



The Chat



—Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

October/November 2013

October/November CALENDAR

Wed Oct 16	6:00 pm	Board Meeting at Gravelles'
Sat Oct 19	7:00 am	Field Trip to Bakersfield
Wed Nov 20	6:00 pm	Board Meeting at Burnetts'
Thu Nov 21	7:00 pm	General Meeting at Museum
Sat Nov 23	8:00 am	Field Trip to Kern River Preserve

NOVEMBER PROGRAM

The Falkland Islands: Penguins and More

The remote Falkland Islands are surrounded by the frigid but nutrient-rich South Atlantic, and attract one of the greatest concentrations of breeding seabirds in the world. Here you can find five species of penguin, along with albatross, giant petrel, and a host of other birds. Elephant seals and southern sea lions also breed here and killer whales patrol the coastline. Join professional nature photographer, tour leader and Ridgecrest transplant Ralph Paonessa for an evening of dynamic photographs from this distant wildlife-rich archipelago.

Ralph Paonessa is a professional nature photographer who leads photographic workshops in North America and around the world. He has resided in Ridgecrest since 1998.

His photographs have been published in such magazines as *Outdoor Photographer*, *WildBird*, *Birder's World*, *Birdwatcher's Digest*, *Nature and Wildlife*, *Martha Stewart Living*, and *Outdoor Traveler*. His work has been featured in calendars by Audubon, Barnes and Noble, *Birder's World*, Sierra Club, World Wildlife Fund, *At-A-Glance*, *Pet Prints*, and the *Himalayan Calendar*. His photos have also appeared in numerous books, and he has won awards for his photography. His images and workshops are featured on the Web at www.rpphoto.com.

Ralph gave us a similar presentation long ago in 2004, and says he has lots of new material since then. He also notes his latest pursuit is Astrophotography

Maturango Museum, 7:00 pm on Thursday, November 21st.

OCTOBER FIELD TRIP

BAKERSFIELD: LAKE MING AND HART PARK

Join leader Bob Parker on our first-ever field trip to Bakersfield on Saturday, October 19th. Meet at the Union 76 gas station in Inyokern at 7:00 a.m. to form car pools for the trip to Hart Park and Lake Ming in east Bakersfield. (Or, if you are coming from the Kern River valley, drive down highway 178 and meet us at Hart Park. Call Bob Parker to arrange for a time and more specific place.)

Our target species will be the Rose-ringed Parakeets that frequent the park, but many other residents and migrants are likely along a site list provided by local birder Brenda Kyle.

Bring lunch. Please call Bob at 760-446-2001 and let him know if you plan to attend.

NOVEMBER FIELD TRIP

AUDUBON CALIFORNIA KERN RIVER PRESERVE

Our November field trip will be a local one. We've birded the Audubon California Kern River Preserve several times in the spring, to find migrants and nesting Yellow Warblers, but never in the late fall. Let's go find out what's there! If nothing else, the Cottonwoods should be in magnificent yellow leaves. And there will likely be woodpeckers in the vicinity, and jays down from higher elevations.

It will be getting chilly, so let's not meet too early. 8:00 a.m. at the Union 76 station in Inyokern should do. We'll car pool from there.

Bring lunch, sturdy shoes and warm clothing.

Call Bob Parker at 760-446-2001 to sign up. If you are already up there and want to join us, call Bob to arrange a meeting place and time.

MORRO BAY WINTER BIRD FESTIVAL

Join us January 17-20, 2014 for the 18th Annual Festival.

Registration will open November 2, 2013 at 6 a.m. Pacific time. The program and schedule are already posted at <http://www.morrobaybirdfestival.org/> so check it out and visit for updates. From the organizers: Kimball Garrett will be our Keynote speaker on Saturday, January 18! And we are lucky to have Jon Young follow him on Sunday evening.

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Valley Sightings – August-September 2013

Please report unusual sightings to Susan Steele at 377-5220 (home) or 939-1722 (work), or by email at steele7@verizon.net.

August

Green Herons were at the ponds Aug 21 and at the golf course Aug 28 (SLS).

Red-shouldered Hawks were at the golf course Aug 5 and 12, at the cemetery Aug 14 and at the ponds Aug 18 (SLS).

FOF for **Black-bellied Plover** was from the ponds Aug 12 (SLS).

A **Whimbrel** was at the ponds Aug 18-19 (DVB).

A **Sanderling** was at the ponds Aug 5-6 (SLS).

The first **Baird's Sandpipers** of the fall and a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** were at the ponds Aug 12 (SLS).

Three **Short-billed Dowitchers** were at the pond Aug 28 (SLS).

White-winged Doves continued in Ridgecrest (EC, BB).

A **Barn Owl** was at the ponds Aug 17 (BB).

An **Acorn Woodpecker** was SW of Inyokern Aug 16 (LK).

A **Nuttall's Woodpecker** was S of Inyokern Aug 18 (SLS).

FOF for **Western Wood-Pewee** was from the college Aug 20 (JS).

FOF for **Willow Flycatcher** was from the ponds Aug 1 (SLS).

A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** was N of Inyokern Aug 27 (BB).

FOF for **Warbling Vireo** was from N of Inyokern Aug 27 (BB).

The **Purple Martin** at the ponds Aug 25 was the first noted in the valley since Sep 1, 2010 (TW).

The **Northern Waterthrush** S of Inyokern Aug 21 was the 9th valley record and the 185th species for that location (SLS).

FOF for **Nashville Warbler** was from the college Aug 18 (JS).

FOF for **MacGillivray's Warbler** was from the ponds Aug 21 (SLS).

FOF for **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was from the ponds Aug 28 (SLS).

FOF for **Townsend's Warbler** was from the college Aug 20 (JS).

FOF for **Yellow Warbler** was from the ponds Aug 5 (SLS).

FOF for **Wilson's Warbler** was from the ponds Aug 16 (DVB).

FOF for **Chipping Sparrow** was at the college Aug 28 (SLS).

The first **Brewer's Sparrow** of the fall was at the ponds Aug 11 (TL).

A **Black-chinned Sparrow** was at the college Aug 28 (SLS). This is our first record on the valley floor.

Lark Sparrows were at the golf course Aug 5 and 12 (SLS).

A **Blue Grosbeak** was at the ponds Aug 14 (SLS).

September

Greater White-fronted Geese were first seen at the ponds this fall on Sep 14 (SK).

FOF for **Snow Goose** was from the ponds Sep 28 (DVB).

A **Green Heron** was N of Inyokern Sep 8 (BB).

Ospreys were at the ponds Sep 2 (BB) and at the cemetery Sep 10 (SLS).

A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was at the ponds Sep 26 (SLS).

It has been a good fall for **Pectoral Sandpipers** with a high count of eighteen on Sep 21 (SLS).

A late **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at the ponds Sep 14 (SK).

A **Common Tern** was at the ponds Sep 21 (TW).

The **White-winged Dove** in Ridgecrest continued through Sep 9 (EC, BB). Another **White-winged Dove** was at the ponds Sep 14 (KL).

A **Long-eared Owl** was SW of Inyokern Sep 15 and 26 (LK).

Acorn Woodpeckers were in Ridgecrest Sep 6 for a new yard bird (BB), and at the college Sep 11 (BB). Two were seen in Grapevine Canyon on Sep 20 (SE).

A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was at the college Sep 23 (SLS).

A **Downy Woodpecker** was in Ridgecrest Sep 24 (JS).

Nuttall's Woodpeckers were in Ridgecrest Sep 8 (BB), and S of Inyokern Sep 19 (SLS).

A **Peregrine Falcon** was at the ponds Sep 7 (TW) and Sep 26 (SLS).

The **Western Scrub-Jay** N of Inyokern remained through Sep 7 (BB).

A **Verdin** was constructing its winter sleeping nest and filling it with feathers in Ridgecrest on Sep 30 (L&SSu).

A **Hermit Thrush** was SW of Inyokern Sep 26 (LK).

Cedar Waxwings were at the college Sep 20 and 23 (SLS).

Phainopeplas were at the college Sep 20 (SLS).

An **American Redstart** was at the college Sep 20 (SLS).

A **Townsend's Warbler** was N of Inyokern Sep 26 (LL).

A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was in Ridgecrest Sep 26 (JS).

FOF for **Spotted Towhee** was from N of Inyokern Sep 26 (LL).

A **Vesper Sparrow** was at the college Sep 23 (SLS).

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes, Dave Blue, Encar Card, Shelley Ellis, Sandy Koonce, Lisa Lavelle, Kelli Levinson, Tim Ludwick, Louise Knecht, Joyce Seibold, Lee and Shirley Sutton, Tom Wuster*

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

I (Editor) was recently given a few newspaper clippings from articles Don Moore wrote as a "Desert Naturalist" in the Daily Independent. The following is excerpted from the first in the series, titled "Birds discover IWW" published December 26, 1986.

"The China Lake community in 1951 didn't have very many birds. We arrived in mid-March to a scene of such barrenness that a few other young couples had simply turned on their heels and gone back home. One of the rewards of staying the past 35 years has been the opportunity to see our bit of the Mojave become an oasis of cottonwood trees, elms, cypress and tamarisks that not only temper the winds, but also shelter a steadily increasing variety of feathered species.

"Our first home was a Navy-owned trailer, one of 200 that had been freshly installed on ten acres of bare desert to house new professional employees until permanent homes could be built. Most of us set to work to create gardens and windbreaks and even planting tiny lawns in expectation of being trailer-bound for at least a year. Two years later we were still waiting for permanent quarters, but our postage-stamp landscaping efforts were flourishing and had become the focus of outdoor activity. It was on a spring morning in the second year that the first migrant warbler appeared. True to the habits of its species, a tiny Wilson's warbler, brilliant yellow with a velvet-black cap, was busily working over our rose bushes in its quest for insect food. We had been discovered.

"In the next few years we moved to a house with a proper yard and our gardening endeavors continued unabated. Small whops of Lombardy poplars were planted along fencelines and some cottonwood cuttings were set out wherever we thought some shade would be appreciated. The rose garden, started with the same bushes that graced our trailer lot, grew with new bare-root stock each spring and we experimented with a varied assortment of shrubs to relieve the harshness of the bare ground that still surrounded most "housing units." Each season the list of birds that passed through the China Lake community grew and a few were even staying on as permanent residents. The first mockingbird appeared and as soon as there were shrubs high enough to meet its nesting requirements, the slim gray form and melodious voice became permanent additions to the neighborhood.

"Since those early days, the country birds have given way to a host of city birds attracted to

cultivated yards and gardens and equally large numbers whose taste is less demanding: English sparrows that forage around backalley dumpsters, Brewer's blackbirds that patrol subdivision gutters and flocks of European starlings that congregate on power lines before going out to glean their daily fare from horse corrals and poultry yards. Add to these the inevitable pigeons gone wild, also known technically as "rock doves" and a typical urban bird population takes form.

"Some of our city birds are actually very adaptable desert species. The linnet, or house finch, is a native that was nesting here in the cholla cactus and Joshua trees long before any human settlement. In spring, male linnets with bright red head and chest appear in the tops of elm trees where they pour out a repetitious rolling song, then adjourn to pluck the ripening elm seeds, scattering the greenish hulls as they go. In town their nests are often concealed in shrubbery or vines growing against walls of homes, hence the 'house finch' label.

"In recent years the mourning dove has become a conspicuous local resident. Earlier its numbers were small, particularly in summer when the yield of native seed crops was not sufficient to support the flocks of doves that are now common all year long. The mourning dove is an indiscriminate nester, starting its nest-building activity as early as March and continuing into the fall, often failing several times before rearing a single chick. Its nest is a casually assembled platform of twigs, straw or pine needles, often so thin that the usual two eggs are visible from below.

"By October the birds of summer are gone and a new group of winter visitors take their place, arriving from nesting grounds in the nearby mountains or as far north as the Arctic Circle. Most conspicuous in desert gardens are the white-crowned sparrows, so-named for their contrastingly striped heads. ... Unlike other winter migrants, which tend to be nearly silent, the white-crowns practice their spring songs even on the coldest days, when weedy roadsides come alive with their activity.

"Not all the summer birds depart in the face of winter's chill. In recent years we have seen Anna's hummingbirds staying on even when all the fall flowers are gone. The increasing number of syrup-filled hummingbird feeders that are being maintained through the winter seem to be the explanation...."

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