Street canal. It was a clear crisp morning with snow on the mountain tops that surround our valley. I noted again how the sound of moving water, even in an irrigation canal, always brightens my day. Then, my dismissal of the stream as a canal was wiped away when I saw four or five trout that were easily more than a foot long.

We started walking to the accompaniment of a chorus of red winged blackbirds and a vanguard of sparrows. After about a quarter mile or path was diverted by the song of a wren that called us out into the field. Each time I hear a wren, I am surprised by how compelling it is. After wandering around following a couple of wren flights, a new voice was heard. After some searching, a pair of red shoulder hawks were located engaged in what appeared to be some fun-filled behavior. They then separated, and sat side-by side, fluffing in the sun; what stunning; beautiful birds.

As we returned to the water, the kingfishers made their appearance. Again, a pair. The male's colors were a sight to behold. Bill was definitely not exaggerating.

After the canal, we visited the park. We disappointed a large number of song birds by interrupting Marge as she filled her backyard feeders. I doubt that I could be as generous as she is about encouraging people to look into my backyard with binoculars. What a wonderful example of how a single household can become a community asset.

There was nothing particularly extraordinary about this morning. It wasn't a trip to Costa Rica or anything like that, but it was a teaching about gifts. Bill gave us the gift of the kingfishers, Marge the gift of a pile of bright house finches, and the birds, as is always the case, were amazing. Life, even the most “common” red-wings and white crowns is energizing and healing. My thanks to all of you in Audubon for the gifts of your knowledge, enthusiasm and sharing.

Those who attended our November meeting heard Bill Monahan of Audubon California discuss the effects of climate change on California birds. His presentation was based on data that was being compiled in a long term study geographic distributions. That study has now been completed and can be seen on the Audubon California website. It is quite interesting and underscores the need for continual mindfulness on this issue.

**Pete Pumphrey**

## Upcoming Events and Field Trips

**Saturday April 18 – Owens Lake IBA Big Day** Willet be big? See page 5! Five teams of 3-5 counters will meet at 7:00 am at the Diaz Lake County parking area (3 miles south of Lone Pine) for a half-day census followed by tally and meal at the Prather home. Please contact Mike Prather in advance, (760) 876-5807 or [mprather@lonepinetv.com](mailto:mprather@lonepinetv.com)

**Saturday May 16 - Benton Hot Springs Ranch** Co-led by the Eastern Sierra Land Trust, California Native Plant Society, and the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society. Enjoy a walk through alkali meadow down through a sagebrush scrub canyon on an ESLT conservation easement. Last year a peregrine falcon was spotted, so we'll have to keep our eyes open. An open-ended half day with 2-3 miles of moderate hiking through hills. Bring plenty of water, your lunch, sunscreen, hat, and make sure to dress for varied weather. Meet in Benton at the intersection of Hwys 6 and 120 at 9 am. To carpool from Bishop, meet at the “Y,” Hwy 6 and Wye Rd. at 8 am. Call Serena at 873-4554 or email [serena@eslt.org](mailto:serena@eslt.org).

**Saturday May 23 - Wheeler Ridge** Led by Karen Ferrell-Ingram. Spend a morning discovering new plants, spotting birds, and exploring the biodiversity of the Round Valley Mule Deer Corridor. 2-3 miles of moderate hiking off trail from 9 to noon. Bring a lunch, water, hat, appropriate clothing for weather, and ESLT will provide drinks. Meet at the gravel pit on Sky Meadow Rd in Swall Meadows at 9 am. Call Serena at 873-4554 or email her at [serena@eslt.org](mailto:serena@eslt.org).

**June 19-21 – Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua** See page 3

## Experience the Power Of Sharing

As you dream about your vegetable garden this spring, think about growing a little extra and sharing that produce with persons in need in Inyo and Mono counties. Your surplus fresh fruits and vegetables can be distributed by the Salvation Army and the Inyo Mono Advocates for Community Action (IMACA) Food is distributed at sites throughout the Eastern Sierra. These donations will enable those most vulnerable in these tough times serve their families more nutritionally balanced meals. Last year, in the program's first year, more than 40 gardeners contributed apples, pears, chilies, eggplant, squash and tomatoes

This effort is rooted in a long-standing tradition of gardeners: the sharing of a bountiful harvest with others. This sharing can happen at many levels:

- gardeners can share unneeded surplus from their normal plantings;
- plant an extra one or two of your favorites and dedicate that production for distribution;
- if you have a plot of land that you do not garden, you could work with your neighbors to create a vegetable patch and share the results;
- organize a neighborhood gardening group or an actual neighborhood garden;
- volunteer to help glean and pick produce in the harvest season;
- spread the word; if you are a member of an organization that would like to know more, call for information and support.

For further information, assistance or to sign up as a participant, please contact Yvonne Wood, U. C. Cooperative Extension, (873-7854), Mike Murphy, IMACA (873-8557), Rob Lawlor, Salvation Army (872-2124), or Pete Pumphrey (872-7846).

We invite you to join us in this simple effort to combine the love of growing things with service to the community. Look for further information, growing tips, and possible special opportunities for participants as we get closer to the planting season and check out the information booth at the Celebrate Community Connections event April 19 at the Bishop City Park. Start small, have fun and harvest the goodness of growing food for local families including your own.



## Community to Connect Again in April

Eastern Sierra residents and visitors will gather to "Celebrate Community Connections" on April 19, 2009 in the Bishop City Park. The event will run from 11:00 am until 4:00 pm. This is the second year for this spring gathering. Last year, more than 700 people came to the park to enjoy live entertainment, kids and family activities and arts and crafts, food and to check out booths set up by more than 40 local organizations and businesses.

Celebrating Community Connections brings the Eastern Sierra together to learn about healthy living, community wellness, money savings through efficient energy and water use, gardening and landscaping ideas, recreational opportunities and sustainable resource management and conservation. There will be artists' booths and demonstrations, live entertainment and music, food vendors, interactions with animals, and art and craft activities for children and families. Field trips will leave from the park to provide opportunities for viewing bighorn sheep. There will be a clean-up event prior to the activities in the park and other outdoor activities are in the works.

Mark your calendar now for this fun-packed day with friends and neighbors. If your business or organization would like information about participating in the event, please contact Keith Caldwell, City of Bishop, 873-5863 or Pete Pumphrey, Eastern Sierra Audubon Society, 872-7846 for registration information and materials.

## Eighth Annual Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, June 19-21

You asked for it—you got it, an extended Bird Chautauqua this year! This year's event will begin Friday morning, June 19 and will end with the usual concert and picnic at Mono Lake County Park on Sunday afternoon.

Nearly 60 workshops, field trips and auditorium presentations will be offered this year for beginning, intermediate, and advance nature lovers. Subjects include birds, bats, flowers, furry critters, night sky, storytelling, wilderness survival skills, art, music, photography, activities for kids and more. Special musical guest will be singer-songwriter Ray Bonneville from Austin, Texas.

Visit [www.birdchautauqua.org](http://www.birdchautauqua.org) for more information. On-line registration opens April 15. The Lee Vining-based event is sponsored by the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, California State Parks, Mono Lake Committee, Eastern Sierra Audubon, Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association, Friends of the Inyo, and PRBO Conservation Science.

## Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches in Inyo County

### Tom and Jo Heindel



Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch

Bob Steele

Independent birders and professional bird tours come to Inyo County annually to see the special birds that occur here. One such magnet is a small black, gray, and brown bird that is splashed with bright pink, the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch. The premier destination for a first-hand experience with these unique and colorful birds is nationally renowned Aspendell, which has provided first-ever views, or “lifers,” to untold numbers of birders. The attraction is the bird feeders that residents hang and luckily they are gracious in sharing their birds with visitors from all over the world. The best time to see rosy-finches is after a heavy snow storm between November and April, which covers the food supply higher up in the mountains and turns the feeders into gathering places for hundreds of birds, mostly rosy-finches. Without a deep snow one is lucky to see more than just a few birds on a visit but they have been seen in Summer. Some visitors even pay for the privilege of seeing these birds by bringing bags of seed in exchange for permission to invade private property!



Sierra Nevada Rosy-Finch

Tom Heindel

Four sub-species of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches have been documented for Inyo County. The Sierra Nevada Rosy-Finch (*Leucosticte tephrosticte dawsoni*) breeds here and is the rosy-finch hikers, skiers, fishermen, and birders find in the high county during the Summer. Those who have summited Mt. Whitney often share their lunch with these beggars who will eat out of their hands! Breeders in the Sierra Nevada are known from as far south as the Cottonwood Lakes area and in the higher sections of the White Mountains. There are no breeding records for any of the other ranges east of the Sierra Nevada but in winter they disperse and have been reported from the Inyo Mountains and Panamint Range. Some of the winter records are from the lowlands such as Panamint Springs (D. D. McLean, Condor 71:433) and south to Galileo Hill Park near California City, Kern Co. (M.T. Heindel, No. Amer. Birds 53:107). Other lower-than-expected locations have been along the roadsides in the Owens Valley after snow plows remove the snow down to the ground which is embedded with seeds as well as at feeders in Bishop (K. Wilson), Fish Springs (T. Heindel), and Big Pine (T. & J. Heindel).



Hepburn's Rosy-Finch

Sharon Ford

The three other races have been found here only in winter. The most often reported is Hepburn's Rosy-Finch (*L. t. littoralis*) a breeder in central Alaska, Yukon, British Columbia, and south to Mt. Shasta. They are easily identified by the extensive gray on the sides of their faces and most winters a few are at Aspendell. The remaining two races are documented only by specimens and the racial differences may be too subtle to allow field identification since they look very much like *dawsoni*. Cassin's Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (*L. t. tephrocotis*) breeds in the Brook's Range in Alaska, Yukon, British Columbia, and western Montana while the Wallowa Rosy-Finch (*L. t. wallowa*) breeds in northeastern Oregon. The only other rosy-finch that occurs in Inyo County is the Black Rosy-Finch for which there are just over a dozen records...but that is another story.

## Owens Lake Important Bird Area Spring Big Day Saturday, April 18, 2009

Eastern Sierra Audubon is planning our Owens Lake IBA Spring Big Day for Saturday, April 18. This survey will be focused on the dust control project and should take roughly half a day. We will need five teams of 3-5 counters to do the census. We will meet at 7:00AM at the Diaz Lake County parking area (3 miles south of Lone Pine).

If you would like to be part of our survey please contact Mike Prather via email or phone. During this part of April each survey group can expect BIG numbers.

There will be a tally and free meal at the Prather home after the count – don't miss it!

RSVP - Mike Prather – [mprather@lonepinetv.com](mailto:mprather@lonepinetv.com), (760) 876-5807



Owens Lake and Willets

Mike Prather

**Eastern Sierra Audubon**  
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Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch

Bob Steele

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## When the snow melts, what will you find?

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