



The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

January/February 2012

JANUARY/FEBRUARY CALENDAR

Wed	Jan 18	6:00 pm	Board Meeting at Burnetts'
Thu	Jan 19	7:00 pm	General Meeting
Sat	Jan 28	8:30 am	Field Trip to Sand Canyon
Wed	Feb 15	6:00 pm	Board Meeting at Suttons'
Sat	Feb 18	8:30 am	Field Trip to Little Lake

JANUARY GENERAL MEETING: BOB PARKER TORTOISES & TURTLES

The Ridgecrest Branch of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club began holding formal meetings in December of 2009 and were granted official Branch status in 2011. The group consisted of some local people who were aware of serious problems with wild desert tortoises being taken into captivity and pet turtles and tortoises being released into the wild. Species such as the red-eared slider and African sulcata tortoise are now living in the wild affecting native species. Pets often carry diseases that they can spread to the wild population. Some captive desert tortoises are from other parts of their species' range and have a different genetic make-up, so when released into our local desert can contribute genes not necessarily beneficial to the offspring.

The club was established to help alleviate the problem by being a source for those wishing to possess a tortoise through an adoption program. The club is also a place where one can place unwanted turtles and tortoises. The club receives these tortoises from the Ridgecrest animal shelter and private individuals.

Bob Parker is a Wildlife Biologist retired from the Ridgecrest Office of the Bureau of Land Management and is currently President of the Ridgecrest Branch of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club.

7:00 pm at the Maturango Museum.

JANUARY FIELD TRIP SAND CANYON HIKE

This trip is a joint venture with the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society. It will be led by Susan Steele and Shelley Ellis. If there is interest, Alison Sheehey will lead a slower, shortened trip birding lower Sand Canyon.

Join us for a moderate hike (4-6 miles round trip with 400' elevation gain) up Sand Canyon. We will start our walk in Kern County and walk up into the burn area that is in Inyo County. We will be targeting some of the ten species of woodpeckers and sapsuckers that have been seen in the canyon. We will also look for Brown Towhee, California Thrasher, and Wrentit.

Meet at 9AM on January 28 at Sand Canyon Road. This is south of Pearsonville, and just south of Brown Road. Look for an unmarked dirt road to the west (you'll be able to see the sand quarry). This will be an all day hike, so bring lunch, and water.

Those who wish to car pool from the Indian Wells Valley or Kern River Valley should meet at the Inyokern 76 station at 8:30AM. Call Bob Parker if you have questions, and to let him know you plan to attend.

Note the previously-scheduled trip to Oceanside has been canceled.

FEBRUARY FIELD TRIP LITTLE LAKE OVERLOOK

Meet at the Inyokern 76 gas station to join this trip led by Lee Sutton to view the birds on Little Lake and the adjoining cliffs from our chapter-sponsored overlook. The locally-nesting Prairie Falcons may have set up residence, and there will be over-wintering ducks to view with our scopes.

Bring a spotting scope if you have one, or there will be scopes provided by others.

Bring a lunch, and plan to go on to Fossil Falls or Owens Lake if the mood strikes us.

Call Lee Sutton at 760-375-1981 to let him know you plan to attend, or if you have any questions.

reminder:

TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

If you are a local chapter member or a subscriber to the Chat it is time to renew. You can tell if you need to renew by looking at the date on your mailing label. If the date is "1/1/12 (K or C)" you need to renew. To renew just send a check for \$15 for membership (including the Chat) or \$7.00 for just the Chat to, "Membership, Kerncrest Audubon Society, PO Box 984, Ridgecrest, CA 93556-0984.

Kerncrest Audubon Society			
Brenda Burnett	President	375-8634	
	cell	382-4935	
Lee Sutton	Vice President	375-1981	
Nancy Robinson	Secretary	375-2049	
Dan Burnett	Treasurer	375-8634	
	& Education		
Robert Parker	Field Trips	446-2001	
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Sherry Brubaker	Member at Large	375-7245	
Shelly Ellis	Member at Large	446-5012	
Nancy Robinson	Birdathon	375-2049	
Newsletter Ed.	Brenda Burnett	375-8634	



Valley Sightings December 2011

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

The **Greater White-fronted Geese** were last seen at the ponds

Dec 8 (SLS).

A blue phase **Ross's Goose** was found at the ponds on the CBC (SLS), it remained through at least Dec 26 (BS) being seen mostly at Leroy Jackson Park. This rare form of the Ross's Goose has been seen in the valley two previous times.

Tundra Swans were at the ponds Dec 14 (TL), and Dec 18 and 22 (SLS).

Wood Ducks were at the ponds Dec 13-20 (SLS).

The 9th species at the Inyokern Ponds was a **Canvasback** on Dec 27 (SLS).

Common Goldeneye were at the ponds Dec 17 (DVB) and Dec 24 (SLS) and at the golf course Dec 24 (SLS).

A **Common Merganser** was at the ponds Dec 7-8 (SLS).

A **Red-breasted Merganser** was at the ponds Dec 1 (SLS).

A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was at the ponds Dec 7 (SLS), Dec 10 (BB), and at the golf course Dec 18 (TL).

A **Ferruginous Hawk** was on base on the CBC (GW).

A **Merlin** was at the ponds Dec 8 (SLS).

Peregrine Falcons lingered this year and gave us our first December records Dec 13 at the ponds (SLS) and our new late date of Dec 20 at the evaporation fields (L&SSu).

A "Yellow-shafted" **Northern Flicker** was in Inyokern on Dec 18 (BS).

It is not an irruptive year for **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, but a couple were at the college Dec 10 (BB), and Dec 18 (DVB).

The **House Wren** continued at the college (BB, SLS).

The **Pacific Wren** S of Inyokern Dec 26 was the 183rd yard bird there (BS).

Four **Western Bluebirds** were at the evaporation fields Dec 6-18 (L&SSu).

Two **Townsend's Solitaires** remain at the college feasting on the pyracantha berries (m.ob).

The **Orange-crowned Warbler** remained at the college through Dec 18 (BB). Another **Orange-crowned Warbler** showed up in Ridgecrest on Dec 31 (SE).

Thanks to the following observers: *Bob Barnes, David Blue, Shelley Ellis, Tim Ludwick, Alison Sheehy, Bob Steele, Lee Sutton, Shirley Sutton, Gary Woods*

A LITTLE IN DEFENSE OF PLASTIC

The following excerpts are from the English newspaper *The Manchester Guardian* of January 6. The article was titled "A torrent of plastic: how to cope?" It included some interesting data in defense of plastic, as well as the usual. Here is a small portion of the article.

"What would a world without plastic look like? Earlier this year, Austria-based environmental consultancy Denkstatt imagined such a world, where farmers, retailers, and consumers use wood, tins, glass bottles and jars, and cardboard to cover their goods. It found the mass of packaging would increase by 3.6 times, it would take more than double the energy to make and the greenhouse gases generated would be 2.7 times higher.

"The European Packaging and Films Association (Pafa) says average spoilage of food between harvest and table is 3% in the developed world, compared with 50% in developing countries, where plastic pallets, crates, trays, film and bags are not so wide-spread. Once the food reaches people's homes, its lifespan is also increased-for a shrinkwrapped cucumber, from two to 14 days.

"Because of the huge carbon content of our diets, it is estimated that for every tonne of carbon produced by making plastic, five tonnes is saved, says Barry Turner from Pafa.

"A more surprising point is made by Friends of the Earth's waste campaigner Julian Kirby, who points out that because it is inert in landfill, plastic waste buried in the ground is a counterintuitive way of 'sequestering' carbon.

"This focus on carbon and climate change, however, ignores the very reasons plastic bags and plastic packaging generally first gripped the public imagination – that it is such a highly visible result of our throwaway society. ...

"Globally, 47 industry groups have united to fund research to stop plastic getting into the seas. ..."

2012 LEGISLATION

In early February the White House will release the President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2013. This will heat up the debate in Congress over how to fund the federal government and the conservation programs within it. The funding of important programs like the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, Everglades restorations, restoration of the Long Island Sound, and many others will be on the table. In addition to budget and funding issues, Congress will begin to reauthorize two large, important bills — the **Water Resources Development Act** (WRDA) and the **Farm Bill**.

WRDA authorizes nearly all of the Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works projects that are instrumental in restoring large ecosystems like Coastal Louisiana, etc.

The **Farm Bill** is the single, largest conservation spending program within the federal government. Millions of acres on private land are restored and protected for habitat and other environmental benefits through the Farm Bill.

With both parties looking hard at ways to reduce the federal budget it is likely that funding for conservation programs will be targeted for reductions.

To stay abreast of these issues and be notified of letter-writing opportunities or email action alerts, sign up for the Audubon Action Network at <http://policy.audubon.org/take-action>.

2012 CHINA LAKE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The weather was clear, calm, and unusually warm for this year's Christmas Bird Count (high of 61 F, low of 38F). Twenty-one pleased participants counted a total of 16,634 birds, with one new species: a Peregrine Falcon found by Lee and Shirley Sutton. The complete list follows, if you turn the page around.

Species	Total	Virginia Rail	10	American Robin	43
Snow Goose (white form)	3500	Sora	4	Northern Mockingbird	48
Snow Goose (blue form)	6	Common Moorhen	14	Le Conte's Thrasher	1
Ross' Goose	281	American Coot	310	European Starling	2348
Ross' Goose (blue form)	1	Killdeer	39	American Pipit	13
Canada Goose	4	American Avocet	cw	Orange-crowned Warbler	1
Tundra Swan	2	Least Sandpiper	7	Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's)	33
Wood Duck	3	Wilson's Snipe	1	Yellow-rumped (Myrtle)*	1
Gadwall	26	Ring-billed Gull	1	Spotted Towhee	5
American Wigeon	18	California Gull	cw	Lark Sparrow	1
Mallard	135	Rock Pigeon	678	Black-throated Sparrow	4
Cinnamon Teal	5	Eurasian Collared Dove	290	Sage Sparrow	409
Northern Shoveler	1919	Mourning Dove	928	Savannah Sparrow	30
Northern Pintail	63	Greater Roadrunner	7	Song Sparrow	14
American Green-winged Teal	196	Barn Owl	3	Lincoln's Sparrow	7
Canvasback	104	Burrowing Owl	2	White-crowned Sparrow	578
Redhead	2	Long-eared Owl	50	Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon)	132
Ring-necked Duck	13	Anna's Hummingbird	27	Dark-eyed Junco (Slate-colored)	3
Bufflehead	13	Costa's Hummingbird	19	Red-winged Blackbird	149
Common Goldeneye	cw	Hummingbird species	1	Western Meadowlark	74
Ruddy Duck	193	Northern Flicker (Red-shafted form)	22	Brewer's Blackbird	388
Chukar	17	Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted)	1	Great-tailed Grackle	61
California Quail	678	Black Phoebe	16	Brown-headed Cowbird	6
Pied-billed Grebe	6	Say's Phoebe	27	House Finch	374
Eared Grebe	16	Loggerhead Shrike	15	Lesser Goldfinch	68
Great Blue Heron	2	Common Raven	474	American Goldfinch	35
Great Egret	2	Horned Lark	1141	House Sparrow	291
Northern Harrier	10	Verdin	20		
Sharp-shinned Hawk	8	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1		Total
Cooper's Hawk	14	Rock Wren	9	Total Species (185)	90
Red-shouldered Hawk	1	Bewick's Wren	8	Additional Forms (10)	5
Red-tailed Hawk	31	House Wren*	1	Unidentified Species (5)	1
Ferruginous Hawk	1	Marsh Wren	25	Count Week Additions	4
Golden Eagle (Adult)	2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	9	New Species	1
American Kestrel	13	Western Bluebird	4	Total Birds	16634
Prairie Falcon	8	Mountain Bluebird	58		
Peregrine Falcon	cw	Townsend's Solitaire	2	No. Participants	21

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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P.O. Box 984
Ridgecrest CA 93556

National Audubon Society membership includes membership in the local chapter, a subscription to the Audubon magazine and the Kerncrest newsletter, *The Chat*. It also provides the right to vote in society elections, and inclusion on national society mailing lists for informational materials and solicitations for contributions. Membership in the Kerncrest Audubon Society includes a subscription to *The Chat*, (not to *Audubon* magazine) and provides the right to vote in local society elections. Inclusion on national mailing lists is optional. A subscription to *The Chat* only does not provide the right to vote in elections.

The Chat

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