

## ***Bristlecone Audubon Society***



### ***Newsletter 005 – 4 October 2010***

#### ***Great Basin National Park Field Tour (2-3 October 2010)***

On what may have been the last warm weekend of 2010, members of Bristlecone Audubon visited Great Basin National Park in early October. Our first stop was Rose Cave. This spectacular limestone solution cavern is a migratory stopover for hundreds of thousands if not millions of Mexican free-tailed bats as they make their way from maternity caves in the north to wintering grounds south of the border. As is the habit for this species, field tour participants watched as free-tails emerged from the cave portal at a rate of over 200 bats per minute. By dark, more than 4,000 free-tails had already disappeared into the night sky of Spring Valley in search of their insect prey.

We left Rose Cave in the able hands of bat researchers Ben and Lauren and wandered off into the night. Along the winding Snake Mountain roads, common poorwills, mule deer and even a ringtail, a Nevada relative of the northern raccoon, were seen making their living in the dark (See Photo). Eventually, campsites were secured near Wheeler Peak, Nevada's second highest mountain at 13,063 feet (3,982 m).

At 10,500 feet, barely a shred of atmosphere obscured our view of the cosmos. We felt as if we could reach out and touch the Dippers, Orion, the Pleiades, even the great Milky Way itself. And thanks to a light breeze, it rained all night .... bright yellow aspen leaves that is. By morning, nearly a solid layer of yellow smothered our bags. The view from the sleeping cot on Sunday morning was worth the entire trip. First light burnished Wheeler's 1,600 foot vertical northeast wall with a sort of gold-bronze wash... this all seen through a matrix of yellowing aspen leaves and Engelmann spruce boughs. It's always a hard thing to leave the high country of White Pine county behind.



Ringtail (*Bassariscus astutus*) out on an evening hunt in the Snake Range of eastern White Pine County, Nevada, October 2010. photo provided by Ben Brigida and Lauren Steel

Wildlife species observed on tour:

|                     |    |                     |    |                         |        |
|---------------------|----|---------------------|----|-------------------------|--------|
| Mallard             | 1  | Common Poorwill     | 2  | Unid. Sparrow           | 1      |
| Red-tailed Hawk     | 4  | Common Raven        | 25 |                         |        |
| Golden Eagle        | 5  | American Crow       | 15 | Least Chipmunk          | 1      |
| Prairie Falcon      | 1  | Black-billed Magpie | 8  | Uinta Chipmunk          | 3      |
| American Kestrel    | 2  | Pinyon Jay          | 25 | Cliff Chipmunk          | 2      |
| Unid. Bird of Prey  | 2  | Canyon Wren         | 2  | Golden-m. Gr.Squirrel   | 1      |
| Mallard             | 1  | Mountain Bluebird   | 22 | Rock Squirrel           | 1      |
| Gadwall             | 3  | Loggerhead Shrike   | 1  | Mexican Free-tailed Bat | >4,000 |
| Northern Pintail    | 5  | European Starling   | 1  | Coyote                  | 1      |
| Unid. Duck          | 3  | Western Meadowlark  | 3  | Ringtail                | 1      |
| American Coot       | 45 | Wh-crowned Sparrow  | 12 | Mule Deer               | 8      |
| Greater Sage-Grouse | 5  | Sage Sparrow        | 1  |                         |        |

## Upcoming Events

### ***Evening Meeting Wednesday 17 November 2010 Birds of Central and South America***

Wildlife Photographer, Gary Clark will be presenting *Birds of Central and South America*. As with all Chapter events, expect some food and drink. If you feel motivated, bring a treat. 6:30pm, NDOW Conference Room.

### ***The Annual 'Christmas' Bird Count (National CBC) 2 January 2011***

Sunday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>, Bristlecone Audubon will continue a tradition started by National Audubon of counting all wintering birds within a ten mile radius of Elko and Spring Creek and provide that data to the national data base. CBCs are also held at Ruby Lake, Snake Valley, Jarbidge and the lower Humboldt River Valley near Battle Mountain. We will provide information on these counts as details come in.

Tentative Calendar into 2011

February 16, 2011 Evening Meeting: Presentation: ***What do Red-naped Sapsuckers and Silver-haired Bats share in common?***

February 18-20, 2011 ***Great Backyard Bird Count***

April 2, 2011 ***Buzzard Saturday BBQ (Return of the Turkey Vultures)***

June Field Tour ***Ruby Lake Birding Drive***

Other Business

***Final Membership Push*** We need to keep those Bristlecone Audubon membership recruitments rolling in. November is show time. Remember to remind new recruits to pencil our Chapter Code, “**C0Z P52 0Z**” into the “Official use only” box when signing up with National Audubon. If you need more membership forms, just let us know. Thanks!!

*P.V. Bradley, Newsletter Editor, Bristlecone Audubon*

*Natural History Note: A kettle of 25 turkey vultures was spotted just east of Elko at 5:55 pm on Thursday, 7 October 2010. All appeared to be giving serious consideration to a non-stop flight to Argentina. Keep an eye out and let us know when you see your last vulture of 2010.*

