



TULARE TAPPINGS

Tulare County Audubon Society

In the Heart of California's San Joaquin Valley
Gateway to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

SEPTEMBER 2009

September Program: Alison Sheehey, Audubon California Kern River Preserve

Alison Sheehey, aka Nature Ali, is the Outreach Director for California Audubon's Kern River Preserve. Tonight, she will share news on the Kern River Preserve as well as provide information on the planning efforts towards the new visitor center.

A native of New York, she moved to California in 1976 and then to the westside of Kern County in 1980. She now lives in the Kern River Valley on Audubon's Kern River Preserve. Her deep appreciation of all things Kern began with her explorations of the desert environs of the Temblor Range (the western border of Kern County) where she fell in love with the intricacies of the geology, flora and fauna in a place many regarded as an ugly wasteland. As Outreach Director, Alison's duties include authoring the website:

<http://kern.audubon.org>, writing the newsletters and educational materials, leading field trips, and coordinating nature festivals. A member of the Audubon Society since 1985, she has been a staunch environmental advocate since she was a child when she participated in the original Earth Day celebration. Her website natureali.org provides an encyclopedia of free information on the natural history of Kern County.

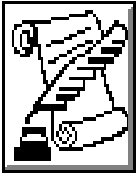
Please join us at the Tulare County Office of Education (at the corner of Woodland and Burrel Avenues in Visalia) on **Friday, September 18, 2009, at 7:00 p.m.**

Articles for Tappings

TCAS welcomes submissions of articles on bird sightings, conservation, and environmental issues, book reviews, and whatever else you think may be of interest. Please submit by the 15th of each month for the next month's newsletter. Articles in electronic format (disk, CD, or E-mail) are highly encouraged to save time and trees! Send to Jihadda Govan at P.O. Box 670, Delano, CA 93216, or E-mail to jihadda@earthlink.net

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Monthly Message

Dearest Readers...Welcome to another fabulous season of programs, trips afield, and general good times. As we reflect on the fall and winter seasons that are nearly upon us, please take the time to plan on attending one of the upcoming field trips.

The breezes taste
Of apple peel.
The air is full
Of smells to feel-
Ripe fruit, old footballs,
Burning brush,
New books, erasers
Chalk, and such.
The bee, his hive,
Well-honeyed hum,
And Mother cuts
Chrysanthemums.
Like plates washed clean
With suds, the days
Are polished with
A morning haze."

By: John Updike

But now in September the garden has cooled, and with it my possessiveness. The sun warms my back instead of beating on my head ... The harvest has dwindled, and I have grown apart from the intense midsummer relationship that brought it on.

By: Robert Finch

Departing summer hath assumed
An aspect tenderly illumed,
The gentlest look of spring;
That calls from yonder leafy shade
Unfaded, yet prepared to fade,
A timely carolling.

By: William Wordsworth

The foliage has been losing its freshness through the month of August, and here and there yellow leaf shows itself like the first gray hair amidst the locks of a beauty who has seen one season too many.

By: Oliver Wendell Holmes

The true beloved of this world are in their lover's eyes lilacs opening, ship lights, school bells, a landscape, remembered conversations, friends, a child's Sunday, lost voices, one's favorite suit, autumn and all seasons, memory, yes, it being the earth and water of existence, memory.

By: Truman Capote



Outdoor Expo, Kern National Wildlife Refuge, Saturday, September 29, 2009

Have you ever wanted to know how to shoot a bow and arrow? How about what you need to go camping? Hunting? Have you ever thought, 'What exactly do hunters do and why?' Well, here's your chance to challenge yourself, and broaden your horizons by learning more about those other recreational activities. Saturday, September 26, 2009, is National Public Lands Day, and to celebrate this important day of recognition of our public lands, Kern National Wildlife Refuge is inviting everyone to come out and learn more about the Refuge and all that it has to offer!

The day will begin at 7:00 am with volunteers showing their support of the refuge by helping prepare for the fall waterfowl season by cleaning areas of brush, weeds, and garbage.

Refuge staff will also be hosting an ongoing children's activity table where kids will be able to invent fanciful birds from their imagination, color, and learn about bird feathers and nests.

Other activities will include learning what ducks eat, examining invertebrates under a microscope, hunter ethics discussion; live animal exhibits by folks from CALM, making animal tracks, and a free raffle. Everyone is welcome to stay, ask questions, and also to enjoy a free lunch, complete with beverages and dessert, at noon!

For more information, call the refuge office at 661-725-2767 or visit the web site at www.fws.gov/kern

Join us for a chance to find out more about various recreational opportunities on your public lands.

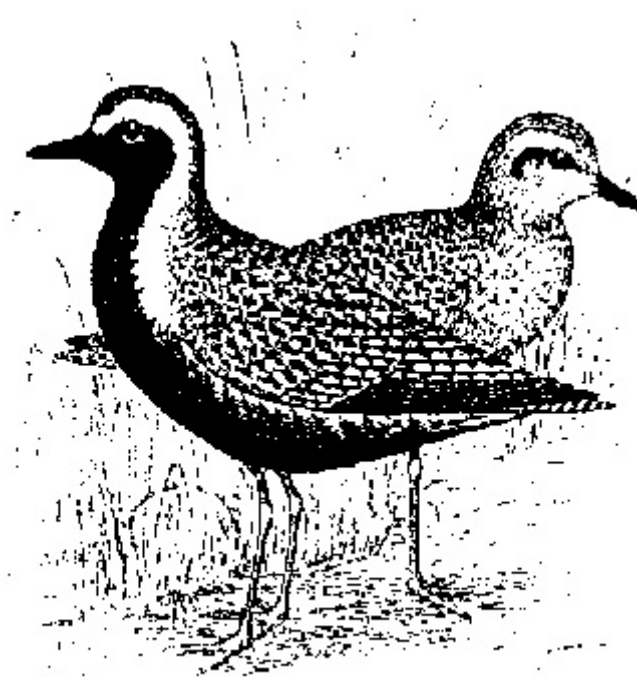


Long-billed Curlew

As its name implies, the Long-billed Curlew stands out for its long, decurved bill (curved down) and its large size. In fact this is the largest shorebird in North

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America. The largest females (males are smaller) can have bills exceeding 200 mm and body masses over 900 g. During the summer, this species breeds in open grasslands, including some agricultural fields (especially in the Great Basin) from central Oregon and north-eastern California east to the mid-western states as well as in the grassland regions of southern British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. Of the Numeniini, this shorebird has one of the shortest migrations, mainly migrating west and south to wintering areas including interior regions of California, Texas, and Mexico but especially coastal California, Mexico, and Texas. A small number of curlews winter along the coast of southeastern USA.



General breeding biology

Long-billed Curlews breed in open grasslands, especially in areas where grass is shorter. They form a cup nest on the ground, that they line with various material, and almost always lay 4-egg nests. The incubation period is 27-29 days, and young are almost immediately mobile. After hatching, chicks are moved to areas of higher grass cover for protection against predators and are brooded by both parents until they are about two weeks old. On breeding grounds, curlews appear to mainly feed on invertebrates like grasshoppers and beetles but will also eat bird eggs and their young.

Migration and Wintering Ecology

Relative to other curlews and godwits, these are

short distance migrants, sometimes making it from breeding grounds to wintering areas in less than two days. Tend to migrate in flocks of less than 50 birds and there is some suggestion that family units may migrate together. Some birds appear to stage in certain agricultural areas like the Central Valley and Imperial Valley of California, before continuing on to final winter destinations.

Wintering ecology

In the Pacific region, a significant number of Long-billed Curlews winter in interior valleys of California, while the rest winter along the coast. Along the west coast, the largest concentrations of curlews occur at San Francisco Bay. Coastal birds feed on tidal flats and on beaches, using their long bills to probe for invertebrates like Ghost Shrimp. They are often seen roosting in mixed flocks with Marbled Godwits.

Conservation status

Total population is estimated at 123,500 individuals (Morrison et al. 2007). Under the US Shorebird Conservation Plan (see <http://www.fws.gov/shorebirdplan/>), they are a species of High Concern mainly due to population declines over parts of their range, their low population

size, and threats to their non-breeding and breeding grounds.



**Field Trip: Valley Wetlands-
Fall Migration, Saturday,
September 26, 2009**

Join us on our first field trip of the season as we revisit some of our local wetlands and ponds such as Tulare Sewage Ponds, the Stockyard Ponds, the *Continued...*

Kansas Avenue Ponds, the Toledo Pits, the Hanford Sewage Ponds, the Jersey Avenue Ponds, and the Nevada Avenue Ponds.

Some of the highlights from past trips to this area are resident breeders like the sleek Black-necked Stilts, the elegant American Avocets, the loud Killdeers, the strange-looking White-faced Ibises, Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Ruddy Ducks, Mallards, Cinnamon Teals, American Coots, Eared and Pied-billed Grebes, and possibly Redheads.

Another wetland that we will explore is the Stoil Ponds, which are almost directly across Highway 43 from the Pixley National Wildlife Refuge. This site, intermixed with marshes, mud-flats, grasslands, and shallow ponds, hosts the largest concentrations of American White Pelicans, gulls, night-herons, and shorebirds in Tulare County.

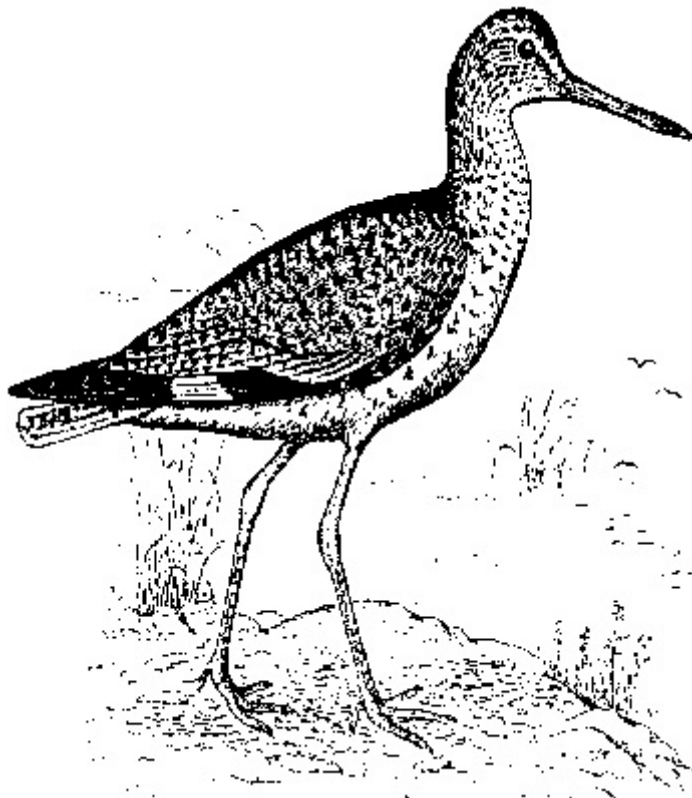
Some of our migrating shorebirds seem to be found at only one or two of these ponds, apparently having more specialized habitat requirements, causing us to explore many different ponds just to add these birds to our list. These more specialized migrants do not winter in our area, but only pass through on their way to South and Central America, stopping only briefly for a quick pit stop to fill up their fuel tank. We can only enjoy the company of these migrants in our area for a short two or three-week window, making these birds a real treat to find. Some of these uncommon temporary migrants include Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes, Lesser

Yellowlegs, and Marbled Godwits.

As this past winter was rather dry, we will "play it by ear" so to speak this day and visit other nearby wetland areas as needed.

Directions: To join us on this memorable trip, meet at the south side of the Sears parking lot in Visalia (corner of Mooney and Caldwell) on Saturday,

September 27th at 7:15 a.m. We will leave promptly at 7:30 a.m. Bring family, friends, binoculars, a spotting scope (if you have one), bird book, a hat, sunscreen, plenty of water, and a lunch. For more information, please contact John Lockhart at 559-303-9706 or j_1_lockhart@sbcglobal.net.



15th Annual Kern River Valley Autumn Nature and Vulture Festival, Saturday, September 26, 2009

Our late September festival dates also correspond with what is historically one of the finest weekends for observing fall land bird migration in California. In addition to the presence of many western migrants attractive to eastern birders, there are excellent

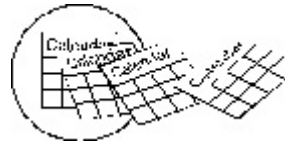
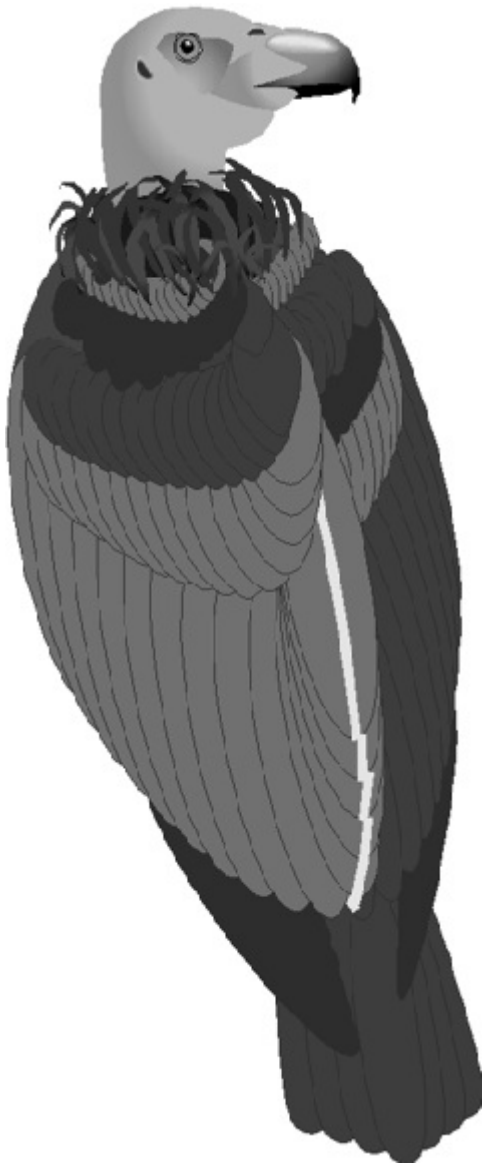
chances for observing eastern rarities at nearby desert oases. This year we offer Booths/Exhibits/Children's Activities at the Kern River Preserve as well as field trips. It is with pleasure and anticipation that we cordially invite you to our annual festival. Join us in celebrating the phenomenon of Turkey Vulture migration and the other natural wonders of fall in the Kern River Valley!

The Kern River Valley Turkey Vulture Festival is an annual celebration of the fall migration of Turkey Vultures. From 1994-2006 from the beginning of September through the third week in October, an average of 25,000 have been seen flying over a single point in the South Fork Valley. The vulture count included only the birds that pass over this single

observation point, five miles south of the Kern River

Preserve. Many other vultures have been casually observed leaving via other routes in the Kern Valley and were not included in the census (speculation on fluctuations of numbers each year leads us to believe while the Kelso Valley is the preferred migration route, some years it is not the optimum and not used as much). This Pacific Flyway vulture migration is one of the five largest known in North America.

For more information, visit www.natureali.org



Calendar of Events

Sept. 18 Chapter Meeting and Program

Alison Sheehey, Kern Audubon Preserve's Outreach Director will share information on upcoming events and the status of the visitor center.

Sept. 26 Field Trip

Please, bring a friend along and join us on the first field trip of the season. Valley Wetlands and favorite birding hotspots will be our targets for this annual favorite!