



AUDUBON'S WARBLER

Vol. 41 no. 12 - February 2012
Newsletter of Kern Audubon Society
A chapter of National Audubon Society
www.kernaudubonsociety.org
www.kastehachapibird.org

Kern Audubon Society
Tues. February 7, 2012
7:00pm

Kern Supt of Schools
17th & L Sts. Bakersfield
"Midway Atoll & Its Sea Birds"
Bob Steele, Wildlife Photographer

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www.bobsteelephoto.com



Midway Atoll (mid-way between the U.S. mainland and Japan) is important for many historical and biological reasons. Today it is part of three federal designations - Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, the Battle of Midway National Memorial and Papahânaumokuâkea Marine National Monument. Well over a million seabirds use the three tiny islands in the atoll to breed each season, including over half of the world's population of Laysan Albatross (pictured above). Join professional wildlife photographer Bob Steele as we explore the human and natural history of this unique and fascinating place.

FEBRUARY FIELD TRIPS

Wed. Walk - Feb. 8th, 8am - Kern River Slough

Join us for this Wednesday Walk with Park Ranger Bill Moffat. Meet at the Park n Ride on Stockdale Hiway between Real Rd. & Hiway 99 at 8am. Bring water, snacks, binocs. Call Al (833-6705) for information.

Sat. Feb. 11th - Kern Nat'l Wildlife Refuge

Kern Audubon-Tehachapi will host this all day field trip to Kern & Pixley National Wildlife Refuges to view wintering wildfowl, hawks & shorebirds with Sandhill cranes at sunset. Tehachapi birders should meet at **7am** in the Tehachapi K-Mart parking lot near the Burger King to carpool and then meeting Bakersfield birders at the Rosedale Costco (near the gas station) at **8am**. Bring water, snacks, binoculars. The group will eat lunch in Lost Hills or you may bring a lunch. Angela Guy is the birding leader--call her for information: 821-7702. Plan to share in gas expenses for drivers!

Sun. Feb 12, 4:00pm - Pixley Nat'l Wildlife Refuge

Sandhill cranes winter in the southern San Joquin Valley and this will be one of the last opportunities to see them before they leave for their breeding grounds. Sandhill cranes feed in the agricultural fields around Pixley Wildlife Refuge and then at sunset, fly back to the safety of the water on the refuge where they roost for the night. Seeing the cranes fly in and hearing their primordial call is amazing! We will meet at the Costco Rosedale parking lot near the gas station to carpool at 3:45. We will depart at **4:00pm** and return after sunset. Contact Madi (322-7470) for info.

Sat. Feb 25, 9am - Wastewater Ponds

You read right! We will be birding the Bakersfield City wastewater treatment ponds, a great place to see shorebirds and waterfowl during the winter. Meet at the gates to the sewer ponds at 9am. Directions: Take Mt Vernon Ave exit off Hiway 58 and go south about 3 miles past the green waste plant to the end of the road. Bring snacks, water, binocs.

BIRDING FESTIVALS

Bird festivals are fun! You meet other birders, visit new places, see lots of birds, hear interesting presentations, support local economies and much more. For information about festivals around the country, go to...

www.Americanbirding.org/festivals
www.birdwatchersdigest.com

For information about festivals in California, go to...
www.natureali.org/nature_festivals.htm



We thank Joseph V. Higbee for the Audubon's Warbler photo used as the newsletter logo. Used by permission. (www.pbase.com/jvhigbee)

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2011 -2012

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Kern Audubon Executive Board will meet on Tues. Sept. 20th, 7pm and is open to interested members. contact a board member for locations.

Congratulations, Susan Steele

Susan Steele, member of Kerncrest Audubon, ended her Kern County Big Year with 328 species of countable birds, according to American Birding Association standards, a new record. The previous record was from 1990 with a count of 305 species. Bob Barnes asked Susan to share highlights and these are some of Susan's reflections:

"First I want to thank the many birders who gave fabulous help during my Kern County big year effort, both with finding and getting me on amazing birds which I might otherwise have missed, and also for all the support and encouragement I received. It has meant so much to me.

"I ended the year with 328 countable bird species observed in Kern County along with 3 officially non-countable others (Gambel's Quail, California Condor, Rose-ringed Parakeet). The best bird this year was the Pyrrhuloxia I found in my backyard that stayed for Mother's Day. It was a first record for Kern County and well-photographed by Bob Steele. Nice.

"My biggest miss, well it would have been Red Crossbill, but for all the time I wasted the last couple of weeks of 2011 looking for Barrow's Goldeneye. Those with a keen sense of irony will appreciate that I finally saw my Kern Barrow's Goldeneye on 2 Jan 2012.

"Bird species I thought would be easy to see that I didn't see: zero.

"Birds missed that I thought I should see, but wasn't certain they'd show up: Red Crossbill and Lucy's Warbler.

"Number of bird species I rated as almost impossible to come across that I managed to see: 14

"My 326th species for the year was also my 326th life bird species for the Indian Wells Valley – Pacific Loon

"Miles that I drove: No idea, but many, many, many...

"What are my birding plans for 2012? I'm still looking for new Kern birds, and I'm going to look for more birds for my North America list. Maybe one of these days I'll finally see a Blue-headed Vireo in Kern County."

KEEPING YOUR BIRD FEEDERS CLEAN

During the winter it's important to keep your bird feeders clean especially if they get wet. Bird food can spoil easily when wet, so clean out your birdfeeders regularly, using a mild vinegar or bleach solution and rinse and dry thoroughly. This includes hummingbird feeders which can collect mold very easily!





NEW YEAR AT PANORAMA VISTA PRESERVE

2012 began with a great turnout! And a tremendous amount of work was accomplished with over 150 willows being planted. The next date to plant trees at Panorama Vista Preserve will be Saturday, February 4, 9-11 AM. Kern Audubon would like to thank the following people for giving 2 hours of time: *Andy Honig, Bill Cooper, Phil Shepherd, Roberta Robinson, Bill and Lynn McDonald, Rich O'Neil, Greg Iger, Stephen Yaws, Tony Swan, Yancy Scott, Alyssa Pack, Trevon Sutton, Rod Lee, Madi Elsea, Kasey Culp, Diane Karch, Carol Gates, Al Caetano, Paul Gipe, John Ohe, and Harry Love*. If you would like to join "the fun" on February 4, call 805-1420 or email Harry (love3@bak.rr.com) for information. To get there take Roberts Lane off Manor Drive in east Bakersfield and go east on Roberts to the locked gate.

The Great Backyard Bird Count - Feb 17 - 20, 2012

Looking for a free, educational activity that makes a difference? This month, join tens of thousands of people throughout the US and Canada in the **2012 Great Backyard Bird Count**. You can count birds you see in your backyard, in your neighborhood, at your local park...or from anywhere you can spot birds!

Whether you are new to watching birds or an expert birder, your counts count! Your checklist will contribute valuable information for science and conservation when you enter your tally online at www.birdcount.org. Your list will help scientists understand more about how the distribution and abundance of birds are changing through time. In 2008 participants documented the huge southward movement of northern finches from Canada, the expanding range of Eurasian Collard-Dove and the Red-bellied Woodpecker, plus the decline of Northern Bobwhite and Eastern Meadowlark.

It's easy to participate...

- 1) visit www.birdcount.org for easy-to-follow instructions, including tips for identifying bird species. Download a checklist for our area
- 2) Count the birds you see, wherever you choose to count. Write down the highest number of individuals you see at one time--that way you will avoid counting any bird twice.
- 3) After at least 15 minutes of watching in one place, report your results online
- 4) You can repeat your count at the same place on each day of the GBBC. You can also visit other locations and submit separate tallies for those areas as well.

If you don't have computer access, contact Madi Elsea (322-7470), who can provide a data form for you or pick up copies at the Kern Audubon meeting on February 7th.

This is the 15th annual GBBC which is sponsored by National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The top 10 most commonly reported birds in the 2010 GBBC were:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Northern Cardinal | 6) Blue Jay |
| 2) Mourning Dove | 7) American Crow |
| 3) Dark-eyed Junco | 8) Black-capped Chickadee |
| 4) Downy Woodpecker | 9) House Finch |
| 5) American Goldfinch | 10) Tufted Titmouse |



2012 LEGISLATION

In early February the White House will release the President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2013. This will begin 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 restoration, restoration of 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 current on 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>

YEAR-END APPEAL...Once again there has been a generous response to the end-of-the-year appeal in the amount of **\$3425**--the most we have ever received! The Kern Audubon Executive Board wishes to acknowledge and thank the following persons for your extra gifts** toward KAS' plans for continuing to *"create a culture of conservation in Kern County!"*

Dana Adams
Pam Baugher
Albert Caetano
Louise Clay
Pat Cox
James Frost
Monte Harper
Mrs. Lamar Hiatt
Lynn James
Gabriele Kidwell
Kerry Lattimore
Janet Lund
Gary Mc Kibbin
Daniel Nadsady
Gloria Pauline
Etta Robin
Linda Schrom

Judy Allen
Shelly & Lance Borgstrom
Lawrence & Joan Carlson
James & Judith Collier
Virginia Dallas
Carol Gates
Irene Heath
Mark & Randi Hodson
Gerald Kay
Lodema Kitchen
Eva Loeb
Bill & Lynn McDonald
Pat & Larry Mumford
Joanne & Paul Newberry
Marilynn Radoumis
George & Joetta Ross
Patricia Turner

Chloe Anderson
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C. Daniel Clark
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Isabella Gurr
Melisse Herring
Betty Ireland
Joyce Kerce
Carol Lair
Vicki Lohr
Donna Mc Kenna
Charles & Gladys Moore
Harold Nyholm
Norman Reimers
Mel & Beverly Rubin
Mark Van Voorhis

**received as of 1/20/12

BIRDING IN PANAMA

John Eigenauer, a member of Kern Audubon, is interested in hosting a birding excursion to Panama next December and invites interested persons to contact him if you are interested at jeigenauer@yahoo.com. A TENTATIVE itinerary is as follows:

Departure date: Saturday December 28, 2012. (This would require spending the night in Los Angeles the night before for an early morning flight on Saturday).

Direct flight to Panama City (about 9 hours).

Eight days of birding, focusing on areas in and around the city of Panama (the central part of the country).

Return date: Monday January 7, 2013.

The ESTIMATED cost of this trip would be \$3000 for two people sharing a room. This cost includes:

- A budget of \$60 in food per day for two people.
- Professional bird guide.
- Transportation (vehicle, gasoline, insurance).
- Shared hotel room for two adults.
- Park entries.

This cost would **not** include:

- Hotel stay in Los Angeles the night before.
- Entry to the Panama Canal.
- Special evening buffet dinner next to the Panama Canal.
- Additional food costs above the estimated \$60 per day for two people.
- Trip insurance (essential).
- Round trip airfare LAX→PTY. (Approximately \$900 per person).

There is also the possibility of an additional excursion preceding this one, so contact John for more info.

Bakersfield Californian columnist Herb Benham had this delightful column about his experience last December of "getting" what birding is all about. He graciously gave permission to reprint this in the *Warbler* for those who may have missed it...

Birds of a feather really do flock together

I'm not leaving this car for a coot. Coots are a dime a dozen. I may be new to the birding fraternity, but I have standards, even if they are new standards. Recently I went birding with my parents at the Kern National Wildlife Refuge. Was it on my top 10 destinations wish list? No, but I wanted to spend the day with them, and they couldn't wait to unpack their binoculars and open their birding guides.

"This is the kind of thing you do when you get old," Dad said about halfway through our tour, most of which took place at 5 mph, scouring pond after pond through the windows of the Subaru.

At the beginning of our three-hour stroll through the refuge, which is about an hour and 9 minutes northwest of downtown Bakersfield, I was a pill. Could we be driving any slower? How do I get these binoculars to work so I am seeing something other than my eyebrows or the back of Dad's head because he was sitting in the passenger seat, blocking my view?

"Look, a northern shoveler," yelled my mom. "Over there."

Over where? "There" is a large geographical area and includes the pond, the Temblor Range and Mount McKinley.

After I had missed a half-dozen shovelers, a bufflehead, two cinnamon teals, a northern harrier and a pied-billed grebe, I concluded that birding was like trying to see a meteorite. In a group, one person sees it and the rest pretend they have.

I saw the coots. I didn't need binoculars to see the coots. I could have seen them with one eye closed, my back turned and standing on my head.

However, the less common birds were proving elusive. I lacked three things: a birding heart (you have to be fond of the winged creatures), patience and the willingness to submit to the glacial-like pace necessary to scan a pond discerningly enough to look beyond the 100 coots, which may be hiding the delicious cinnamon teal that looks good enough to put in the smoker and serve for Christmas dinner.

"Bird-watching is like eating peanuts," Dad said. "Once you start, you can't stop."

Wait a minute. I put on the brakes, stopped the car and looked at this man who claimed to be my father. He was 86. Had he gone around the bend when I wasn't looking?

Fifteen minutes later, I joined him around that bend. The sun was shining, it was a beautiful fall day with not a breath of wind. It was hard to hold on to a bad attitude.

"Do you see that cinnamon teal, at the edge of the rushes?" Mom asked.

I cranked the \$500 binoculars, sweeping back and forth across the pond, and what do you know: There was the prettiest brown duck I'd ever seen sitting among a throng of black coots.

"I got it," I yelled.

That's when you know you are a goner. When you use the phrase, "I got it," you start to think about Craigslist and binoculars and all the friends you are going to tell.

Yes, I was a goner. My heart had slowed, blood pressure caved and now I was shouting out birds. I spotted two red-tailed hawks and a northern harrier before my parents, not that birding is competitive (read "The Big Year").

I got it, I got it. And now I get it.

We were on fire. Flying like Icarus toward the bird-specked sun: ruddy ducks, a Cooper's hawk, killdeer, common moorhens, a long-billed dowitcher and a black-necked stilt. I was a coot away from discovering a new species.

On the way home, we stopped by the Pixley National Wildlife Refuge in order to see the sandhill cranes. There were thousands of birds in the sky two miles to the west, but we couldn't tell whether they were cranes. It was dark and almost time for the meteorites.

Herb Benham, *Californian* Columnist, 12/06/2011

BINOCULARS....There has been such a good response that we will be placing another order for Eagle Optics binoculars very soon. If you are interested, contact Rod Lee (322-7470). The binoculars are 8X42's and the cost is \$145. These are very good binoculars for birding.



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Bakersfield CA 93385



www.kernaudubonsociety.org

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Join KERN AUDUBON for these activities...

- Sat. Feb. 4, 9am - Panorama Vista Workparty
- Tues. Feb. 7, 7pm - Program: Midway & Sea Birds
- Wed. Feb. 8, 8am - Kern River Slough field trip
- Sat. Feb. 11, 8am - Field trip Kern Natl Wildlife Refuge
- Sun. Feb. 12, 4:00pm - Pixley Nat'l Wildlife Refuge
- Sat. Feb. 25, 9am - Birding the sewer ponds field trip

Membership Application -- KERN AUDUBON SOCIETY (C30)

If you would like to be part of a grass-roots conservation organization with a distinguished history, join the National Audubon Society and Kern Audubon! Please complete the form below and send with your check !

Membership includes *Audubon Magazine* (6 Issues) and the *Audubon's Warbler* (10 issues)

____ New Member \$20

Make check payable to **NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY**

Send this form and your check for \$20 to:

Kern Audubon
PO Box 3581
Bakersfield CA 93385

Name(s) _____ Amount enclosed _____

Address _____ E-mail _____

City _____ Zip Code _____ Phone # _____

Please indicate if you would like to receive your *Audubon's Warbler* electronically: ____yes ____no