

Friends of the Kern River Preserve

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Hummingbird photo & art by Alison Sheehey

HUMMINGBIRD CELEBRATION FEATURES BANDING & LATEST RESEARCH

By *Betsy Steele*

Those little sprites of the bird world—hummingbirds—are reliable charmers at the preserve, especially in mid-summer. Darting around the feeders, dive-bombing interlopers, perching and preening, the hummingbirds go about their business within close range of quiet, delighted observers.

And for the past two years, the preserve has hosted special weekends to celebrate these tiny birds—six species of which can be seen here. This summer, the celebration will be on July 27-29 and August 3-5, with classes, slide shows, lectures, field trips and hummingbird banding.

Donald Mitchell, a hummingbird specialist from the University of Minnesota, has been conducting research in the Kern Valley and surrounding mountains for several years. He is particularly interested in finding out how feeders may have affected the distribution and migratory habits of hummingbirds. And he's especially knowledgeable about Allen's, having written the *Birds of North America's* account on this species, which so closely resembles the rufous.

See **HUMMINGBIRD** on page 2

“BIRDS OF A FEATHER” ENJOYED FIELD TRIP AT THIS YEAR'S BIOREGIONS FESTIVAL

By *Betsy Steele*

Feather sleuthing was the focus of a workshop held during the Bioregions Festival. Led by John Schmitt, *Feathers in the Field* was a fascinating foray into the chief characteristic that defines birds.

And Schmitt, as the lead detective, provided clues and insights about these marvelous structures and the species they come from in our area.

A superb birder, taxidermist and world-renowned artist, whose work is featured in a number of bird field guides (including *National Geographic's Birds of North America*), Schmitt has been a naturalist “since I was about seven-years-old,” he said.

And feathers were one of his favorite things to collect. “I’d see a feather and just could not leave it on the ground.”

During the field trip, neither could we. Picking up a few gray feathers clinging to a shrub along the road to the preserve, Schmitt helped us reveal the story they told. They were from a mourning dove that had been caught by an accipiter probably just a few days earlier. We saw where the raptor had perched, plucked its meal and “white-washed” a log. We examined the plumage details that labeled the prey as a dove.

See **FEATHER** on page 7

Friends of the Kern River Preserve

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The Kern River Preserve is managed by Audubon-California for the preservation of California's largest contiguous cottonwood-willow riparian forest and the wildlife it supports. The Friends of the Kern River preserve is a membership organization that provides financial support for the Preserve. Your support is critical to the success of the Kern River Preserve. Please consider making a donation by filling out the attached form and mailing it to the Friends.

PRESERVE MANAGER..... REED TOLLEFSON
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NEWSLETTER EDITOR..... BOB BARNES
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WEBMASTER..... ALISON SHEEHEY
MASTHEAD ART WORK..... KEITH HANSEN

HUMMINGBIRD: *Continued from page 1*

Last year, Mitchell's banding stations were a highlight of the festival—especially when peak numbers of migrating rufous hummingbirds started to show up.



With practiced reflexes, Mitchell and his assistants drop the trap door on a cage when enough of the hummers have swarmed inside for nectar. Gently capturing and placing the little birds in mesh bags, the researchers take measurements, affix minuscule bands and mark the birds with dabs of pigment for future reference.

Mitchell will be leading an Advanced Hummingbird I.D. and Natural History Field Workshop August 3-5. It's an opportunity to learn more about plumages, calls, flight displays, status and distribution of black-chinned, Anna's, Costa's, calliope, rufous and Allen's hummingbirds. Participants will venture afield to favorite hummer foraging sites and feeding stations in Mitchell's research zone.

Although the celebration weekends pay special homage to hummers, anytime from mid-March through mid-October visitors are welcome to become enthralled by the hummingbirds at the preserve's very active feeding stations!

For current Hummingbird Celebration information, visit the Kern River Preserve website. ❖

**WOODDUCKS FIND FRIENDS
IN HABITAT CLUB:**

**Volunteers work hard to provide nest shelters
for these beautiful waterfowl**

By Betsy Steele

Kern Valley Fish and Game Habitat Club members have been wading the South Fork shallows, climbing shaky ladders placed against trees, paddling equipment-laden boats and forging their way through nettle thickets in order to put up nesting boxes for wood ducks at the Kern River Preserve.

Nesting success has risen and fallen over the years since monitoring of the boxes began, in 1996.

“Last year was a pretty good one, but the two previous ones were pretty lousy,” said Don Tolle, a dedicated habitat club member. In January, all 38 boxes (in various locations around the Kern Valley) were checked and maintained in advance of the breeding season.

About 24 of the boxes held signs of successful nesting—wood duck egg shells and lots of fluffy down.

Two of the boxes in the Brown Mill Pond area have been taken over by screech owls and honey bees. “When we went back this year, we thought ‘will they be here again’—and they sure were,” Tolle said. “But that’s okay; they’re acceptable tenants too.”

The previous year, 1999, there appeared to be a high incidence of bad eggs and evidence of double clutches, in which more than one female lays eggs that are then abandoned. According to wildlife biologists, this commonly indicates insufficient nest sites for the population.

When the Habitat Club put up more next boxes, the hatching success seemed to improve greatly—especially along the Sierra Way bridge trail. Eggshells were noted in all 12 boxes now located there, where most had failed before—often due to double clutching.

Thanks to the club's efforts, these beautiful waterfowl may be seen—and heard—more often in the Kern Valley in future years. ❖

THANKSGIVING IN COSTA RICA: NATURAL HISTORY AND BIRDWATCHING

MURRELET HALTERMAN presents a natural history and general birding field trip to Costa Rica to benefit Audubon-California's Friends of the Kern River Preserve and the Southern Sierra Research Station

Costa Rica has been called the jewel of the tropics—well known for its great birding, friendly people, and conservation of natural resources.

We will visit three of the most incredible places in Costa Rica, and sample a variety of habitats. Habitats will include: mid-elevation tropical rainforest, high mountain cloud and elfin forests, and coastal rainforest. We will begin the trip in Tapanti, one of Costa Rica's most recent National Parks. One of the wettest places in the country, we look for Black-bellied Hummingbirds, Prong-billed Barbets, and mixed tanager flocks. Next we will move on to San Gerardo de Dota. This area, fast becoming one of the most popular birding locations in Costa Rica, is well known for Resplendent Quetzals, Long-tailed Silky Flycatchers, and many species of Hummingbird. We will end the trip in Carara National Park, an incredible place with Scarlet Macaws, Chestnut-collared Antbirds, and fabulous mixed-species flocks of tanagers, honeycreepers, and warblers. Although birds will provide the focal point, this trip to Costa Rica will offer a wide range of natural history and cultural experiences.

DATES: Saturday, November 17 – Sunday, November 25, 2001 (Detailed background and complete trip itinerary is found below)

LEADER: Murrelet Halterman (assisted by Bob Barnes)

Murrelet Halterman is Project Director with the Southern Sierra Research Station with a MS degree from California State University, Chico where she conducted her masters thesis research on habitat use of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo. She has worked on research projects as diverse as ecology of the Spotted Owl, riparian breeding bird surveys, salamander distribution, and carnivore surveys. She has traveled extensively in Latin America for the past eleven years and has led seven trips and spent over twelve months in Costa Rica during that time.

BACKGROUND & ITINERARY: We have timed this trip to coincide with the Thanksgiving holidays. We will visit three very different areas, to sample a variety of different habitats (and different birds!) of Costa Rica. Because our group size will be small, we get better looks

at the birds. On November 17 we will begin in the upper rainforest, just a few hours from the San Jose Airport. We will spend several days in the mountains here, then head to San Gerardo de Dota for two nights. We will then bird our way down to the Pacific coast, for three nights near Carara, one of the most incredible of Costa Rica's National Parks. We will spend our last night near San Jose, and fly out on Sunday, November 25.

Day 1, November 17: Arrive in San Jose by noon. We will have lunch, then head up to Kiri Lodge, one mile outside of the mid-elevation Atlantic-slope habitat of Tapanti National Park. After a few hours of rest, we will go into the park and look for Black-bellied Hummingbirds, Emerald Toucanet, Red-headed Barbet, and Prong-billed Barbet. Night at Kiri Lodge.

Day 2, November 18: We will drive to Tapanti for a picnic breakfast at the entrance to the park. Afterwards we will walk up into the park, looking for mixed flocks of warblers and tanagers including White-winged Tanager and Spangle-cheeked Tanager. In the afternoon, we will return to Kiri Lodge. We will take a late-afternoon walk down the road birding the second-growth habitat for spinetails, Yellow-faced Grassquit, Montezuma Oropendula, and Brown Jay. Night at Kiri Lodge.

Day 3, November 19: We will leave Kiri Lodge after breakfast, and bird our way to San Gerardo de Dota where we will spend two nights. I call this cool cloud forest "Quetzal City". In addition to Resplendent Quetzals we may see White-winged Tanager, Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher, and numerous other cloud forest species. The food is great and the nights are cool. Night at San Gerardo de Dota.

Day 4, November 20: Birding around San Gerardo de Dota all day. This is one of few areas in Costa Rica where Acorn Woodpeckers are found. It is a good area for Collared Redstart and mixed flocks of warblers and tanagers. We may see Three-striped and Flame-throated warblers, Sooty-capped Bush-tanager, and White-eared Ground-sparrow. You may have a trout lunch at nearby Cabinas Chacon, where we will watch the excellent

hummingbird feeders for Volcano Hummingbird, Violet Sabrewing, and Purple-throated Mountain-Gem. After lunch we will walk the road up from our hotel where in the past we have seen Resplendent Quetzal, Torrent Tyrannulet, Collared Redstart, Green Violet-ear, Barred Becard, Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Black-and-yellow Silky-flycatcher and Sooty Robin. Night at San Gerardo de Dota.

Day 5, November 21: Leave San Gerardo de Dota after a morning of birding. We will casually drive and bird our way to Carara Biological Reserve. We will spend three nights here, and can look forward to seeing Scarlet Macaws, Royal Flycatcher, Blue-throated Goldentail, and Black-hooded Antshrike. Night at Villa Lapas.

Day 6, November 22: Happy Thanksgiving! But instead of Wild Turkeys, we will head into Carara Biological Reserve early in the morning, looking for “Pava”—Crested Guan. We will spend all day here. Walking the trails looking for Blue-crowned Motmot, Baird’s and Violaceous Trogons, Golden-naped Woodpecker, White-tipped Dove, Riverside Wren, Keel-billed Toucan, Fiery-billed Aracari, Plain Xenops, Golden-crowned Spadebill, and many other resident birds as well as a large variety of migrants such as Red-eyed Vireo, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Yellow-throated Vireo, and many others. Along the road we may see Laughing Falcon, along with Pale-billed Woodpecker and other resident and migrant species. We will take along a picnic lunch, since the birding will probably be so incredible we won’t want to go back to the hotel. Dinner and bird review at the Hotel Villa Lapas.

Day 7, November 23: We will spend another bird-filled day in Carara National Park. We will hope to once again see flocks of Scarlet Macaw, mixed flocks of warblers and tanagers, Squirrel Cuckoo and, with a lot of luck, White-necked Puffbird and Orange-collared Manakin. We will return to the hotel for lunch. The afternoon will be free to sit by the river, relax on the porch, or walk the trails. We will have a late-afternoon walk on the local trails, or possibly in Carara, for those who wish to go out. Night at Villa Lapas.

Day 8, November 24: We will spend the morning birding around the hotel, then drive out to the Rio Tarcoles for some shorebird action! We will see many familiar faces, such as Caspian Tern, Western Gull, and Ruddy Turnstone. We also will look for Magnificent Frigatebirds, Brown Pelicans, Gull-billed Tern, Sandwich Tern, Black Skimmer,

and Laughing Gull. We will then bird our way to our hotel, in the hills above San Jose. Farewell Dinner and bird list.

Day 9, November 25: Depart from San Jose Airport. We will make arrangements for transportation from the hotel to the airport.

COST: \$1,700.00 for the nine-day trip based on double occupancy (Single room supplement: \$200). Includes all food, accommodations, daily local guides, boat trip, all transportation within Costa Rica, and all entrance fees. Transportation to and from our starting point in Costa Rica is not included. Accommodations will range from quite nice to slightly run-down but clean. Trip costs above actual expenses are fully tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

PARTICIPANTS: 5 minimum, 10 maximum.

PAYMENT: Check for \$500 non-refundable deposit by August 1, 2001 (balance by October 1, 2001) made out to “SSRS - Costa Rica “ and mailed to SSRS-Costa Rica, PO Box 953, Weldon, CA 93283.

DONATION: The Southern Sierra Research Station is a 501(c)3, fully tax-deductible, non-profit organization. For tax purposes, you will receive a letter by December 31, 2001, letting you know of the amount of your donation above actual trip expenses.

AIRFARE (not included): Airfare from LAX should run between \$600 and \$800. It may be more expensive from departure points farther east in North America. Different carriers will be lowest at different times and prices fluctuate wildly. A minimum of 5 participants and a maximum of 10 will be allowed for the trip. Transportation will be in an air-conditioned bus.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Bob Barnes (760) 378-3044 (24-hours), or e-mail (best!): krpfriends@lightspeed.net, or snail mail: P.O. Box 953, Weldon, CA 93283.

NOTE: This itinerary may be changed slightly and a final completely correct itinerary will be provided before the actual trip, along with an information handout, questionnaire, and a species checklist.

THANKS: Thanks abundantly to Murrelet Halterman for offering this trip as a benefit on behalf of Audubon-California’s Friends of the Kern River Preserve and the Southern Sierra Research Station. ❖

HAWK WATCHING, BIRDING, AND OTHER FUN IN THE STATE OF VERACRUZ, MEXICO — FALL 2001

By Jim Royer

While the state of Veracruz has not received the birding attention given to other regions of Mexico, it still came as a shock when Ernesto Ruelas and others from Pronatura documented the largest hawk migration in the world, in the fall of 1992—just north of the city of Veracruz. This amazing migration had been reported earlier in the century (Frank Chapman et al.) and had, of course, been known to the residents of central Veracruz for centuries, but its magnitude had never been documented as no one had monitored this flight to determine actual numbers.

Up to 1,000,000 migrating raptors have been seen in one day at one spot and over 5,000,000 in a season (21 species)! When this migration is combined with an additional 19 species of resident raptors, this state in eastern Mexico is a hawk watcher's dream. If weather conditions are right we should see 200,000 or more individual raptors on the trip. In addition to several hawk watching days we will visit coastal riparian habitat, fresh water and brackish lagoons, a migrant trap in an urban park, coastal scrub, rainforest, a coffee plantation, grassland, and other habitats for a total of approximately 260 - 320 species of birds.

Besides birding, we will watch butterflies (many beautiful species which we can identify with the aid of a unique field guide put together by Southern California butterfly enthusiast Wanda Dameron) and other wildlife. We will visit a grand archaeological museum, a botanical garden, and pre-Columbian ruins; as well as savor some of the history, culture, and wonderful food (the best seafood I have ever had) of Veracruz. Although the emphasis of this trip will obviously be birds (especially hawks), this trip is meant to be a sampler of the natural and cultural history of Veracruz—not a life lister's marathon. The group will take breaks, enjoy nice meals, watch butterflies, and do much more than just chase birds. While the trip will not attempt to compile as large a list as possible in eleven days at the expense of all else, well over 200 species will be tallied. The pace will sometimes be fast (with a couple of long drives), but the walks will be mostly easy with some moderate hill climbing. If physical abilities or interests so dictate, we can break into two groups. Accommodations will range from quite nice to slightly run-down but clean. Profits are a tax deductible donation to KRP and SSRS.

DATES: Sunday, September 30 - Wednesday, October 10, 2001

LEADER: Jim Royer

Jim Royer has been a leader of Audubon Society fieldtrips for

over 20 years along with other groups such as the Western Field Ornithologists, Kern River Research Center, San Francisco Zoological Society, Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, and the Kern Bioregions Festival. He has birded in Veracruz for parts of the past six years. While his groups have consistently had the highest species totals of the groups visiting Veracruz in the fall, they have also been fun trips. A species list of prior trips is available on request from Jim at the address or e-mail below.

ITINERARY:

Day 1, September 30: All participants should take the same flight from Mexico City to Veracruz City (or else be at the Hotel Bienvenido, in Cardel, the night before). From Veracruz City we will drive to the best hawk observation spot. We will spend the night at the Hotel Bienvenido in Cardel where we will eat dinner, make introductions, and discuss hawk identification and orientation for the trip.

Day 2, October 1: After an early light breakfast at Hotel Bienvenido and early morning birding at San Vicente along La Antigua River for a wide variety of birds (Ringed Kingfisher, White-crowned Parrot, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Red-billed Pigeon, various Swallows, Rufous-naped and Band-backed Wrens, Altamira Oriole, Melodius Blackbird, Blue-grey and Yellow-winged Tanager, and migrants) we will return for more hawk watching at either Cardel or nearby Chichicaxtle (both official hawk watch stations). The location of the hawk migration will determine our lunch spot (possibly the car). After the hawks slow down we will bird the Chichicaxtle area (Bat Falcon, Laughing Falcon, Blue-grey Tanager, Red-billed Pigeon, Couch's Kingbird, Blue-black Grassquit, and Melodius Blackbird) and either Rancho Escondido or Puente Nacional to look for Mexican Sheartail and other birds. Dinner and bird review in Cardel before a third night at Hotel Bienvenido.

Day 3, October 2: After an early light breakfast at the hotel, we will start with an optional 6:15 am trip to Laguna San Julian (herons, N. Jacana, Grey and Roadside Hawks, Crested Caracara, Common and Ruddy Ground Doves, kingfishers, Black-headed Saltator, the three similar Tyrant flycatchers—Social, Boat-billed and Great Kiskadee, Brown Jay, and Melodius Blackbird) and Laguna Catalana (Snail Kite?, Zone-tailed Hawk, jacana, Mangrove Swallow, Least Grebe, Y-c Night Heron, Anhinga, caracara, Ringed Kingfisher, Green Kingfisher, Amazon Kingfisher, Belted Kingfisher, and Yellow-faced Grassquit). We will arrive back in Cardel for the raptor

migration at approximately 10:00 am and have lunch in Cardel. We will spend midday watching migrating hawks and other likely migrants such as Wood Storks and Anhingas. After an afternoon trip to the Totanac ruins at Zempoala (Bronzed Cowbird) and a nearby beach (Aplomado Falcon, Gray and Roadside Hawks, Double-striped Thick-knee, Collared Plover and other shorebirds, Sandwich and other terns, and herons) we will spend another night in Cardel, with dinner and bird review at the Hotel Bienvenido.

Day 4, October 3: We will rise very early so that we will arrive at La Mancha at first light and breakfast at the car—to enable us to see as many species as possible at this beautiful preserve which contains a great range of habitats (possible Sungrebe, Boat-billed Heron, other herons, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, White Ibis, Aplomado Falcon, Common Black Hawk, Aztec Parakeet, Red-billed Pigeon, White-bellied Emerald, R-t Becard, Masked Tityra, M. Oropendola). It includes a pristine beach with terns, shorebirds, and frigatebirds overhead (take your swimsuit!). Time allowing, we will explore this section of coast and do some hawk watching before heading south to the rainforests of Catemaco and out stay at the Hotel Catemaco. On the way south, we will stop at Tlacotalpan and Alvarado, an immense river wetland/lagoon where Pronatura is working to catalog and preserve the native wildlife. We will look for lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Snail Kite, Black-collared Hawk, Limpkin, and Purple Gallinule. We will have dinner and a preview of the rainforest birds at the Hotel Catemaco.

Day 5, October 4: We will get going very early to bird the thick rainforest preserves at the Las Tuxlas Research Station (Blue-crowned Motmot, Collared and Violaceous Trogons, Golden-olive Woodpecker, White-tipped Dove, Spot-breasted Wren, Black-cowled Oriole, Keel-billed Toucan, Collared Aracari, Plain Xenops, Stub-tailed Spadebill, Black-throated Shrike-Tanager, Crimson-collared Tanager, and many other resident birds as well as a large variety of migrants such as Red-eyed Vireo, White-eyed Vireo, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Yellow-throated Vireo, and many others (in '96 we had 2 Swainson's Warblers)). We can eat breakfast and watch some berry-loaded trees which sometimes “drip” with birds. We will also take a walk next to nearby pasture land for such raptors as White Hawk, Great Black Hawk, Black Hawk Eagle, Bat Falcon, Laughing Falcon, and Pale-billed Woodpecker along with other resident and migrant species. In the afternoon, we will take a beautiful boat ride at Sontecomapan (brackish lagoon linked to the gulf) (Snail Kite, herons, anhingas, Neotropic Cormorant, Sungrebe, and many North American breeders such as Hooded Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, and Prothonotary Warbler if we hit a migrant wave) as well as a

possible crocodile. Dinner and bird review will precede a second night at the Hotel Catemaco. If some insomniac participants desire, we may try an optional evening owling excursion (Ferruginous Pygmy, Mottled, or maybe even Spectacled Owls and Potoo).

Day 6, October 5: More early morning birding at a local ejido or back in the Las Tuxlas Rainforest. This day provides more time to look for the local specialties such as Brown-hooded Parrot and Gray-breasted Chat. In the afternoon we may do some more rainforest birding and birding at the edge of a lagoon at either Nanciaga or La Jungla (Least Grebe, herons, jacana, rails such as Ruddy Crake (seldom seen), and mixed flocks of migrants and residents). Nightly bird review before retiring at the Hotel Catemaco.

Day 7, October 6: We will rise early again for some birding along rainforest in the hills above Catemaco. We will then pack up, and head for the large waterfall at Xico, and more birding. Then we will complete the drive to the lovely capital of the state of Veracruz—Xalapa (some maps say “Jalapa”)—where we will spend the night. We will stop enroute to look for Mexican Sheartail and other birds of the scrub. We will check in at the Posada de Cafetos, before a short tour of the downtown area and dinner and bird review at a restaurant near the hotel.

Day 8, October 7: We will start out before light for the drive to the mountains near Las Minas for higher elevation birds (Tufted Flycatcher, Mexican Chickadee, the Mexican form of Stellar's Jay, Dwarf Jay, White-breasted Wood Wren, Grey Silky, Crescent-chested Warbler, Red Warbler, Slate-throated Redstart, Rufous-capped Warbler, Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, Yellow-eyed Junco, and many North American breeders). After dinner and bird review we will spend a second night at Posada de Cafetos.

Day 9, October 8: Morning birding at a coffee finca near Xalapa. Such shade tree coffee plantations provide important habitat for bird populations. In the afternoon we will visit the Museo de Anthropologia which has a splendid exhibit of artifacts of the Olmec, Totanac, and other cultures of eastern Mexico (including many colossal Olmec stone heads). (I was blown away on my first visit to this beautiful museum). The grounds here can be birdy as well. This will be our last night at Posada de Cafetos and in Xalapa.

Day 10, October 9: We will start by birding right in Xalapa—at the Parque Ecologico Macuiltepetl—looking for resident species such as Blue Mockingbird, Squirrel Cuckoo, Green Jay, Rusty Sparrow, White-naped Brushfinch, and several hummingbird species along with mixed flocks of eastern and western North American breeders, and beautiful butterflies. We

can call Cardel to see if we want to drive back to Cardel for one last day of potentially phenomenal hawk watching (to be able to compare and contrast the hawks we see at this date with the species we saw one week before) We will bird our way back to Veracruz arriving at the Hotel Colonial for our last night of the trip. If time permits we can take a short tour of old Veracruz. The “zocalo” (square) adjacent to the hotel is the focus of old Veracruz with live music and celebration. Dinner and bird review at a local restaurant (excellent seafood and drinks) before starting our final pack and retiring.

Day 11, October 10: We will have one last opportunity to see some wetland birds and perhaps some hawk migration near the airport before we depart. If you are leaving on this day plan to schedule your departure flight with the group on Mexicana, as we will arrive at the airport for that flight, or make your own arrangements for a later time. Some may want to stay longer in Mexico once they are down there. You can rent a car in Veracruz (do not do it through U.S. companies—too expensive—but do it when you arrive in Mexico).

COST: \$1,990.00 for the eleven day trip, (payable with a non-refundable deposit of \$500 by July 31, 2001 and the remainder by September 1, 2001). Cost includes all food and accommodations between the afternoon of our arrival to the morning of the day of departure, daily local guides, boat trip, all transportation within Mexico, and all entrance fees. This cost is based on double occupancy (participants are responsible for securing a roommate, but we will provide names of other

unmatched participants if desired). A single occupancy supplement is available for an additional \$200.

AIRFARE (not included): Airfare from LAX should run between \$400 (with a senior discount) and \$600 (from Mexicana). It may be more expensive from departure points farther east in North America. Participants must arrange their own Mexicana flight from Mexico City to Veracruz and departure from Veracruz City on Wednesday, October 10 (unless you have made your own arrangements for staying on in Veracruz longer). Check prices for connecting flights to Mexico City with United, American, Aero Mexico, and Mexicana—different carriers will be lowest at different times and prices fluctuate wildly. A minimum of 5 participants and a maximum of 12 will be allowed for the trip. Transportation will be in two air-conditioned vans, with a leader in one van and a local driver in the other.

FOR MORE INFORMATION and to reserve a spot on this trip: call Jim Royer at 805/541-6850, e-mail to jimnogyys@aol.com, or “snail mail” to 991 Osos Street, Suite A, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401.

Reservations will be held after the \$500 deposit is received. This itinerary may be changed and a final completely correct itinerary will be provided before the actual trip. Please check on the exact flight times before booking your tickets—all participants should plan to arrive on the same flight in Veracruz and depart on the same flight unless arrangements are made otherwise. ❖

FEATHER: *Continued from page 1*

This feather find was coincidental. But others had been planted by Schmitt to give us a sense of what we might actually encounter in the field—on fence posts, dust-bathing sites, under an owl roost. With a vast feather collection—some kept since boyhood—Schmitt was able to show us subtleties, such as feathers sheared off by a mammal versus those plucked by a raptor; or duck versus quail downy underfeathers.

But it’s the wings and tail that can reveal the most, Schmitt said. Held in lateral profile, you can quickly tell whether it’s tail or wing plumage. The tail has a slight lift to the shaft; the wing is straight.

Reassembling a single bird’s plumage is a great way to appreciate the geometry of feather structure. Piecing a puzzle of robin feathers together and quizzed by Schmitt, we gradually got a feel for where each feather fits on bird anatomy.

Is it a primary or secondary wing feather? Is this underwing covert from a juvenile or adult bird? Is this breast feather from an accipiter or another type of raptor? From an owl or from one of the other two species that also have soft pile for whispering flight?

Schmitt answers these and many more complex questions about this “different aspect of bird-watching,” as he calls it.

Toward the end of the field trip, Schmitt got out a bag of small soft feathers. Standing some distance from a row of bird houses where tree swallows and bluebirds swooped, he released a flurry of potential nesting material. “Yesterday, they eagerly gathered these up,” he said.

Now that he’s a local resident of Wofford Heights, this talented artist and naturalist is looking forward to being more involved in the Kern Valley—especially during its nature festivals. ❖

INTERESTING HAPPENINGS...

Possible Yellow-legged Frogs Found at Preserve: Last sighting in Kern Valley dates back to 1949

He wasn't looking for them—but Buz Lunsford says that's often the way he finds things.

The herpetologist was poking around the Kern River Preserve just before the Turkey Vulture Festival last fall. Noting dozens of baby catfish in a fast-drying puddle near the irrigation ditch, Lunsford began a rescue effort, and in the process discovered three possible juvenile foothill yellow-legged frogs in the mud beneath the catfish.

This “species of special concern” in California—on the verge of being federally endangered—hadn't been noted in the Kern Valley since 1949.

In decline for decades, due to a deadly brew of factors such as habitat loss and disruption and the introduction of non-native bullfrogs, foothill yellow-legged frogs are rare little gems these days.

Although the sighting has yet to be officially confirmed by other academics in the field, Lunsford is convinced of the frogs' identity.

“There's no doubt in my mind—that's what they are; they are not juvenile bullfrogs as some may have thought,” Lunsford said—a statement that rings with affirmation for preserve manager, Reed Tollefson.

“It would be wonderful if we have them here... confirming how important [this habitat] is for so many species that are so imperiled in much of the state.”

As a Ph.D. herpetologist who has developed the reptile and amphibian checklists for all the National Parks in the southwest, Lunsford is now applying his talents in the Kern Valley. He hopes to put together a completely revised checklist of all the herps found here. So far, he's confirmed the presence of about 71 different species of snakes, lizards, frogs and salamanders. “Every day I'm out running around trying to put this together,” he said.

Sometimes he's standing in one place, too—with a small display of common species he's temporarily borrowed from their wild homes. Lunsford's “Herp-Ecology” exhibit will be one of the attractions at the September 28-30, Kern Valley Vulture Festival. ❖ *By Betsy Steele*

KRP Base Camp for Sound Recordings

Oregon's Geoffrey A. Keller used the Kern River Preserve as his base camp for securing recordings of sixty-four nesting species of birds for an upcoming CD, “Bird Songs of Central and Southern California.” The CD will be one of a series of regional recordings of bird songs produced by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds.

On two visits this spring, Geoff recorded extensively at KRP, the Cane Brake Ecological Reserve, along Kelso Valley Road, and in the surrounding mountains. He was taking advantage of the rich bioregional mix found here, leading to ease in finding numerous nesting bird species in diverse habitats in close proximity to his base camp at KRP.

KRP Friends volunteer and Onyx resident, Terri Gallion, worked with Geoff day after day to help him get the best recordings possible. She served as his guide to local areas and as his “eyes” while he concentrated on recording sounds. Geoff said Terri was the best field partner he had ever encountered in his recording career due to her extreme patience, dedication, and intuitive ability to remain silent during recording.

As a result of his remarkable success in recording here, Geoff said he expects the Kern River Preserve to receive special highest mention both in his booklet accompanying the CD and on the outside jacket cover.

The commercially available “Bird Songs of Central and Southern California” is planned for a 2002 release. ❖

Dragonflies Coming to the Kern

Terri Gallion has just developed a passion for dragonflies. As a result, she has started an e-mail network with people interested in learning about dragonflies in Kern County. Terri has scheduled Kathy Biggs, author of a book on California dragonflies, to give a dragonfly workshop during the April 26-28, 2002 Kern River Valley Bioregions Festival. She is also working to get a state, even national, conference on dragonflies held in the Kern River Valley. If you would like to work with Terri on these, or one or more of her many other projects, you may contact her at e-mail: vulturewatcher@yahoo.com ❖

THANK YOU DONORS & NEW MEMBERS

Your donation is critical to the success of the Kern River Preserve. The Friends of the Kern River Preserve is a membership organization formed to provide support for Audubon-California's newest preserve.

We want the Friends of the Kern River Preserve to meet your needs as well as the Preserve's. We recognize that your labor is as important as your dollars, so we have provided a way that you can become a member through the accumulation of your volunteer hours. Within a given year, if you work 15 hours you become a Friend, for 30 hours you become a Supporter, for 50 hours you become a Pacific Flyway Patrol member and for 100 hours you become a Raptor Circle member.

We would like to invite non-profit organizations, businesses and school classes to become members at the Pacific Flyway Patrol level or higher. These members will have the opportunity to use the Preserve headquarters for a field trip and receive a two-hour guided tour along the Nature Trail.

We have monthly workdays with potluck dinners for Friends of the Kern River Preserve. You will receive this newsletter to keep you up-to-date on our progress. And we have a t-shirt for our Supporter members and above.

We sincerely thank the following people who have so generously contributed so far this year to the Kern River Preserve. We regret any omissions or misspellings.

PACIFIC FLYWAY PATROL (\$100 - \$999)

Gary M. File - File's
Painting
Judy Fiskin
Ernie & Nancy Flores
Bill & Birdie Foster
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Barbara M. Garris
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Claire Hemingway
Robert & Judy Jacobs
Robert Knox
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR 2001

July 7 & 8 (Sat & Sun)—*3rd Annual South Fork Kern Rapid Assessment Summer Bird Count (Sat) & Kern River Valley Butterfly Count (Sun) Weekend*

July 13 - 16 (Fri-Mon)—*Sequoia AS (San Mateo County) SF Kern Field Trip*

July 27 (Fri) - August 5 (Sun)—*3rd Annual Kern River Valley Hummingbird Celebration*—Kern River Preserve, Weldon - Hummingbird banding, care and feeding of hummingbirds, status and distribution, migration, hummingbird research, binocular usage, Saturday evening slide and lecture presentations on California hummingbirds. NEW in 2001: Advanced Hummingbird ID Field Weekend Workshop

September 1 - October 20—*8th Annual Kern River Valley Turkey Vulture Watch*

September 15 (Sat)—*Kern Valley Pride Day*

September 28 - October 1—*7th Annual KRV Turkey Vulture, Raptor & Fall Migration Festival*

September 30 - October 10—*Veracruz, Mexico Hawk Watching & Birding Benefit Field Trip*

November 17 - November 25—*Costa Rica Natural History & Birdwatching Benefit Field Trip*

April 26 (Fri) - May 2 (Thurs), 2002—*8th Annual Kern River Valley Bioregions & Birding Festival*

June 21 - 24, 2002 (Fri-Mon)—*Palomar AS (San Diego County) SF Kern Field Trip*

July 13 & 14, 2002 (Sat & Sun)—*4th Annual South Fork Kern Rapid Assessment Summer Bird Count & KRV Butterfly Count Weekend*

September 27 - September 30, 2002—*8th Annual KRV Turkey Vulture, Raptor & Fall Migration Festival*

For more information on these and other events, please visit our website at: <http://frontpage.light speed.net/KRP/> or contact:

Bob Barnes—phone: (760) 378-3044 or e-mail: bbarnes@lightspeed.net

Reed Tollefson—phone/fax: (760) 378-2531 or e-mail: rtollefson@lightspeed.net

VULTURES, VULTURES, VULTURES, DO WE HAVE VULTURES!!!

The 7th Annual Kern Valley Turkey Vulture Festival is coming September 28 - October 1, 2001. The Vulture Fest is centered on the grounds at Kern River Preserve Headquarters. There are workshops, field trips, vulture drop-ins & lift-offs, and California Condor updates. Visit the KRP website for current Vulture Fest information.

With up to 33,000 vultures passing through every southbound fall migration, the Kern River Valley is receiving national attention in newspapers, on NPR, and on TV. In 1999, Willard Scott featured the Vulture Fest during his weather segment on The Today Show. In 2000, CBS Sunday Morning featured the vulture migration here in their traditional ending nature piece.

Although the Vulture Fest program will be in the mail in late July or early August, mark your calendars and make your lodging reservations now.

Those of us who organize and conduct the Vulture Fest and the September 1st through October 20th Kern Valley Vulture Watch & Count want more volunteers to make these events even better. Please consider offering your help. Contact Bob Barnes at e-mail: krpfriends@lightspeed.net and/or Terri Gallion at vulturewatcher@yahoo.com. Thank you. ❖

KERN RIVER PRESERVE

Wish List

If you have any of the following items on our "Wish List" or would like to make a tax-deductible donation of any kind to the Kern River Preserve, contact Reed at the Preserve by calling (760) 378-2531 or by e-mail at krpfriends@lightspeed.net.

- **Flatbed Trailer suitable for hauling a tractor or vehicle**
- **Medium Farm Tractor, Category III 3-point hitch**
- **Skilled volunteer painter, electrician, carpenter and/or plumber** - we will supply materials and a place for you to stay and/or camp. We will do our best to make you comfortable and welcome.

FRIENDS OF THE KERN RIVER PRESERVE
 NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY – CALIFORNIA
 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

5.2

Name: _____ Phone: (_____) _____
 Address: _____ Fax: (_____) _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 E-mail: _____ *NOTE: This is a change of address*

Please Make Checks Payable to: NAS/KRPFriends

Application for: <input type="checkbox"/> New Member <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal _____ \$1000 Raptor Circle _____ \$20 Friend _____ \$100 Pacific Flyway Patrol _____ Additional Contribution _____ \$50 Supporter \$ _____

_____ Please send me information on planned giving

_____ Please send me information on volunteer opportunities

All members (Friends and above) receive our newsletter
 New members at the \$50 Supporter level and above can receive a KRPFriends T-Shirt
 (please indicate size if you wish to receive a shirt)
 Small Medium Large XL XXL

Mail to: Friends of the Kern River Preserve • P.O. Box 833, Weldon, CA 93283

.....(please cut here and return with remittance).....

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Upcoming Preserve Saturday Service Workdays:

- **Where:** Kern River Preserve Headquarters
- **When:** 9 a.m. (Except for 8:30 a.m. on October 21st)
 - August 11, 2001
 - September 8, 2001
 - September 15, 2001 (Kern Valley Pride Day)
 - September 22, 2001 (Vulture Festival Grounds Preparation)
 - October 13, 2001
 - October 20 & 21, 2001 (3rd Annual Kelso Creek Sanctuary Campout & Service Weekend)
 - November 10, 2001
 - December 8, 2001
- **Bring:** A sack lunch and wear sturdy outdoor clothes.

CALL or EMAIL REED for details: (760) 378-2531 or rtoleffson@lightspeed.net



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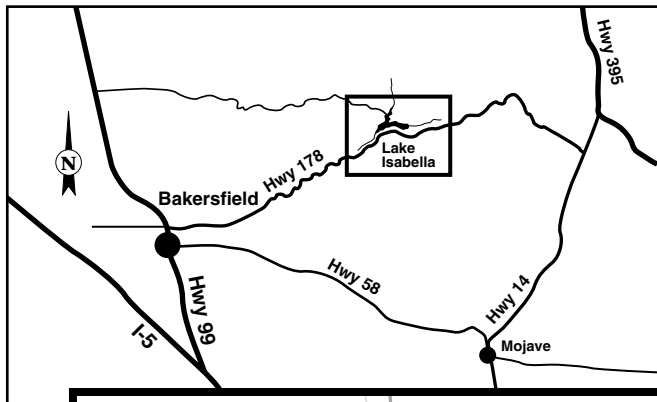
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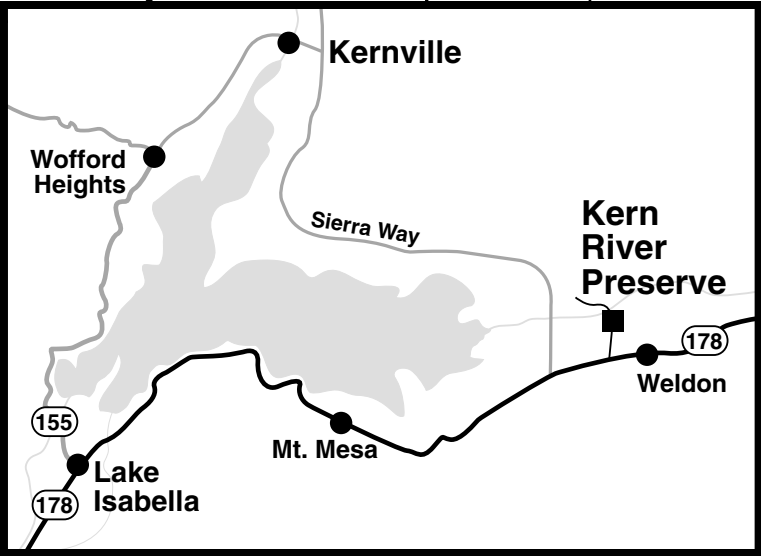


Coming Soon!
The 3rd Annual
**Kern River Valley
Hummingbird
Celebration**
July 27 - August 5



The Kern River Preserve is located 1.1 miles east of the intersection of State Highway 178 and Sierra Way in Weldon, Kern County, California.

Driving time from:
Los Angeles 3.5 hours
San Diego 5.5 hours
San Francisco 6.5 hours
Reno 7.5 hours



Current road conditions: (800) 427-7623

For further information about the

**FRIENDS OF THE
KERN RIVER PRESERVE,**

call: (760) 378-3044
e-mail: krpfriends@lightspeed.net
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