



WESTERN MEADOWLARK

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May/June 2009



Friends of the
Desert Mountains

The Palms to Pines Birding and Nature Trail

Presented by Kurt Leuschner
Wednesday, May 20, 2009

at the San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society's monthly meeting.

Almost two years in the making, the *Palms to Pines Birding and Nature Trail* map is now available at various locations in and around the Coachella Valley. Kurt Leuschner, Associate Professor of Natural Resources at College of the Desert in Palm Desert, California, completed this project during a recent sabbatical.

This useful guide and map highlights ten of the area's best-known birding sites – included for each site are directions and contact information, a list of habitats and signature bird species, wildlife viewing opportunities and other pertinent information. All ten stops are within a relatively short drive from the trail's starting point at the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument visitor center in Palm Desert. As you use this map to guide you to all ten sites, you'll be introduced to one of the most biologically, geographically, and topographically diverse regions in the world. At each site, you will find knowledgeable naturalists, as well as bird checklists, detailed maps, and other information on local fauna and flora. Plan to spend a few hours or a few days exploring each area. Resident and visiting birders and nature enthusiasts will want to visit all ten stops and experience the natural wonders that make this area unique.

You may visit the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto National Monument visitor center in Palm Desert and pick up a copy of *The Palms to Pines Birding and Nature Trail* guide or come to our meeting where they will be available. Also, the *Palms to Pines Birding and Nature Trail* may also be viewed online at www.desertmountains.org.

Many of our members know Kurt and have taken his many birding classes and heard his programs. He is a terrific teacher and his program is certain to be both informative and entertaining. His trail guide is wonderful. Everyone is always welcome at our meetings. Please come early to visit with friends. Our doors open at 7 PM and the meeting begins at 7:30 PM.

Happy birding and see you on the trail!

Dori Myers, Program Chair

When Does Renewable Energy Equal Poor Planning?

Just when you thought it was possible to breathe a sigh of relief that the new president was rethinking the environmental disasters espoused by the former administration, there is a new menace on the horizon, and it is coming in the guise of environmentally friendly programs. The Press Enterprise reported earlier this year that Los Angeles wants 800-megawatt power lines in place by 2013 to tap geothermal energy at the Salton Sea as well as proposed desert-area wind and solar projects. Although it's true that Los Angeles does need to tap renewable energy sources, the LADWP is unwilling to look at green energy plants closer to home. So, besides damaging or destroying the desert habitat needed to build wind turbines and solar-energy arrays, the roads needed to build and maintain power lines will cause environmental damage along the entire transmission corridor.

Clearly one of the most frustrating plans is the Green Path North project that will traverse the San Bernardino County deserts and foothills. Edison has offered to add enough capacity to its power lines along I-10 so that transmission lines and infrastructure can be shared, avoiding the need for new corridors in areas currently undamaged. LADWP is unwilling to share the transmission lines, preferring its own lines and power-generation sources that allow the utility to offer lower rates. The most recent proposal, known as Route A3, would establish additional rights of way near existing utility paths along I-10 from Palm Springs to Beaumont. The route would then cut north through historic San Timoteo Canyon to Loma Linda, Colton, Rialto, and San Bernardino.

POWER LINE PATH: The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has proposed an alternative route for its Green Path North project, which would carry electricity from alternative sources in the desert to customers in Los Angeles.



SOURCE: LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND POWER

BECKY HAGENAU/THE PRESS ENTERPRISE

Continued, pg. 2, greenpath

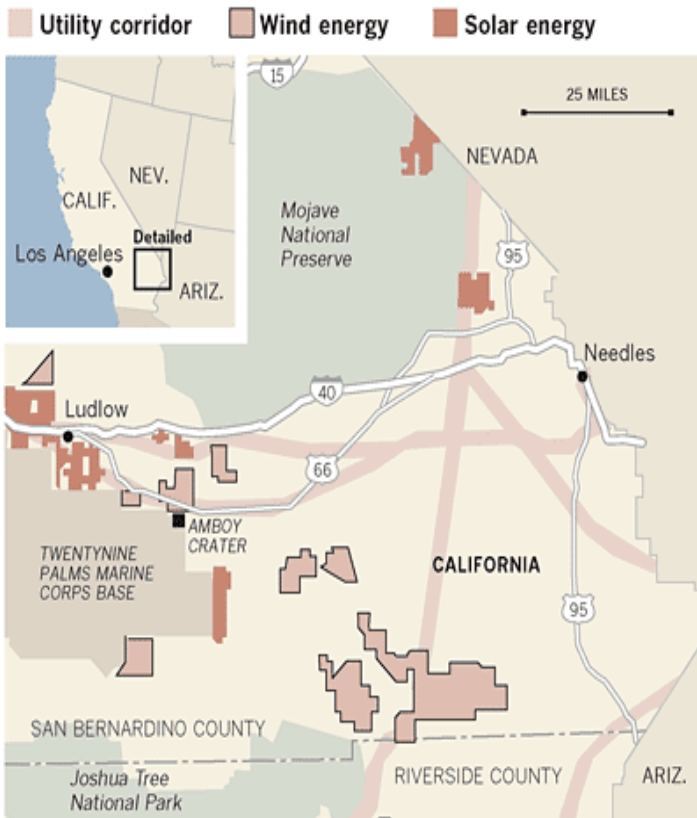
(greenpath, continued)

Beyond the transmission issue, there is considerable controversy over why wind turbines and solar energy arrays are being placed in the Mojave Desert when the power they produce will be used by Los Angeles. The Wildlands Conservancy, which negotiated the purchase of over a half-million acres in the desert so it could be turned over to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management for protection, calls it a “violation of trust” since they garner support by touting public access. And that support is diverse, including hunters and off-roaders who enjoy the Mojave Desert.

Currently the BLM is considering 171 applications for large-scale solar and wind projects on more than a million acres of California Desert from Ridgecrest to El Centro. The BLM claims that conservationists are overstating the issue and that many projects probably will not be built. Conservationists, who obviously do not oppose renewable energy, would prefer that solar units are placed on rooftops or on land that has already been disturbed. Federal environmental review is just beginning. But this is clearly a “David and Goliath” issue, with Goliath represented by the LADWP. It’s difficult to understand how a group of policy-makers hungry for renewable power can not see the viable and sensible alternatives available.

Power plans

The California desert between Mojave National Preserve and Joshua Tree National Park encompasses several designated utility corridors as well as areas where applications have been made to conduct either wind or solar energy projects.



Source: Bureau of Land Management

PAUL DUGINSKI Los Angeles Times

New Report Looks Into Bird Deaths at Altamont Wind Farm

Wind energy is currently the fastest-growing form of renewable energy. That makes wind an important energy resource and a vital part of the solution to global warming. However, wind energy is not without its faults.

A new report detailed in the San Francisco Chronicle by writer Charles Burrell suggests that the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area, one of the largest wind farms in the state, is also “the symbol of the wind industry’s biggest stain—the killings of thousands of birds, including majestic golden eagles, by turbines.”

About a year ago, in response to a legal settlement between wildlife groups, wind companies and Alameda County, there was a promise to reduce bird deaths by fifty percent in three years. There were four targeted species—burrowing owl, American kestrel, red-tailed hawk, and golden eagle. It now appears, after careful research that took predation from scavengers into account, that bird deaths have actually increased, perhaps by nearly ninety percent from 2005 to 2007. The total number of birds killed is staggering—229 red-tailed hawks, 150 burrowing owls, 56 American kestrels and between 49 and 116 golden eagles per year. Apparently, the problem is not just birds running into the turbine blades. Many dead birds have been found around turbines that were turned off, and some were electrocuted by live wires near operating turbines. Destroying the habitat under the turbines may also have an effect.

Researchers have found that bird species more prone to collision spend more time flying in close proximity to wind turbines and at heights at or below the rotor planes of the turbines. They also found that turbines at the end of rows and in deep canyons had disproportionately more collisions than other turbines.

Altamont Pass may be unique in the number of bird deaths. Many other bird farms report zero bird deaths every year, although no significant studies have been done in other areas. Mike Sagrillo of the Wind Energy Technical Lab says, “After dozens of studies spanning nearly two decades, we now know that the Altamont Pass situation is unusual in the United States. The high raptor mortality there was the result of a convergence of factors, some of which were due to bad siting in the local ecosystem, while others were due to the wind turbine and tower technology used at the time.”

Current mitigation measures include shutting down the turbines for two months during the low-wind season each winter, relocating selected, highly dangerous turbines, removing non-operating turbines, installing structures at the ends of turbine strings to divert birds to fly around the turbines, and management practices to deter rodents (other than by poisoning) that may congregate around the base of turbines and are a food source for birds. Most researchers, however, conclude that the most effective solution to reduce bird collisions in the Altamont Pass area is to replace the many small existing turbines with fewer, larger turbines on taller towers. This is called “repowering” and is unfortunately a costly solution—perhaps as much as \$1 billion. The bigger turbines would reduce the number of blades to about one-tenth of their current number, and the

blades would turn more slowly and be higher off the ground to keep them farther away from raptors diving for mice.

This is certainly one of those issues where environmentalists find themselves on both sides of the controversy. Of course we must pursue emission-free energy in an all-out effort to limit global warming. At the same time, we cannot condone the killing of even a single golden eagle, and when the deaths reach double and triple digits, the direction to lend support becomes clearer. The killing of these raptors in any number is not only immoral but illegal according to state and federal law. It cannot be enough to believe, as does James Walker, president of the American Wind Energy Association, that wind power helps save bird lives by combating global warming. Although his statement may be true, one has to wonder at what point we realize that those species we worked so hard to help through global warming will not be around to enjoy it.

All paintings are courtesy of Kurt Leuschner and were done by artist Lisa Walraven.

Scott's Oriole, Lisa Walraven



Greater Roadrunner, Lisa Walraven



Pinyon Jay, Lisa Walraven

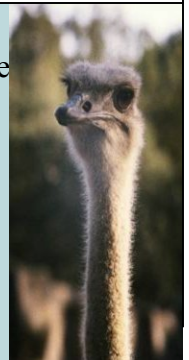
Bring on the Bird Buffet!

If you feed birds, you're in good company. The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology reports that a study done in 1997 by Kaytee Avian Foundation estimates that 43 percent of U.S. households, or about 65 million people, provide food for wild birds. This figure is important because our environment has changed radically in the last several years. Not only do wild birds have to deal with habitat loss, but they must also compete with growing numbers of non-native birds like starlings and house sparrows. Setting up a backyard birdfeeder can be a rewarding experience. You can experience birds from the comfort of your home without braving the elements, and you can provide a supplement to natural food supplies for wild birds. You might even get into careful record keeping and become a part of the growing number of citizen scientists who help track the movement and general health of the bird population.

Many people start feeding birds in the spring when there are many about and they are very active and visible, but the real needy time for our avian visitors is during the winter when natural food supplies are scarce. It turns out, though, that any season is a good time to feed birds. Spring is important because many of the preferred natural foods have been consumed during the winter and birds need an incredible amount of energy to migrate. Helping supply them with ample food helps them stay healthy for breeding. The summer season provides birds with their greatest natural food supply, but it is also the time of their greatest need. Parent birds must feed themselves and their offspring. Summer is also the time when birds eat the greatest variety of foods from suet and mealworms for protein to sunflower and nyjer to provide oil for body fat to fruit and nectar. Fall is a season of great food demand because of the new crop of fledglings. Migratory birds are also putting on fat to power long migrations during the fall, so they are looking for oil-rich seeds.

Once you decide to start feeding birds, you will also need to decide on the types of food you will provide. Keep in mind that one key to attracting a variety of bird species is to provide a variety of food types. The seeds that attract the greatest number of species are black-oil sunflower. According to the Cornell Lab, these seeds have a high meat-to-shell ratio, they are nutritious and high in fat, and their small size and thin shells make them easy for small birds to handle and crack. Some birds do prefer other seeds, though. Cornell's Seed Preference Test found that most ground-feeding bird species prefer white millet or red milo to black-oil sunflower seed. Experimentation with different types of food in your own yard will help you decide what your backyard birds prefer.

Quality low-priced wild bird seed will be available at SBVAS general meetings in twenty-five pound bags. Not only will you be able to feed your backyard birds, but you will help provide SBVAS with a reliable, monthly fundraiser.



Idyllwild Nature Center



Date: May 23, 24 & 25

Time: 10 AM-3 PM

Location: 25225 Hwy 243
One mile north of the
Community of Idyllwild

Contact person:
Shelley Kibby
951-659-3850

Morning Session: 10-11:30

Fee \$2 adults, \$1 kids, \$1 dogs

- Illustrated lecture about San Jacinto mountain & desert natural history
- Beautiful & amazing local species and their relationships
- Meet author John Muir Laws

Afternoon Session: 1-3 PM

Fee \$30/day OR \$75/3 days

- Multi-media exploration of nature and detail
- Close, personal time with author John Muir Laws
- Bring your sketch pads, pencils & supplies

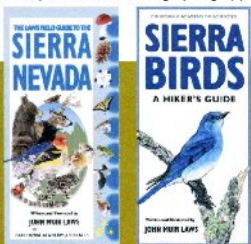
Come and Find your Place in the Forest.

Memorial Day Weekend 2009 Annual Wildflower & Art Exhibit



Guest Speaker: John Muir Laws

Author, artist, educator, and naturalist John Muir Laws will explore various nature, animal, and environmental topics during our three-day event. For six years, he backpacked the Sierra Nevada to research and illustrate his comprehensive field guides, *The Laws Guide to the Sierra Nevada* and *Sierra Birds: A Hiker's Guide*. Beautiful and informative, the guides use original watercolor paintings to help nature lovers understand the biodiversity of the region. Buy both at the Idyllwild Nature Center or bring your own copies for author autographing opportunities!



Sponsored by:



Idyllwild Nature Center

25225 Hwy 243
One mile north of Idyllwild

Phone: 951-659-3850
Fax: 951-659-3106
E-mail: skibby@co.riverside.ca.us
Web: www.idyllwildnaturecenter.net

Gambel's Quail,
Lisa Walraven



15th Annual Joshua Tree Count

When: Saturday, May 2, 8:00 a.m.
Where to meet: Joshua Tree Visitor Center, 6554 Park Boulevard in the town of Joshua Tree
What to bring: Come dressed for a day in the field. Bring your lunch, water, and sunscreen. Also helpful are binoculars, field guides, cameras.
Cost: \$3.00 per participant
For more info: Contact Joe Zarki 760-367-5520 W or Marilyn Lutz 760-367-5681, 760-366-8913 H

These counts are organized by the North American Butterfly Association under research permit from Joshua Tree National Park. Volunteers are needed to observe and record butterflies for a one-day period within a 15-mile diameter circle. Counts are held each year during the season of peak butterfly diversity. Each census will add to our knowledge of the geographical distribution and population size of the species counted. No experience necessary. Please RSVP to Marilyn or Joe.

In 2008, 472 counts were conducted around the United States, Mexico and Canada. Help us learn more about an often overlooked park resource. For more information, visit www.naba.org.



Photo by Bill Truesdell

Eighth Annual Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua June 19-21, 2009 / Lee Vining, California

Three full days in 2009!

March 27, 2009

Complete program information is available on the "Program" button on the website. Don't forget registration opens April 15, 2009.

March 22, 2009

Chautauqua schedule and registration information posted. Click on "Register" and "Schedule" at left. Detailed Program info coming soon. **Registration opens April 15, 2009.**

March 15, 2009

The complete Chautauqua program is very nearly complete. In the meantime, you can check out Rosalie Winard's [artist profile](#) on youtube. Rosalie Winard is this year's keynote speaker.



2009's musical guest is [Ray Bonneville](#)

Questions? Email us at:

birding@monolake.org



Burrowing Owl, Lisa Walraven



Costa's Hummingbird, Lisa Walraven

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www.inlandplanet.org

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CALENDAR

May 6, 2009 Board Meeting
 May 20, 2009 General Meeting
 June 3, 2009 Board Meeting
 June 17, 2009 General Meeting

All meetings are in the San Bernardino County Museum, 2024 Orange Tree Lane, Redlands. Board meetings are the first Wednesday of the month, and General Membership meetings are on the third Wednesday of the month. To reach the museum, take the California St. exit off I-10, go north one block to Orange Tree Lane and turn right. The museum will be on your left. Meetings, except potlucks, start at 7:30 and doors open at 7. Potlucks begin at 6:30.

Field Trip Schedule

Beginning Bird Walk—Fairmount Park
Saturday May 3, 2009 8:00-10:00A.M
 Leader: Doug Karalun (909) 425-5355

For those of you who are just beginning the wonderful pastime of bird watching, please join us for a fun, slow-paced morning of birding in one of our local wildlife habitats. Our goal will be to teach you enough basic birding techniques and identification skills so that you will feel comfortable birding on your own or joining our longer birding trips throughout the year. We will introduce you to some of our local bird species. You may be surprised at what wonderful birds can be seen! Wear comfortable walking shoes, hats and sunscreen and bring binoculars and water. The walk is free and no reservations are needed. Everyone is welcome and student lists will be signed.

IMPORTANT: Only a limited number of students can be accommodated. A maximum of TEN students can attend, but only if they call/email and register in advance. Students are expected to show interest, have binoculars, and attend the full trip. Signature for school credit will be provided at the end of the walk. To reach Fairmount Park from downtown Riverside take Market Street north to the signal at Fairmount Park and turn left, then turn immediately to the left towards the tennis courts then right into the parking lot. Follow the lot all the way to the end and park near the bandstand. Please contact Doug Karalun for further information. Rain or other conditions may cause last minute changes. You may call ahead to confirm location and time.

Saturday, May 2, 2009 - 7:00 am
Big Morongo
Chet McGaugh (951) 781-3699

The first week in May is about the best time for observing migrant land birds in Southern California and Big Morongo is one of the best places for it. In addition to migrant warblers, vireos and flycatchers, we expect to see the breeding specialties including Vermilion Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, Bullock's Oriole and Hooded Oriole.

Join us for a morning birdwalk on the trails and roads of the preserve and surrounding areas. We will meet at the preserve parking lot at 7:00 am. To get there, take I-10 to Highway 62, go north ten miles to Morongo Valley, then turn right on Park Avenue to Covington Park. Turn left at Covington Park, then do a quick right-left-right into the preserve. Weather is typically good this time of year. Bring water, snacks and lunch if you plan to make a day of it. Some of us will probably stay out all day. Who knows where the afternoon will lead us?

Sunday, May 3, 2009 - 8:00 am
Box Springs Mountain
John Green (951) 686-2956

We will meet at 8:00 am. From Highway 60 in Moreno Valley take the Pigeon Pass Road / Frederick Street exit. Take Pigeon Pass north and continue for about 4.2 miles. When Pigeon Pass makes a sharp turn to the right, you will continue straight on Box Springs Mountain Road for about 1.3 miles to the parking area. There is a \$2 per person parking fee box. We will do a lot of walking, so wear appropriate shoes and dress comfortably in layers. Some trails may be overgrown, long pants are advised. Carry water and snacks. There are picnic tables at the parking area, so bring a lunch if you'd like to eat after the hike. See you there!

IMPORTANT: This trip is not suitable for large groups, only a limited number of students can be accommodated. A maximum of FIVE students can attend, but only if they call and register with me in advance. Students are expected to show interest, have binoculars, and attend the full trip. Signature for school credit will be provided at the end of the walk. I may be able to loan a pair of binoculars if arranged well in advance. There is a Beginning Bird Walk available at Fairmount Park on the same day as this trip for those desiring an easier walk, or if this trip is full.

Saturday, May 9, 2009 - 8:00 am
Whitewater Canyon
Steve Myers (760) 843-4009

This trip is a new addition to the SBVAS field trip lineup. Portions of Whitewater Canyon have long been more or less closed to public access, but the former trout farm is now the "Whitewater Canyon Preserve," managed by The Wildlands Conservancy. If you visited the trout farm in the past, you will not know the place now. Most of the facilities have been removed, and habitat restoration is under way. There are still a few ponds with trout, but riparian and desert scrub habitat should be teeming with birds on this trip. The canyon hosts nesting Summer Tanagers and Brown-crested Flycatchers, and migrants should be easy to find. In addition to the Preserve, we will visit Bonnie Bell, a small community in the canyon that contains excellent cottonwood and willow forest and woodland, somewhat reminiscent of Big Morongo. Meet at the Whitewater Canyon Preserve at 8:00 am. To reach the Preserve, go east on I-10, past the turn-off for Highway 111, and take the Whitewater exit. Turn left, pass over I-10, and watch for Whitewater Canyon Road on your left. The Preserve is at the end of Whitewater Canyon Road, approximately 5 miles north of I-10. Bring sturdy footwear, water, lunch, and the usual essentials.

Saturday, May 16, 2009 - 9:00 am
Baby Birds at Bearpaw
Cin Greyraven (909) 794-0509

Join us for a trip into the hidden world of nesting birds at Bearpaw Nature Sanctuary in Forest Falls. Biologist Cin Greyraven will lead the group in its search for evidence of breeding behavior in the common birds of the chaparral and forest. Since 1994, Bearpaw Sanctuary has been part of the National Nest Box Trail system, offering homes to Western Bluebirds, Oak Titmice, House Wrens, Mountain Chickadees, and Ash-throated Flycatchers. Learn what types of nest boxes work best and how monitoring data by average citizens across the continent can contribute to scientific research. Learn how to monitor a nest box without disturbing the nesting effort. Enjoy a peek inside the usually inaccessible world of cavity nesters, and learn to recognize different species by their nests, eggs, and chicks. Bring binoculars for long-distance viewing and cameras for close-up snapshots. Children are welcome. The gate code is #7282. For additional information, call (909) 794-0509.

Saturday, June 6, 2009 - 7:00 am
Wrightwood
Gene Cardiff (909) 875-5358

The San Gabriel Mountains trip will start at the California Department of Forestry Mormon Rocks Station on Highway 138 at 7:00 am. Take I-15 north from San Bernardino or south from the Victor Valley and turn toward Palm-dale on Highway 138. The CDF Station is located 1.5 miles up Hwy 138 on the left side of the road, opposite the large sandstone formation called the Mormon Rocks. (There are no restrooms at the CDF Station, use the restrooms at the gas stations near the off ramp.) After birding that area for 30-45 minutes, we will proceed up Lone Pine Canyon Rd into Wrightwood. We will enjoy a snack at the Twin Lakes Club and then will proceed up Highway 2 to the Arch Picnic Grounds at Big Pines and to the Table Mountain Campground amphitheater. We will have lunch at Table Mountain. After lunch, we will proceed to Valyermo where we will bird the Paradise Springs area and St. Andrew's Priory. If the cherries are ripe, we will stop to pick fresh cherries. Bring a lunch, liquids and a good pair of shoes. We will look for mountain birds such as the White-headed Woodpecker, Clark's Nutcracker, Red Crossbill, Green-tailed Tow-

hee, Townsend's Solitaire, and Black-chinned Sparrows. Please don't forget: you will need an Adventure Pass (we will stop at the ranger station.)

Calendar for Field Trips for 2008/2009

- May 2:** Big Morongo—Chet McGaugh
May 3: Beginning Bird Walk, Fairmount Park—Doug Karalun
May 3: Box Springs—John Green
May 9: White Water Canyon—Steve Myers
May 16: Baby Birds at Bear Paw—Cin Gray-raven
June 6: Wrightwood—Gene Cardiff
July 11: Greenhorns—Steve Myers (this date is tentative)
August 22: Insane Jaunt/Salton Sea—John Green

Field Trip Checklist

Comfortable shoes or hiking boots, hat, sunscreen, insect repellent..
 A good Road Map,
 Full fuel tank, drinking water, snacks and lunch, binoculars and or a scope, field guide
 Come and Enjoy. Call Field Trip Leader for last minute cancellations, questions or changes... 🐦



White-headed Woodpecker, Lisa Walraven

THE WESTERN MEADOWLARK

c/o San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society
P. O. Box 10973

Nonprofit Organization
U. S. Postage
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San Bernardino, CA

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National Audubon Society (NAS):

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- ☐ NAS Regular Membership* \$35
- ☐ NAS Gift Membership \$20.
- ☐ Senior/Student (with id) Membership \$15

Please make check payable to **National Audubon Society**

Includes chapter membership & Meadowlark if in SBVAS area

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- ☐ SBVAS Donation _____

Please make check payable to **SBVAS**

SBVAS Chapter
C97C110Z

MAKES A GREAT GIFT



All meetings in the San Bernardino County Museum 2024 Orange Tree Lane, Redlands

Board Meetings are the 1st Wed.

General meetings are the 3rd Wed. SBVAS Membership currently at 1,795

To reach the Museum, take the California Street exit off the 10 Freeway and go north 1 block to Orange Tree Lane—turn right. The museum will be on your left...

Everyone is always welcome
Program Chair: Dori Myers

JUNE POTLUCK DINNER,

Ends Audubon's Year

June 17, 2008

Program for Wednesday at 6:30 PM

Help us celebrate the end of our chapter's year, the beginning of summer and the joy of nature at our June potluck dinner. We will begin our evening of camaraderie at 6:30 p.m., an hour earlier than usual at the San Bernardino County Museum. SBVAS will supply a turkey and a ham as well as beverages. Please bring a dish to share either a salad, vegetable, casserole, or dessert. Please remember to bring your own table service. Officers will be installed. This usually takes only a few minutes and then our members will provide the program by bringing 10-15 of their favorite nature slides to share. This is a great annual event and is fun for everyone. *Come enjoy good friends, food and what is certain to be a terrific evening.* ♡

Bearpaw Ranch

is SBVAS's 70 acre nature sanctuary, operated by the San Bernardino Audubon Society and may be visited 7 days a week from dawn 'til dusk by members of Audubon and their guests. Bearpaw Ranch is nestled on the north slope of scenic Mill Creek Canyon at 4,500 feet elevation, surrounded by the towering peaks of the San Bernardino National Forest. To reach Bearpaw Ranch, take Highway 38 to the Forest Falls turnoff. Go only a few car lengths on Valley of the Falls Dr. and look for our small wooden sign on the right. We have a new paved road, the entry is easy for almost all normal passenger cars. There is an electronically operated entry gate. Members who wish to visit the Sanctuary should call ahead for the security code. Access to the code may be had by calling—Bearpaw at (909) 794-0509. Bearpaw Sanctuary, 38801 Valley of the Falls Drive P.O. Box 88; Forest Falls, CA 923396

DATED MATERIAL - Please Expedite

