



Friends of the Kern River Preserve

Vol. Two No. Three

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CALIFORNIA

Third Quarter 1998

BIRDWATCHING IS NOT FOR THE BIRDS

by Reed Tollefson

Many people are only vaguely familiar with the mission of Audubon. At best we are often identified as the "those people that watch birds". Unfortunately, with most people, watching connotes a very passive activity, like watching television. Park yourself on the couch with the remote control and a bag of chips, put the brain and body into neutral, zone out and watch. At the end of the day you can reap what you have sown.

This is a completely inaccurate impression of the dynamic and thrilling sport of bird watching. Imagine stepping out into the Kern River Preserve in the cool pre-dawn of an autumn morning. The air is moist and fragrant. You stretch and breathe deep. Your ears are tuning in to the first scattered calls and peeps. It begins to warm and soon your ears are assailed as the morning chorus peaks, your binocs are up every three paces. Field markings blur and you can't get through the guide before you have to look at another flitting warbler, wren or tanager. Not at all passive, but don't be smug.

We need to do more. We need to actively engage ourselves in the protection of birds and their habitat. We need to reach out and educate people about the importance of birds, wildlife and a healthy environment. We absolutely must provide good stewardship of the Kern River Preserve.

We need you to make this a reality by building a positive and dynamic organization, the *Friends of the Kern River Preserve*. Only you can bring your talent, your energy and your enthusiasm to the preserve. We need to build our education program, excite our

festivals, support our research and actively care for our habitat. You know your skills and interests better than anyone does.

So, put our festivals and work parties on your calendar and bring at least one friend when you come. Visit the preserve and look around, the tremendous needs are apparent. Meet some of our hard core volunteers and research biologist and learn more about what needs to be done and how you can help. Take a good look at our wish list. Get someone to join the Friends of the Kern River Preserve or give them a gift membership.

Don't rely on the preserve staff and a few hardcore volunteers to get the job done, we are much too limited to give this place what it truly needs and deserves. Don't rely on us to take you by the hand and lead you along. Identify the needs, match them with your resources and get with the program. We need you to help the Friends of the Kern River Preserve to meet our tremendous challenges and to act on our many opportunities. When everyone who cares for this preserve applies his or her energy, skill and resources, our legacy will only be limited by our vision.

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON 1785-1851

John Audubon gave several different accounts of his birth, but the discovery of records in France in the early 1900's established that he was the son of a French Naval Captain and a French girl who worked for Captain

Audubon gave different stories and led some people to believe he was born in Louisiana or was the son of Louis XVI, the King of France

See JJA on page 2

FRIENDS OF THE KERN RIVER PRESERVE
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(760) 378-2531
krpfriends@lightspeed.net

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
Director of Kern Valley Outreach Bob Barnes
Newsletter Production Michael Henstra
Newsletter Contributors Sandra Wieser

JJA *continued from page 1*

Audubon at his sugar plantation in San Domingo (Haiti). Audubon's real mother died within a short time after his birth so Audubon's father took him back to France as a young child where he was adopted by Captain Audubon and his legal wife. Apparently to hide his illegitimate birth, Audubon gave different stories and led some people to believe he was born in Louisiana or was the son of Louis XVI, the King of France. A book entitled *I Who Should Command All*, leans heavily on the belief that Audubon was, in fact, the Lost Dauphin who disappeared from the tower during the French Revolution.

As a teenager, Captain Audubon sent his son to manage his plantation near Philadelphia. It was here that Audubon met and married his wife, Lucy, whose support was critical in achieving his success. During his early married years he was unsuccessful in business and attained fame as an artist only after many troubled years.

Audubon succeeded only because he went to England where his work was appreciated and subscribers made possible the long publication of his 435 prints (1826 to 1838). In the 1830's Audubon also wrote his *Ornithological Biography* which describes the habits of the birds he drew. He interspersed these bird

biographies with episodes on life in America during this turbulent period. His writings are now considered a literary treasure and should be explored by the serious Audubon collector.

After being successful with the birds, as with any great artist, Audubon turned to another subject and undertook to publish the animals of America. This proved more difficult than he had anticipated, as many of our animals were nocturnal and their habits were hard to learn. He was greatly aided by a Lutheran minister in Charleston, South Carolina, Dr. John Bachman, whose daughters were the first wives of his two sons, John W. and Victor Audubon. In fact, John drew over half of the 155 animal plates, and Victor contributed by managing the sales and drawing many of the backgrounds. Audubon made a trip to the "western regions" in the 1840's, his last great adventure prior to his death in 1851. He chased the great Buffalo herds, but never achieved his dream of reaching the West Coast.

Few men of his age enjoyed the travels of Audubon. He spent days and weeks in the woods studying birds and animals; and his spectacular drawings, which were criticized by some, were scenes he actually witnessed. He traveled to Paris to sell his book and never accepted an offer for a single print, always insisting that the book be sold intact. This is one reason his prints are so rare today.

4-H AG/WILDLIFE TRAIL UPDATE

by Sandra Wieser

As mentioned in our last newsletter, the Kern valley 4-H Club visited the Kern River Preserve to research a site for a new trail. The new trail will parallel the Prince Ditch, an agricultural irrigation ditch comprising part of the southern boundary of the preserve. They have their work cut out for them as the spring floods washed out parts of the existing trail. Interesting things can be seen on both sides of the trail. The open pastures often host collections of turkey vultures and other animals going about their daily routine of finding food and raising young.

See **4-H** on page 3

4-H *continued from page 2*

Seasonal grasses and flowers grow in these pastures and despite the bad press sometimes given to cattle, permanent pastures and other farm land can be a very compatible neighboring land use. (Children may find cows fun to watch too). A \$1500 grant from the Great Valley Foundation has been earmarked for this trail. It will make a beautiful addition to the Kern River Preserve.

BIOREGIONS FESTIVAL AT THE KRP MILL FIELD HIGHLIGHTS—APRIL 25 AND 26, 1998

by Sandra Wieser

Mother nature was having fun with us again. Just one week before the festival she decided to turn up the thermostat causing the road into the headquarters area of the Kern River Preserve to flood from the increased runoff. But we were not to be stopped. After a few days of hectic preparations, Ernie Lopez mowed a nice cozy spot for festival visitors. The Mill Restoration site proved to be more than adequate. No one was heard to complain about the flooding and everyone had a good time.

Our information booth was set up under the shade of one of our cottonwood plantings and a van donated to the preserve was used to work out of and for overnight storage. It made an effective wind break as the weather was cool and breezy during the day on Saturday. Volunteer Jeff King helped set up hay bales throughout the clearing for visitors to enjoy. It was good to move to this site because visitors rarely get to see this section of the preserve. It was a new experience.

Several festival tour groups stopped at the site. Many birds were sighted around the Mill Slough and Boy Scout Pond. A redtail hawk's nest was seen from the trail. Those with binoculars or a spotting scope got to see three baby hawks.

The Saturday night astronomy hike went well. The sky was clear and there were few bugs out. The wind had died down by the time the tour started. As the sky darkened the stars started to peek out and we were

able to see several spring constellations. The frogs started to serenade us in the growing darkness. We could not see any birds of course, but tried to identify the few we heard by their songs. The night ended with a bang when a bright fireball streaked over the Piute Mountains toward the south and briefly lit up the Kern Valley. A telescope was set up for those who wanted to stay longer.

A thank you goes out to Eunice Corn for helping with the information booth. Also thanks to the Camp Fire Girls for setting up their food booth. They offered food at no cost (suggested donation) and the hay bales around the information booth made for a cozy spot to sit and chitchat about the day's events.

Sunday started out cool with ice on the tables, but later turned out nice and warm. Noel O'Connor helped at the information booth. Her warm smile and enthusiasm made the day go smoothly. Thank you Noel. Several T-shirts were sold including the older Nature Conservancy shirts and the newer Valley Wild shirts. Proceeds will go to support the KRP and future festivals.

A special thanks to Sandra "Nightowl" Wieser who dutifully awoke in the early morning after doing her astronomy presentation Saturday night to assist at the information booth.

Don Moore led a birdwalk and turned his spotting scope on our redtail hawk nest for a real close up view. Another nest was viewed from the end of the trail on neighboring ranch land. The event that made everyone's day was the sighting of a summer tanager, an uncommon bird in the Kern River Valley.

Looking forward to seeing all of you at the Turkey Vulture Festival in September!

PARDON US

Many of our new members and recent donors have not received donation acknowledgments or T-shirts in the mail. We are doing our best to cut through the backlog caused by personnel changeovers and computer upgrading. We are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel of paperwork and as this newsletter goes to press things should start returning to a resemblance of normal. Our apologies for any inconvenience and thank you for your patience.

THANK YOU DONORS!!!

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

Friends of the Kern River Preserve membership is based on a calendar year. Each member will receive a renewal notice in November of each year (unless you joined after October 1st). Those who join mid-year will receive all previous newsletters for that year. We have chosen this method to simplify our bookkeeping and save on administrative costs. We hope it will work well for you also.

We sincerely thank the following people for their contributions to the Kern River Preserve. We regret any omissions or misspellings.

Raptor Circle (\$1,000 +)

Robert G. Schonholtz

Pacific Flyway Patrol (\$100-\$999)

Dr. John & Dorothy Almklov
Elisabeth Hart Bathgate
Pamela Clark
Dr. James & Judith Collier
Stephanie & Robert Frey
David Froba
Barbara Garris
Claire Hemingway
Barbara Horton
David Kurdeka
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Meade
John & Susan Mills
Arthur & Jean Morley
Virginia Stabler
Clinton Stallings

Supporters (\$50 - \$99)

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John Neiger & Kemper Carlson
Sue & Tom Carter
Lucy Clark
Eunice Corn
Carol Jean Coulter
Robert Fink
Denise LaBerteaux & Bruce
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Edith Reilly
Jack & Barbara Robson
N. John Schmitt
Steve & Mary Ellen Spradlin
James Sullivan
Oasis Garden Club of Indian Wells
Valley
Harvey O'Neil & Cherri Lea
Ziegler

Friends (\$20 - \$49)

Linda Allen
Gary Beeler
K. Birder
Lucile Boman
Dorothy Burnstrom
Mary Ann & David Campbell
J. Richard Campbell
Janet Carter
Kern River Research Center
James Coatsworth
Kelly Cohen
Linda Utt—Tule River Conservancy
Bina Crowe
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Tamara Doe
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Foundation Donors

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James Station Market
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Tree-Mend-Us Tree Service

School Class Donors

Miss Blake & Students
Mrs. Morgan & Students

Organizational Donors

Oasis Garden Club
Tree People
Tule River Conservancy

Audubon Chapter Donors

Eastern Sierra Audubon
Kern Audubon
Kerncrest Audubon
Laguna Hills Audubon
Lake Almanor Audubon
Ohlone Audubon
Mt Diablo Audubon
Pomona Valley Audubon
Santa Monica Bay Audubon
South Coast Audubon
Tulare County Audubon
Ventura Audubon
Yosemite Area Audubon

COMING PRESERVE EVENTS

- **Kern Valley Pride Day at KRP and Vulture Festival Preparations on the weekend of September 19 & 20.** (See following for details)
- **September 19, Sat.—Kern Valley Pride Day**—Help to pick up trash on roads around KRP and South Fork Wildlife Area. We will need trucks and trailers for roadsides and canoes or boats for flooded areas in the SFWA. If we have a good turn out, Friend of the Kern River Preserve can earn local recognition and possibly a donation from local Kern Valley civic groups that are sponsoring the event. Sponsors will also provide a free BBQ lunch for participants. Meet at KRP HQ at 8:00 am. We will finish pick up by 11:30 am. Contact Sandra Wieser at (760)378-2531 for details and to reserve your place.
- **September 20, Sun.—Turkey Vulture Festival Preparations at KRP.** Help spiff up the Visitors Center, Nature Trail and Headquarters for the TV Festival. We can really use some help to make the preserve look its best.
- **September 25–28—Kern Valley Turkey Vulture Festival.** The Vulture Festival is a celebration of Turkey Vultures at the height of their fall migration through the Kern River Valley. At last year's festival, 866 Turkey Vultures passed over on Saturday and 966 on Sunday. The highlight was late Sunday afternoon when over 3,700 vultures came into roost for the night! During the full fall census, taken between 1 September and 20 October, 28,589 Turkey Vultures were counted passing over a single point five miles south of Audubon California's Kern River Preserve. The magnitude of this migration over this southern Sierra count site is the largest known in North America north of Mexico!
- **October 17, November 14, and December 19—Workdays: General Preserve Maintenance.** You can help with Preserve projects by attending one or more Kern River Preserve Workdays during 1998. Be prepared for extremes of weather. Mark your calendars for the year. For information contact Reed at 760-378-2531 or e-mail him at krpfriends@lightspeed.net.

A SPECIAL KRP THANK YOU TO:

- **Ken, Sachi and Kenji Fortune** for delivering and installing four new low flow toilets, that are already providing great energy and water savings. Suffice it to say, we reflect regularly on these fine donations and our good "Fortunes".
- **Dave Kurdeka** for a recent substantial cash donation to the Friends of the Kern River Preserve, but more importantly for his many hours of help with water monitoring.
- **Clifford Boren and his family and Boy Scout Troop 712** from Bakersfield, for building 20 fine bird houses for the Kern River Preserve.

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

by Sandra Wieser

As a Friend of the Kern River Preserve you are probably acquainted with much of the Kern Valley and surrounding countryside. You are also familiar with the need to promote and preserve the valley and its variety of resources. A new nonprofit organization is in the works called Valley Wild. Its goal is to preserve these resources for future generations by joining together the valley business and agricultural communities with environmental and preservation concerns in order to promote conservation, ecotourism, and public education.

Various valley entities will be represented including Kern Valley Chamber of Commerce, Kern Valley Revitalization Committee, Kern River Preserve, U.S. Forest Service, etc. The Kern Valley Bioregions and Turkey Vulture Festivals may be handled through this organization in the future. Many details need to be worked out yet. Valley Wild is to be run by a Board of Directors and is not a membership organization. We will keep you informed of future developments.

*"Even if you're on the right track,
you'll get run over if you just sit there."*

—Will Rogers—

SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM

by Sandra Wieser

Each summer Kern High School District, Career Resource Division, provides employment opportunities for 2,200 Kern County youth, ages 14 through 21. Career Resource Division offers students a wide array of options to match students' skills, abilities and interests.

All youth will attend a workshop to prepare them before being assigned a job. Once placed at the worksite, students work a four (4) day week, Monday through Thursday. Fridays will be spent in the workshop to reinforce what students have learned during the week and provide them with additional skills needed to find employment after completion of the program.

Kristi Foster, a resident of Weldon, came to work with us at the Kern River Preserve. Besides doing much needed routine maintenance, she helped us with the Friends mailing, paring down a large backlog. Without her help it would have taken much longer to finish the job. We will miss her here at the preserve and hope she will come back as a regular volunteer. Thank you Kristi.

NAS STRATEGIC PLAN— CREATING A CULTURE OF CONSERVATION

Though an old story, it bears re-telling—of how, a century ago, determined citizens banded together in common outrage against the slaughter of herons and egrets whose feathers were being used to adorn ladies' hats. Those citizens, who succeeded in fostering laws to protect birds and their rookeries, called themselves the Audubon Society.

The story has resonated throughout the history of the conservation and environmental movements because its guiding ethic still lies at the heart of our collective vision -- an ethic which asserts that citizens can and must succeed in preserving their natural heritage.

Audubon's story parallels the story of the environmental movement, as one of its leaders, as its bellwether. In the first half of the century, Audubon was there to lead

the way when protection of the nation's "crown-jewel" wildlands topped the agenda. And during the 1970s and 80s, Audubon was there at the vanguard when the nation's landmark environmental laws were enacted. But a sea change has occurred on the environmental scene -- a scene that now includes a strong opposition, a scene that reflects the nation's evolving demographics and a shift of impetus in government from Capitol Hill to the 50 state houses and, ultimately, to local communities.

Change is challenging, but Audubon's story has always been about rising to the challenge. So, to prepare ourselves to lead the environmental movement boldly forward into the new millennium, Audubon has just completed a long-term strategic plan. The process which led to the plan was thoughtful, rigorous, and disciplined -- encompassing interviews, focus groups, and surveys that involved all of Audubon's staff and Directors, dozens of leading environmentalist, 700 Audubon chapter leaders, and nearly 1,300 randomly-selected Audubon members. The questions posed were tough, the answers were honest.

The resulting plan maps Audubon's course for the next 25 years, as we dedicate ourselves to bringing about a national and, yes, worldwide culture of conservation.

To accomplish this, our plan mandates that we:

- Sharpen the focus of Audubon's campaign and resources on the conservation of birds, other wildlife and their habitats.
- Expand our educational programs to nurture appreciation of nature and understanding of the essential link between ecological health and the well-being of human civilization.
- Invest heavily in Audubon's distinctive grassroots network as the primary instrument of our environmental advocacy.

As we move forward, these initiatives will build upon our traditional strengths of education and advocacy. It will be by empowering ever-more citizens with the knowledge and means to be effective environmental advocates that we will bring about a culture of conservation.

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

2.3

Name: _____ Phone: (_____) _____

Address: _____ Fax: (_____) _____

City: _____ State: _ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

Application for: New Member Renewal

_____ \$1000 Raptor Circle

_____ \$50 Supporter

_____ \$100 Pacific Flyway Patrol

_____ \$20 Friend

_____ Please send me information on planned giving

_____ Additional Contribution \$ _____

_____ Please send me information on volunteer opportunities

All members receive this quarterly newsletter

New Supporters and above receive a KRPFriends T-Shirt
(please indicate size or if you wish no shirt)

Small Medium Large XL XXL None

Please Make Checks Payable to:
NAS/KRPFriends

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

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

Just as a Reminder—
It's not too late to respond to our 1998
Spring Appeal.

Our current total is approaching \$9,000.

Thanks a million to all who have
responded to date!!!

National Audubon Society
Friends of the Kern River Preserve - Audubon
P. O. Box 833
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THIRD QUARTER 1998 NEWSLETTER

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For further information about the Friends of the Kern River Preserve, call (760) 378-2531 or e-mail krpfriends@lightspeed.net.

