
Friends of the Kern River Preserve

Vol. 1, No. 2

A Newsletter of the Friends of the Kern River Preserve

November/December 1997

Old Seasons, New Stories

by Terri Gallion

This time of the year, you feel closer to trees. The crisp air smells like freshly planed wood. Leaves crunch and swish around your feet as if you were walking in trees. The river is gilded with reflected gold and, somehow, even the water smells faintly of weathered wood. Now, trees speak a language easier to understand. I have heard their sighing and singing most clearly in this season.

It is fall and the Kern River Preserve turns another of its faces to greet me. I have walked in these forests since 1986. These trails and paths, however familiar, make me tingle with a sense that some small adventure still awaits. I am never disappointed. Seasons wax and wane, the river floods and dries to a trickle, families of animals and birds breed, migrate and return again, young trees grow taller and old ones fall.

Every season has a particular feeling and fragrance. Winter is quiet and the forest smells like the rich soil of an organic garden. Spring is excitement, an eager anticipation of returning birds and budding trees. The slender branches of willows appear to quiver with expectation. Spring's scent is a subtle and alluring blend of new leaves, fresh earth and tender sunlight. Summer in the river forest is full and fertile, everything is green and everything smells green. There is a herbal quality to summer's aroma, too. Sunshine warms the leaves of Yerba Mansa (*Anemopsis californica*) which send up a scent like an herbal balm. Native peoples used Yerba Mansa tea to heal and soothe lung ailments. I've tried it myself and it really works.

Through the years, I have volunteered on many bird research projects, planted trees and led nature walks on the Preserve. All of this volunteer work has allowed me to become very familiar with the moods and seasons at the Kern. It has let me get a feeling for the soil, let me sit still long enough to really listen and learn. But in this place of peacefulness and continuing cycles there are also some bigger surprises. Like the day while surveying for Summer Tanagers, I decided to lie down beside some bulrush along the river to wait and listen for responses to a taped male tanager call. A short time later, I heard a rustling in the reeds and saw something brown moving past them. "A deer or a coyote", I thought, "And it doesn't know I'm here!" Slowly, I raised myself up and peeked over the bulrush to see a mother bear and her two small cubs. With a snort, she and both clumsy cubs splashed across the shallow river.

The more I've learned, the deeper my love affair with this place has grown. Originally, I am from Missouri where it is quite lush compared to the arid West. So at first, I didn't realize the specialness of the Kern River Preserve. These river forests of Fremont's Cottonwood and Willows are now very rare. In California, 95% of this forest type has been lost forever. The amazing diversity of species that depend on it for survival have also dwindled. Today, many animals and plants are making a last stand along the fragile corridor of the South Fork Kern River. In fact, the riparian forest here is one-quarter of all that is left in the state. It provides habitat for the only significant nesting populations of Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Summer Tanager in California. It has one of the largest populations of the Federally Endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. Alkali Mariposa Lilies raise their lavender banners above the marshes and Western Pond Turtles nest on the banks of fresh water ponds. It is nature's museum of how much of the Great Central Valley of California once looked.

But that's not all. A large part of what makes the Kern so beautiful and so unique is the bioregions that meet here. A bioregion is a habitat where certain types of soils, climate, plants and animals form a unique system. There are six bioregions in California and five of them are found in the Kern River Valley. Nowhere else north of Mexico do five bioregions converge to create such an outrageous display of ecological diversity. The Great Basin Desert, Mojave Desert, Great Valley Grassland, Coastal Chaparral and Sierran Forest bioregions come together here. A drive around this small valley is like touring most of California, the only bioregion you can't see here is Coastal Redwoods!

As I've worked and learned, I've come to see it as very much more than just a piece of land. The Kern River Preserve is a stronghold against the storm of a world gone crazy with greed and need. It is a unique place that gives us a chance to go back and see some of what we have lost. It challenges us to go forward to preserve and restore the precious parts that remain. It is a richly beautiful and charming place I have come to know and love.

Terri Gallion is one of our outstanding volunteers at the Kern River Preserve. She has conducted research on Summer Tanagers, promoted the Preserve in the Kern Valley and led thousands of people on tours at the Preserve. We hope her articles will be a common feature of this newsletter.

FRIENDS OF THE KERN RIVER PRESERVE

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Weldon, CA 93283
(760) 378-2531
krpfriends@kernvalley.com

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 the Friends: Lynn Overtree

Statistics (as of October 25, 1997):

Membership Numbers: 900

Friends - 571

Supporters - 150

Pacific Flyway Patrol - 173

Raptor Circle - 6

Corporate Members - 0

Nonprofit Members - 0

School Class Members - 0

Fund raising goal - \$80,000

Total to date - \$48,774

THANK YOU FOR YOUR VOLUNTEER ASSISTANCE

We would like to thank the following people for their volunteer efforts on the Preserve:

- **Terri Gallion** for assistance with the writing of this newsletter.
- **California Conservation Corps's** 12-15 person crew for 8 weeks of work on fence repair, invasive species removal and flood damage control.
- **Kristen Enos, Tal Pierson, Sandra Wieser, Bob Barnes and Mary Whitfield** for assistance with labeling and sorting the vol. 1, no. 1 newsletter for mailing.
- **Jeff King, Bob Barnes and Sandra Wieser** for another couple of months of work around the headquarters maintaining and improving its appearance for guests.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

- Stuffing and labeling envelopes for our fall appeal in mid-November.
- Someone with strong experience working with MS Access to assist with managing the Friends' database.
- Writers that can contribute articles to this newsletter.

- Someone who can assist with the layout and design of this newsletter.
- Someone with carpentry skills

THANK YOU FOR DONATIONS

We would like to thank the following people for their gifts to the Kern River Preserve:

- **Kern Audubon Society and Kerncrest Audubon Society** for sharing this newsletter with their members.

WISH LIST

If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation of any of the following items contact the Preserve Manager:

- Dependable 35- to 50-hp farm tractor
- 3-point tractor auger
- Hip waders
- Furniture for the Visitors Center
- Industrial lawnmower
- Color monitor for a PC computer
- 2 card tables

PRESERVE EVENTS

- **November 15 & December 13. General Preserve Maintenance.** Work parties meet at the Preserve headquarters. Volunteers are welcome to camp at the headquarters and spend time exploring the Preserve and revegetation sites. *Camping facilities are rustic. Outhouses and water are available, otherwise, campers should be self-contained. For additional details, or if you would like to make arrangements for a group work party, contact the Preserve Manager.*
- **November 22. Friends' Thanksgiving Lunch and Fall Colors Walk on the Kern.** Members of the Friends of the Kern River Preserve are invited to join us for a day of fun at the Preserve. Go for a walk in the forest's fall colors followed by a potluck lunch in the courtyard. **Please RSVP to the Preserve Manager.**

CONSERVATION LINK

Please support these other organizations and their activities in the Kern Valley region. If your organization would like to post events here, please send us your newsletter.

- **November 8. Kern River Research Center Fundraiser at the Pine Cone Inn.** Support local biological research by attending this evening of live music and an art auction. **Call (760) 378-3345 for details.**
- **November 12, 8:00/9:30am. Kern-Kaweah Sierra Club Bull Run Creek Dayhike.** 6-mile moderate hike near a waterfall & large pools. **Call leader Larry Wailes at (805) 323-5569.**

Continued on page 7

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

We would like to thank the following people for their donations to Audubon-California's Kern River Preserve.

Are you wondering why your name is on this list, when you don't remember joining the Friends? Well, we believe that anyone who has made a donation to the Kern River Preserve through Audubon in 1997 should automatically become a Friend and receive this newsletter. In fact, if you gave \$50 or more through the spring appeal, you are eligible for a free T-shirt, just as a new member is. If you would like to claim your T-shirt, please complete the T-shirt claim form in this newsletter and send it in to us.

The Friends of the Kern River Preserve is not for Audubon members alone, anyone with an interest in the Kern River Preserve is welcome to be a Friend. You may have visited the Preserve with Tree People, or the Aguabonita Flyfishers or the Oasis Garden Club or independently. Many of you have requested a membership organization for the Kern River Preserve for years. Well, now we have one!

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 bi-monthly newsletter to keep you up-to-date on our progress. And we will be having a T-shirt made for our Supporter members and above.

Friends of the Kern River Preserve membership is based on a calendar year. Each member, therefore, will receive a renewal notice in January 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+)

Mrs. Sidney Barnes
Mrs. Emily H. Bour
Ms. Jane Buel Bradley
Mrs. Jan Montgomery
Miss Lora M. Sims
Mr. J. Holley Taylor

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

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 Mr. Emil Zollinger
 Mrs. Lewis Zuelow

T-SHIRT CLAIM FORM

Many of you gave \$50 or more during Audubon-California's spring appeal for the Kern River Preserve. We believe that you should be members of the Friends of the Kern River Preserve and receive a complementary T-shirt, just as a new member at this level would. Our T-shirts have not been made yet, but we will try to have them to you before the end of the year. If you would like to claim your T-shirt, please fill out this form and send it to: Friends of the Kern River Preserve, P.O. Box 833, Weldon, CA 93283. If you have any questions, please call us at (760) 378-2531. **Thank you for your generous contribution.**

_____ Please send me a T-shirt size _____

_____ Please send me a T-shirt size _____, but let me cover the Kern River Preserve's cost, enclosed is my check for \$15.00

_____ Please send me extra T-shirts size _____ (\$15.00 each)

Make checks payable to: NAS/Friends of the Kern River Preserve. Tax and postage is included.

**FRIENDS OF THE KERN RIVER PRESERVE
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY~CALIFORNIA
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

1.2

Name: _____ Phone: _____
 Address: _____ Fax: _____
 City, State, Zip: _____ Email: _____

_____ \$1000 Raptor Circle
 _____ \$100 Pacific Flyway Patrol
 _____ \$Other

_____ \$50 Supporter
 _____ \$20 Friend

_____ Please send me information on planned giving
 _____ Please send me information on volunteer opportunities

All members receive this bi-monthly newsletter
 Supporters and above receive a large T-shirt
 (please indicate if you want a different size or no shirt)

Please Make Checks Payable to:
 NAS/Friends of the Kern River Preserve

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

CONSERVATION LINK (CONT.)

- **November 15.** *Kerncrest Audubon Society Kern River Preserve Trip.* Join one of the local Audubon chapters as they bird watch the Preserve. **Call Bob Meade at (760) 377-4451.**
- **November 16 & 23; December 7, 14, & 21.** *Kern River Research Center Bird Banding Demonstrations.* KRRC biologists band birds on the Kern River Preserve as part of a research program on bird use of riparian revegetation sites. **Please call (760) 378-3345 to confirm.**
- **November 17 & December 15.** *Kern River Research Center Garden Work Days.* Assist in the construction of the 2 acre wildlife garden. Learn tips you can use in your own garden. **For more information call (760) 378-3345.**

THANKSGIVING WITH FRIENDS

Without you, preservation of the Kern River Preserve would be impossible. We want you to know how special your membership is to us, so once a year we will be holding this Thanksgiving Dinner to say "Thank You" to the Friends of the Kern River Preserve.

Our first annual Friends' Thanksgiving Dinner will be held at the Preserve on Saturday, November 22nd. We will begin the day at 10:00 am with a 2 hour easy walk through the forest to enjoy the fall colors and birds. At noon we will return to the headquarters for an outdoor potluck dinner. The Preserve will provide a turkey, a vegetarian option and drinks. Please bring a side dish or dessert. Remember, you have to be a member to attend, so if you're not yet, hurry up and send in your application.

Don't forget to RSVP at (760) 378-2531, so we will know how much food to prepare.

FALL FLYAWAY

October was "Fall FlyAway" month for Audubon. At this time of year, we witness inspiring migrations of birds as they head

south to their winter homes. For example, here 28,588 Turkey Vultures migrated through the Kern Valley this year.

These birds enrich our lives so greatly, but will they have a place to call home when they return this spring, and every spring? The Kern River Preserve is at the heart of one of the first ten Globally Important Bird Areas (IBA) to be designated in the United States by Bird Conservation International through the American Bird Conservancy.

During October, the Clean Water Act turned 25 years old. Wetlands are the single most important habitat for birds and are indispensable to the production of the clean water we need to drink. The Kern River Preserve has many acres of wetlands that it protects for wildlife, while downstream this water is used for agriculture and drinking water.

Be sure to also watch for "All Bird TV", produced by Audubon, The Nature Conservancy and Animal Planet. It is the only national network broadcast devoted entirely to birds.

LOGO & NEWSLETTER NAME CONTESTS

The Friends of the Kern River Preserve needs a logo and a name for this newsletter.

Our goal is to find a logo that is simple, yet represents the uniqueness of the Kern River Preserve.

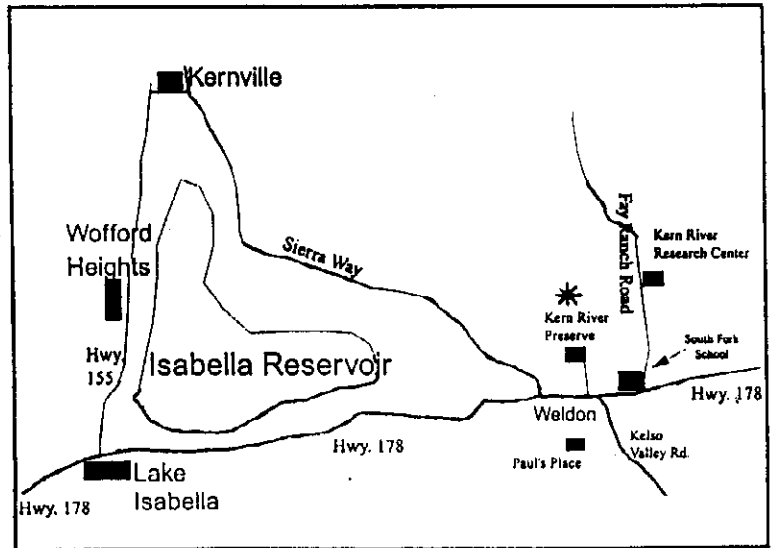
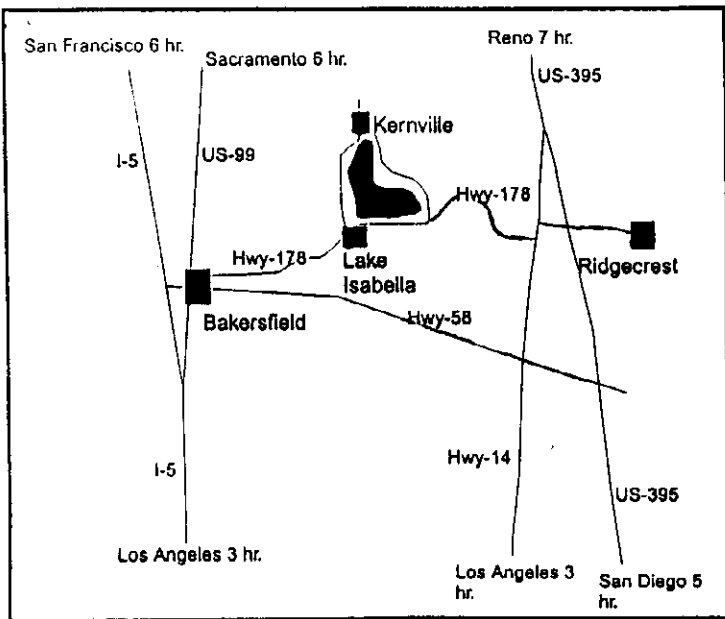
The name for the newsletter should emphasize our role as a group of Friends working together to support the Kern River Preserve and the riparian forest it protects.

If you are interested in contributing a logo or newsletter name for consideration, please send your artwork or newsletter name to the Friends of the Kern River Preserve by December 31, 1997. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope if you want us to return your artwork. The Steering Committee will be responsible for choosing the logo and newsletter name. We hope we will be able to present the winning logo and newsletter name in the January/February newsletter.

National Audubon Society
Friends of the Kern River Preserve
P.O. Box 833
Weldon, CA 93283

Address Service Requested

For further information about the Friends of the Kern River Preserve, call (760) 378-2531 or email krpfriends@kernvalley.com.



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