

Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge

You just never know what you might discover here at Ash Meadows NWR. The refuge is always looking for volunteers to help with a variety of tasks and when Kathy gave us a call about doing a bird survey we welcomed the opportunity.

Kathy was looking for a new place to explore and do a little birding when she came across our website. So she drove all the way down from northern California to spend a few days with us.

A cold and windy day greeted her on the first day but her luck was just about to change. The following days were nice and warm; perfect for watching birds. As she sat and watched a group of Ruby-crowned Kinglets flitting about in the trees she happened to notice that one bird had orangy-buffy flanks, a green head and two

white wingbars. What is this? She grabbed her Sibley birding book to confirm what she thought she was seeing. Was it possible that this could be a

as Reno, to come to the refuge just for a glimpse of this rare visitor.

Fortunately for them this little guy needed to refuel and spent a couple days filling up on insects and caterpillars. One lucky birder got more than just a glimpse and was kind enough to share his great photos with us. How did this bird end up in Ash Meadows so far from his destination? That just might be a discovery for another day.



First Time Ever!

Bay-breasted Warbler
Courtesy of Greg Scyphers

Bay-breasted Warbler? This is a bird that has only been seen in Nevada a couple of times and NEVER in Ash Meadows.

Kathy consulted with her bird 'guru' back home, she called refuge staff and then posted the sighting on eBird. This inspired folks, from as far away

Bay-breasted Warbler
Dendroica castanea



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Range data by NatureServe

2012 Christmas Bird Count

Due to rainy weather the Christmas Bird Count event was postponed until Jan 4th. The reschedule resulted in fewer participants but we were still able to count 1,341 birds from 62 different species.

The highlights of the day was a flock of 10 Sandhill Cranes, a Mountain Chickadee, a Rough-legged Hawk, a Golden Eagle and an Orange-crowned Warbler.

Volunteers noticed that many of the typical shorebirds and

waders were missing from this years count probably due to ice on the marshes and shallow water. However, there were plenty of Gambel's Quail and Green-winged Teal spotted during the day. The Ash Meadows annual Christmas Bird Count started in 1995. To read more about this year's count go to our [new website](#).

The Christmas Bird Count is a long-standing citizen science project which is coordinated by the National Audubon Society.

Our new website

[http://
www.fws.gov/
refuge/
ash_meadows/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/ash_meadows/)

If you are interested in bird watching or bird conservation projects in the Pahrump and Amargosa Valley area contact the Pahrump Chapter of the Red Rock Audubon Society at richardcantino@att.net



*We can hardly wait
for the opening day of
our new visitor center.*

Stay Tuned!

On the Horizon

A new visitor center for the refuge is in the design stages. In the 11,000+ square foot building will be an exhibit hall, outdoor classroom, gift shop, indoor restrooms, offices and a multipurpose room.

The plans include a design to conserve water and energy, lower operating costs, reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions and provide a healthy and safe environment for our visitors and staff.

Approximately 65,000 people visit the refuge each year but only about 10,000 actually come into the visitor center. We expect the numbers to increase significantly once the new visitor center opens. Stay tuned!



Research and Recovery



For more information on Devils Hole and the Devils Hole pupfish check out these resources: *Battle Against Extinction* (published in 1991) and on-line at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2012/3021/>

Friends and recurrent visitors to Ash Meadows NWR may have noticed a new building approximately one mile east of the current visitor center. The new building is the Ash Meadows Fish Conservation Facility.

The primary objective of the facility is to aid in conserving imperiled aquatic organisms (not just fish), which includes those occurring in Ash Meadows, as well as those occurring elsewhere in the nation.

There is a lab that will be used for aquatic research and a large concrete tank that has the ability to manipulate certain aquatic habitat characteristics such as oxygen levels, sunlight and water temperature.

This facility has the potential to fulfill a need for research and recovery in the world of fish conservation both locally and nationally.

Did you know that the Devils Hole pupfish is the rarest in the world? Although Devils Hole is located within refuge boundaries it has been managed by the National Park Service since 1952.

Restoration

Prior to 1984 when the refuge was established, many of the springs were enlarged and almost all the spring outflows were diverted into ditches to irrigate farmed fields. These activities damaged the natural aquatic ecosystems of these springs and surrounding area. Native plants and trees were also removed which allowed weeds and other types of invasive non-native species to thrive and the size of natural habitats decreased. The refuge is working hard to restore these habitats through aquatic and re-vegetation restoration efforts.

Aquatic restoration includes manipulation of the physical, chemical or biological characteristics of an aquatic resource, such as spring pools and outflows, with the intended results of improving them. The goal of any restoration effort is to return an area back to its natural and historic functions. This improves the overall ecosystem, promotes long term sustainability and ecologic functions, creates and increases the amount of aquatic habitat that is favored by native species and eliminates aquatic habitat that is favored by non-native or invasive species.

A re-vegetation program has been in place for several years and just last year we planted over 25,000 native plants, spread 1600 pounds of native seed, extracted and treated over 4000 salt cedar trees. Additionally we mowed approximately 30 acres of weeds in old agriculture fields to reduce seed production of non-native species and cattails were cut from 10 miles of channel. Our restoration efforts for the upcoming year will focus on the upper Carson slough.

The slough (pronounced slue) was once a massive marshland but was drained and mined for its peat in the 1960's. The conditions here have created and sustained a unique desert wetland ecosystem. This system supports rare plant species including the federally endangered Amargosa niterwort and federally threatened Ash Meadows gumplant. The slough constitutes roughly the northern 1/3 of the refuge and includes Fairbanks, Soda, Rogers, Longstreet, Five Springs and Cold springs and their accompanying outflows. The slough continues towards the south past existing refuge boundaries.



We are planning to burn an area referred to as Lower Crystal Marsh sometime in February; weather permitting. The fire will help to eliminate cattails, provide more open water for wildlife habitat, remove weeds from old agriculture fields and provide a fire break around existing buildings.

There will be a 30 day public comment period where you can voice your opinion on the proposed plan for the upper Carson Slough restoration project and backcountry trail plan. Notices will be placed in local newspapers, on our website and in the office. Copies of the environmental assessment will also be made available.

During the next few months you may notice flags and cones along Spring Meadows road. We are working cooperatively with Valley Electric to replace old deteriorating power poles. Some of the replaced power lines will be moved underground and some overhead lines near roadways will be moved. This will provide easier access when servicing is required.

Check out the new website. It has a great new look with a photo gallery, videos, news, brochures, upcoming events and more. The old website will still come up if you use a search engine such as Google but we are in the process of making that change. So for now use the following web address: http://www.fws.gov/refuge/ash_meadows/ Don't forget to visit us on Facebook too!

Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge

610 E. Spring Meadows Road
Amargosa Valley, Nevada 89020
Phone 775-372-5435
E-mail: cyndi_souza@fws.gov

The refuge is open from Sunrise to Sunset every day of the year
Visitor Center Hours of Operation:
Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Holidays and weekends when staff or volunteers available

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/ash_meadows/

Don't forget we are on Facebook too!



*Interested in learning about
Medicinal and Edible Plants
of the Mojave Desert?*

*Sign up today for this event
on March 23rd from 9-11am.*

Contact us at 775-372-5435

cyndi_souza@fws.gov



Our volunteers are the best!

Ash Meadows is fortunate to have such wonderful volunteers who share with us their experience, time and passion for nature.

Please join us in welcoming Deidre and Ron, our resident volunteers this winter, who will be with us for the next few months. They hit the ground running and have already made some great suggestions for the visitor center.

Next time you are here stop in and say Hello.

