

# From Behind the Binoculars

*Field Notes from the Birding Intern*

by Alison Young



**H**ere at Mono Lake, the summer has been full of exciting bird sightings. From the edge of the lake to high in the Eastern Sierra above us, the Mono Basin has an amazing diversity of avian wildlife.

## **June ...**

County Park was a busy bird locale ... the bright yellows of Western Tanagers, Yellow Warblers, and Bullock's Orioles flitting between the branches of the trees ... the raucous chorus of Hairy Woodpeckers, Red-breasted Sapsuckers, Northern Flickers, and Downy Woodpeckers ... Black-headed Grosbeaks and Spotted Towhees foraging under the bushes ... Killdeer, Wilson's Snipes, American Avocets, Yellow-headed Blackbirds at the shore ... and Cinnamon Teals, Mallards, Gadwalls, and Canada Geese with goslings dotting the surface of Mono Lake.

At other areas around the lake ... Sage Thrashers, Say's Phoebes, and Osprey perched on top of the towers at South Tufa ... one Long-billed Curlew feeding among hundreds of California Gulls at the Rush Creek delta ... a pair of Northern Harriers hunting at Sammann Spring ... Calliope, Costa's and Rufous Hummingbirds making an appearance ... a Green Heron camouflaging into the reeds at Dechambeau ponds.

Higher elevations in the Mono Basin brought Green-Tailed Towhees emerging from below the brush to sing on the hills above Lee Vining ... a Green-Winged Teal, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Spotted Sandpiper enjoying the beaver ponds in Lundy Canyon ... Mountain Bluebirds sitting on the roofs in Bodie ... and a Warbling Vireo, Brown Creeper and Yellow-rumped Warbler up Parker Canyon.

## **July ...**

was a great month to see birds of prey in the Mono Basin. Kestrels feeding small critters to their begging young ... a Prairie Falcon in the canyon of Wilson Creek ... scouting the territory at County Park was a juvenile Cooper's Hawk and a juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk (which caught and ate a snake while hunting from a tufa tower by the boardwalk) ... a Red-tailed Hawk having an unexpected meal of a Cooper's Hawk near Devil's Punchbowl ... Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, and Red-tailed Hawks at Glass Creek Meadow ... and a Great Horned Owl silently flying in the night at County Park.

Other birds graced the shores of Mono Lake as well ... Lazuli Buntings with their startling flash of blue ... a small flock of Hermit Thrushes quickly passing through at County Park ... Bushtits noisily chattering in the brush ... Black-crowned Night Herons stalking among the reeds ... Caspian Terns and Rock Wrens finding space between the nesting gulls on the islands ... Gray-crowned Rosy Finches adding color to the higher elevations ... Semipalmated Plovers, Marsh Wrens, Virginia Rails with their young, and flocks of 10,000 Wilson's Phalaropes in the marsh at County Park.



## **August ...**

the Mono Basin was a favorite quick stopover for many migrating birds ... Wilson's and MacGillivray's Warblers singing in the trees ... Forster's Terns resting off-shore at South Tufa ... a Cassin's Vireo ... Long-billed Dowitchers, Willets, Greater Yellowlegs and Marbled Godwits probing the mud for a meal between newly-arrived Red-necked Phalaropes on the shore, occasionally scared into flight by a Peregrine Falcon ... Northern Shovelers feeding "bottoms-up" in the lake ... one White Pelican stopping in for a visit.



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Longer-residing birds entertained as well ... a fledgling Hairy Woodpecker following its parent loudly begging for food ... Gray Flycatchers bobbing their tails ... a Red-tailed Hawk screaming after a Golden Eagle above Lee Vining Canyon ... Western Wood Pewees seen and heard with greater frequency from their fly-catching perches ... the California Gulls born this year have learned to fly, and are all over the lake.... ❖

*Alison Young is the Committee's Birding Intern. Along with her great knowledge of birds she also brought with her to the Mono Basin an amazing recipe for vegan peanut butter chocolate chip cookies.*