



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

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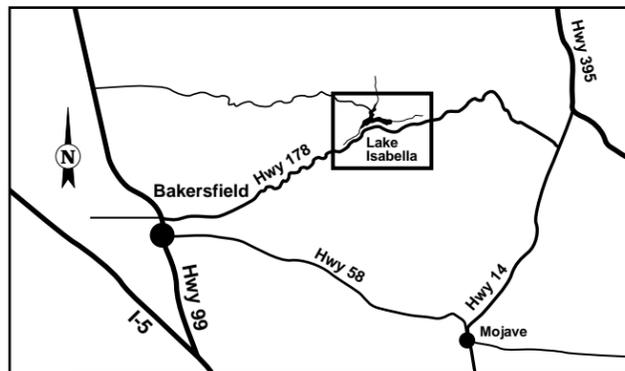
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Coming this April:

**KRV Bioregions & Spring Migration
Birding Festival**

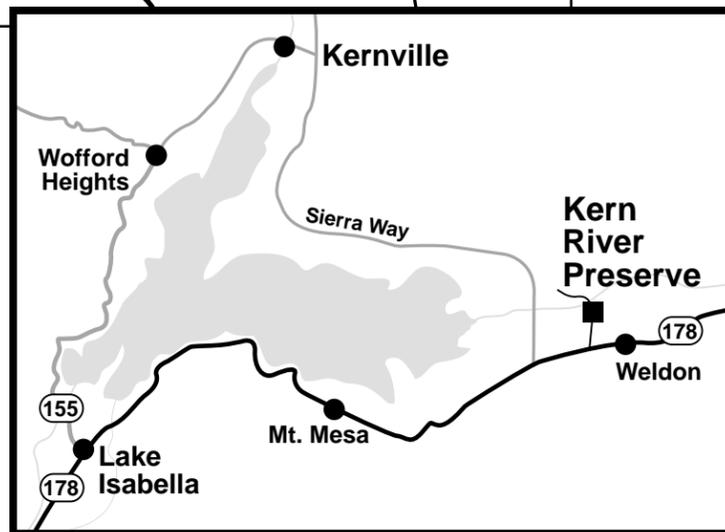
April 27 - May 3



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



For further information about the

Friends of the Kern River Preserve,

call: (760) 378-3044

e-mail: krpfriends@lightspeed.net

visit our web site:

<http://frontpage.lightspeed.net/KRP/>

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Friends of the Kern River Preserve

Vol. Five No. One

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CALIFORNIA

2001

New Season Anticipates Bioregions Festival

By Betsy Steele



Wildflower field trip in the upper Kern River Canyon area led by Jim Shevock, considered one of the foremost authorities on botany in the Sierra Nevada.

Photo by Teresa Benson

On the threshold of spring, your thoughts may be turning to outings – to birding, hiking and discovering once again, the “sense of wonder” in the unfolding of this season.

That wonder is emphasized at the Kern Valley Bioregions Festival. In its 7th year, the festival will be held the weekend of April 27-29 at the Kern River Preserve and in Kernville (with post-festival events and trips Apr. 30-May 3).

From “belly botany”—noting minuscule groundcover plants, to seeking the identity of a soaring raptor far overhead, field trips during the festival are eye-openers. Many visitors who have never been to the Kern Valley before are amazed at the diversity to be experienced here—for this little known corner of the state holds a wealth of natural treasures. So return visits are a “requirement,” as all festival regulars know.

With expert guides—an “ist” list of wildlife, botany, anthropology, geology and bird specialists, the field trips take participants on educational adventures to the five California bioregions in the Kern River Valley.

See **BIOREGIONS** on page 2

Restoring Habitat:

Canebrake Preserve and Kelso Creek Sanctuary are focus of recent activities

By Rick Englehorn

The Kern River Preserve’s restoration project, a native tree planting and management plan, at the California Department of Fish and Game’s Canebrake Ecological Preserve, has been completed. This fall’s plantings of Oregon ash concluded the process begun last year which saw five species of willow, Fremont’s cottonwood, wild rose, mulefat, stinging nettle and a native cane planted on the restoration site. Mowing and irrigation enabled the trees and shrubs to gain a foothold. Preserve Manager Reed Tollefson noted that the diversity of species used and the non-linear planting scheme were a different approach from restorations in the past, thanks to the innovative plan developed by wildlife biologists Bruce Garlinger and Denise LaBerteaux. Thus far the results have been

positive. In fact, with the onset of cooler damp weather and continued flood irrigation from a neighboring ranch, the site was deemed self-sufficient and the irrigation lines were removed this fall.

Throughout the restoration, those involved enjoyed the incredible surroundings: the South Fork Kern’s dramatic canyon and the jagged ridgeline of the distant Owen’s Peak Wilderness provided awesome backdrops. Many bird species, including a flock of wild turkeys, western and mountain bluebirds, lark sparrows, and many raptor species, along with western pond turtles and occasional waterfowl were their companions at this State Ecological Preserve. Groups such as The Tree People of Los Angeles, Agua Bonita Flyfishers, and the Friends of the Kern River Preserve put in many volunteer hours. This restored site adds to the upper end of the 14-mile-long riparian forest along the South Fork Kern which is designated a Globally Important Bird Area, as well as a National Natural

See **RESTORATION** on page 5

Friends of the Kern River Preserve

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Weldon, CA 93283
(760) 378-3044

Web Site: <http://frontpage.lightspeed.net/KRP/>

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 Tollifson
Director of Kern Valley Outreach..... Bob Barnes
Newsletter Editor..... Betsy Steele
Newsletter Production..... Wendy Higa
Webmaster..... Alison Sheehey
Masthead Art Work..... Keith Hansen

BIOREGIONS: *Continued from page 1*

Nowhere else in the state is this convergence of habitats found—resulting in a unique and beautiful region—still largely unmarred by development pressures that have buffeted so much of California. Within several miles, Great Basin Desert, Mojave Desert, Great Valley Grassland (which includes riparian forest), Coastal Chaparral and Sierran Forest spread a splendid array of natural features and wildlife. And Isabella Reservoir—particularly in its South Fork reach—hosts waterfowl, wading birds, transient white pelicans, and the occasional bald eagle.

With a backdrop of mountainous and desert wilderness areas, Sequoia National Monument and public lands, the valley setting is extraordinary, “world class—on a par with National Parks,” some would say. And it’s certainly world class for birders. Numerous birding trips to all corners of the region are a big part of the Bioregions Festival. But so are little trips, including adventures for novice naturalists and youngsters.

During the first festival I attended, my little boy put his ear to an orange-crowned warbler’s downy breast at one of the bird-banding demonstrations and also discovered snake skins. The next year, I attended a mammal workshop in which we probed owl pellets for rodent skulls; and a birding trip, during which Joshua trees, cottonwoods, orioles and a roadrunner were all in the same field of view. A year later, I eagerly anticipated the geology explorations and I found out what that prominent limestone band is all about. A friend brought her child to learn the rudiments of bird identification on a stroll at the preserve, while she

took part in a Native American plant identification walk. The next day, one of the state’s foremost botanists showed us the features of miniature poppies through a hand lens and took us out to the desert where tiny monkey flowers, bearing his name, bloomed fleetingly. Identifying bats at dusk, hooting for owls, and learning more about the amazing world of moths were just a few of the other activities our family has taken part in at the festivals. With each one, I felt growing appreciation and awe toward the valley environs. So often, the trip leaders would say “...the greatest diversity of...species are found here...and so much still to be learned...”

By participating in the festival you’ll be learning, but you’ll also be saying to the broader Kern Valley community and its de facto planners: Pay attention. Head’s up! You have a treasure here that is unlike anywhere else in the state. Many, many people venture to this place for its natural values and in the process, patronize your businesses, but have comparatively low impact on the resources here. They leave them essentially the way they found them. Erode the valley’s natural ambience and diversity and you could erode that sustainable flow of visitors.

Broader motives aside, reasons for taking part in the Bioregions Festival are mainly that it’s fun, educational, a great spring getaway and maybe even an opportunity to add to your “life list”—be it bird life or getting in touch with LIFE—the vibrant, budding, singing, fragrant festival of the season here in the Kern River Valley. ❖



Educational and interactive exhibits are just a few of the events at this year’s Bioregions Festival on Saturday in Circle Park.

Photo by Teresa Benson

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

5.1

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Address: _____ Fax: (____) _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
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Application for: New Member Renewal
_____ \$1000 Raptor Circle _____ \$20 Friend
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_____ \$50 Supporter \$ _____

_____ Please send me information on planned giving
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All members (Friends and above) receive our newsletter
New members at the 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

Spring Work Parties at the Kern River Preserve:

- **KRP Facility Restoration Days — March 10 & 24, April 14 and May 5**

This spring we will be working hard to make needed repair to our Headquarters Buildings as well as a new facility that Audubon is scheduled to receive. We are working with a very generous donor to acquire a spacious facility to be used to support our conservation and outreach program in the Kern River Valley. This facility will be used for office space, meetings and lodging for Audubon guests, seasonal staff and volunteers. We want to make sure that the buildings and grounds are well maintained so that we can protect the value of this generous gift and to present a very positive image of our Kern Valley Program. Please come out and help us to take care of our old headquarters and our new “Kern Valley Outreach Center.”

Bring work gloves, wear sturdy outdoor clothes and shoes and a lunch. We will provide drinks. Please call KRP and leave a message or speak with Reed at (760) 378-2531. Let us know how many people will be coming with you. We can provide volunteers with a good campsite on the preserve with rustic accommodations. Work starts at 9 am. For people that choose to stay, we will finish the day with a short hike followed by a potluck dinner (bring a dish and set up).

- **Bioregions Festival Preserve Preparation Day — April 21**

Help KRP Staff and Volunteers prepare the Kern River Preserve for the Bio-Region Festival.

Calendar of Events for 2001

March 10 & 24, April 14, May 5 (Sat)—
KRP Facility Restoration Days—See Volunteer Opportunities

April 21 (Sat) —*Bioregions Festival Preserve Preparation Day*—See Volunteer Opportunities

April 21 - 22 (Sat-Sun) —*Whittier Audubon Society (LA County) SF Kern Field Trip*

April 27 - May 3 (Fri-Thu) —*7th Annual Kern River Valley Bioregions & Spring Migration Birding Festival*—Kernville, CA. Average of 190+ bird species per BioFest! Small group field trips, children's program, 5K/10K walk/run, hot springs, kayaking, wildflowers, trout festival. See website for more information.

May 4 - 6 (Fri-Sun) —*Palomar Audubon Society (San Diego County) SF Kern Field Trip*

May 11 - 14 (Fri-Mon) —*Sea & Sage Audubon Society (Orange County) SF Kern Field Trip*

May 18 - 21 (Fri-Mon) —*Private Group SF Kern Field Trip*

June 22 - 25 (Fri-Mon) —*Los Angeles Audubon Society SF Kern Field Trip*

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

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

July 27 - Aug 5 (Fri-following Sun) —*3rd Annual KRV Hummingbird Celebration*—Kern River Preserve, Weldon. Hummingbird banding on selected Saturdays & Sundays, care & feeding of hummingbirds, status & distribution, migration, hummingbird research, binocular usage, Saturday evening slide & 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 28 - October 1 —*7th Annual KRV Turkey Vulture, Raptor & Fall Migration Festival*

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

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

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

Plan a visit to the Kern River Preserve!

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.

A very small sampling of events held at the Kern Valley Bioregions Festival...



Fun activities for the kids!

Kid's Fish Tent - a very large (50' long) colorful tent where kids can listen to special storytelling...kids can also dress in animal costumes and parade around the park.

Photo by Judy Schutza

For dates and times of all activities planned for this coming Bioregions Festival, please check the schedule of events in the Bioregions Festival Program coming soon in the mail.



(above) Bioregion Festival participants gather at Hanning Flat to prepare for a day of "Birding by Kayak" on Isabella Lake.

(left) Paddlers on the water, looking north to Hanning Flat and Rabbit Island (rocky mound).

Kayaks supplied by Sierra South
Photos by Phil & Phyllis Allin

Interesting Happenings...

Coffee Theme for International Migratory Bird Day

Across the Western hemisphere this spring, millions of birds are winging their way north to nesting areas in Canada and the United States after wintering in warmer climates. As this timeless migration cycle continues, hundreds of birding events across the country will celebrate migratory birds and their contribution to the human and natural world on Saturday, May 12, the Annual International Migratory Bird Day. This year's theme for IMBD is shade-grown coffee.

Traditional coffee plantations in South and Central America grow coffee shrubs under a canopy of trees, the layers and diversity of which offer shelter and food for wild birds. Due to an increase in demand for coffee worldwide, many of these plantations have been converted to high-yield, sun-tolerant coffee plantations, which are devoid of trees. In many parts of the neotropics, shade-grown coffee farms are the only forest-like habitat remaining.

Loss of the canopy means loss of habitat for migratory and resident birds; studies have found that the diversity of birds and other wildlife plummets when coffee plantations are converted from shade to sun. Other ill effects: sun-grown coffee, while yielding higher short-term output, requires higher levels of fertilization and plant replacement, suffers increased risk of failure due to drought, leads to soil damage, and means the destruction of the forest—a long-term resource for local peoples.

Consumer awareness is key to returning shade-grown coffee to the shelves and maintaining trees in the tropics. This is the reason for the coffee theme for International Migratory Bird Day. Because the **Kern Valley Bioregions Festival (April 27 - May 3)** was originally founded on the principals of IMBD, some of this consumer awareness will be brought to this year's Bioregions Festival. Samples of shade grown coffee will be served throughout the festival (while they last!) along with handouts for people to order their own coffee. Also, a full color (frameable) poster of a shade-grown coffee plantation with migratory birds will be handed out free of charge.

Teresa Benson, a wildlife biologist for the Sequoia National Forest, Cannell Meadow and Greenhorn Ranger District, states how easy it is to contribute to shade grown-coffee. "It addresses something that people can actually contribute to each and every day (by buying the coffee) without a major commitment of time or money. They can know that they are helping to preserve the wintering grounds of birds that breed here and migrate south."

If you would like more information on IMBD go to <http://birds.fws.gov/imbd/coffee.html>.

Four Sapsucker Species in a Morning!

The Kern River Valley in Kern County, California, currently has the makings of a morning, or one day, GRAND SLAM of the four species of sapsuckers found in North America: Williamson's, Yellow-bellied, Red-naped, and Red-breasted.

One Williamson's (female), one adult Red-naped, and up to three Red-breasted Sapsuckers have been frequenting the planted pines of the Main Dam Campground off of Highway 155 below Isabella Reservoir's main dam just north of the community of Lake Isabella since December 30th. The Williamson's was also spotted in the planted pine trees behind the U.S. Forest Service's Greenhorn Ranger District Visitors' Center, located on the hill separating the main dam and auxiliary dam. A female has also been present there.

One juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was found in the residential area of the community of Onyx on January 6th and continues to be observed.

If you make the journey to the Kern River Valley to attempt the SAPSUCKER GRAND SLAM, check out Isabella Reservoir as well. It has had large numbers of waterbirds this winter including 2300+ Eared Grebes, 4500 Western/Clark's Grebes, 600+ Double-crested Cormorants, 70+ Common Goldeneyes, 16 Hooded Mergansers, 1100+ Common Mergansers, 5 Osprey (determined from numerous reports of December 30th), and 15 Bald Eagles (determined from 25 reports on December 30th).

Continued on page 7



Keith Hansen

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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 our 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 in the year 2000, and so far in 2001, to the Kern River Preserve. We regret any omissions or misspellings.

Raptor Circle (\$1000 +)

Sidney Barnes
Daniel Portway

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

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Marian Baird
Kathleen Barry
George & Judy Beatty
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(left) "To plant a tree" and restore a forest, volunteers dig in.

Photo by Reed Tollefson



(right) Work crew eager to get started out at the Canebrake.

Photo by Reed Tollefson

RESTORATION: Continued from page 1

Landmark and is regarded as a flagship project of the California Riparian Habitat Joint Venture. Field trips to this site are scheduled throughout the Bioregions Festival (see additional information about the festival on page 1).

In other restoration news:

The preserve's Kelso Creek Sanctuary needs protection from both off-road-vehicle trespassing and uncontrolled livestock grazing. These forces have resulted in bank destabilization, erosion and lack of regeneration by native vegetation. This sanctuary, a verdant oasis for many species of wildlife, is a very important stopover for tens of thousands of land birds during northbound spring migration as well as local riparian obligates throughout the year. Therefore, the Kern River Preserve, with funding support from both the Bureau of Land Management/Ridgecrest and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Partners for Wildlife Program has begun a "passive" restoration project. This type of restoration consists of the eradication of non-native species such as salt cedar and tree-of-heaven in conjunction with perimeter

fencing. The 156-acre property contains excellent Fremont's cottonwood and red willow riparian habitat along a perennial reach of Kelso Creek as well as extensive Joshua tree groves on the surrounding hills and terraces. Initial plant eradication has been completed and fencing began in December with a crew surveying the boundaries and clearing brush. The antiquated existing fence was dismantled with the help of volunteers from Dr. Alan Franz's class from Marymount College, Palos Verdes. Fencing of the area will include a pedestrian walk-through to enable visitors access to 30 acres of prime riparian forest. Snowstorms this January hampered the effort somewhat, but the project should be completed in time for the Bioregions Festival.

Looking to the near future, this spring and summer will bring a shift in emphasis, with attention to restoring the visitor and office facilities at the Kern River Preserve.

Please see the volunteer opportunities and "spring work parties" schedule to see how you can become involved in these many rewarding projects. ❖



Volunteer Profile: Dave Harvey, birdhouse man

By Betsy Steele

Visitors to the preserve would find it hard to miss the numerous nesting boxes along the trails and fields. Soon, their occupants will be arriving: western bluebirds, tree swallows, house wrens and a few ash-throated flycatchers.

And keeping track of all this activity is U.S. Forest Service employee and KRP volunteer, Dave Harvey.

“About two years ago, I took an interest in maintaining and monitoring the bird boxes out there,” he said. Dave was building on a project begun by Kern Valley resident, John Boice, who assembled nearly 40 boxes for the preserve about 10 years ago.

“We’re hoping to get maybe 100 out there in time for the nesting season this year,” Dave said. The cozy and carefully designed boxes have been donated from a number of sources, including the Forest Service, local schools, Camp Owen and various individuals with a knack for carpentry.

“But you can’t just put the bird houses up and forget about them,” Dave said, relating how imperative it is to evaluate the condition of the nest sites and their tender inhabitants.

“They have to be cleaned out, checked for ant invasions and parasites, make sure tree limbs haven’t created a ladder for predators, and the temperature and ventilation is critical. I moved some to shadier locations.”

All this care paid off. Last year, according to Dave, 92 tree swallows, 69 bluebirds, 44 house wrens and 10 ash-throated flycatchers fledged from the 57 boxes—up from a total of 90 that fledged from 36 boxes the year before.

“Oh, and we also had a frog box, where I’d regularly find five or six little tree frogs just sitting in the shade,” Dave added.

The weekly bird nest rounds are not without hazard and witness to tragedy. Inevitably, some of the nestlings

succumb to starvation and other adversities. Once, tiny, but ravenous bird mites crept onto Dave’s hands and arms. Another time, wasps had settled into a box and weren’t too pleased when Dave raised the roof. And, of course, he’s regularly subjected to dive-bombings and angry scoldings from defensive parents.

But Dave is dedicated to the task, despite a few misadventures now and then.

“It’s really neat. I’m learning a lot. You get to recognize who’s what, from the young and nest contents.” Ash-throated flycatchers, for example, make furry, downy nests; wrens make messy, twiggy ones.

Dave hopes eventually to work on a map that will help him more accurately chronicle which species and number of individuals inhabit various locales from season to season. That map will likely include the preserve’s Kelso Creek property where additional boxes are going up.

But first things first. By early March, all the houses for the eager breeders must be ready to lease. Dave wants to make them especially attractive to beleaguered bluebirds, so he’s been consulting with the Bluebird Society and Cornell Ornithological Society for their most up-to-date advice.

If you would like more information on this volunteer project and how you can help keep it going, please call Dave at 760-379-4764. ❖

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- Construction Crew: **Jeff King, Breck McAlexander** and **Rick Englehorn**—for fence construction

INTERESTING HAPPENINGS *continued from page 4*

For a complete report on wintering species in the Kern River Valley go to www.birdsource.org and look up the results of the December 30th **Kern River Valley Christmas Bird Count (CBC)** and the December 31st **South Fork Valley CBC**.

Information provided by Bob Barnes and Terri Gallion.

Beautifying the Gateway

Preserve manager Reed Tollefson and a crew of able volunteers have been helping with the planning and restoration of a natural area in Lake Isabella.

Known as the “Gateway Project,” the 18 acres of wetland and shrub were recently acquired by the Kern River Valley Heritage Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving this plot of land close to the valley’s commercial center, near the intersection of state Routes 155, 178 and Isabella Blvd.

Once slated for commercial development, “Gateway” is a section of the alkali meadows and wetland that is becoming a “showcase to help people appreciate what’s here,” said Reita Hamilton, a landscape designer who is helping plan the project.

A small population of rare alkali mariposa lily thrives on the property, along with a mix of species that typify some of the upland and wetland zones of the valley.

The Kern River Preserve is in the process of cultivating cottonwoods and other native trees to be planted along the eastern edge of the property. In addition, a nature trail and visitor center may eventually be established, in coordination with the Kern River Valley Chamber of Commerce.

“I felt if we didn’t become involved, this beautiful piece of land and rare habitat would have gone for something else,” Hamilton said. ❖