

From: [Steele, Susan L CIV](#)
To: [Gray, Stanley K Civ USAF AFMC 912 AMXS/MXAC](#); [Deal, Wanda Civ USAF AFMC 95 ABW/EM](#)
Subject: RE: Piute Ponds
Date: Thursday, March 24, 2011 8:08:35 AM

Stan, excellent points.

I was thinking about the snowy plovers and the trees that are going to be planted around Piute. I know up at Owen's Lake they have a big problem with ravens eating the snowy plover chicks. With that in mind, I'm guessing the trees will need to go to the west of Piute. Putting them on the east would make convenient perches for ravens looking to hunt at Rosamond sometimes wet/sometimes dry lake.
Susan

-----Original Message-----

From: Gray, Stanley K Civ USAF AFMC 912 AMXS/MXAC [<mailto:stan.gray@edwards.af.mil>]
Sent: Wednesday, March 23, 2011 7:42 PM
To: Steele, Susan L CIV; Deal, Wanda Civ USAF AFMC 95 ABW/EM
Cc: Gray, Stanley K Civ USAF AFMC 912 AMXS/MXAC; Kelli Levinson
Subject: RE: Piute Ponds

Wanda,

I would have to agree with all the points that Susan has made in her message below. Last fall the Duck Hunters ponds that are just south of the deep water ponds at Piute were allowed to stay shallow (but not dry). This made for perfect conditions during much of shorebird migration, hosting a good variety, including many Baird's and Pectoral Sandpipers. Plus at least one Ruff (an uncommon Old World species). However, within a week of the water being turn on for the flooding of these ponds--almost all of the smaller and truly long distance migrants disappeared from this location just when many of them should have been peaking in their numbers. It is important to remember that for most of these species the adult birds actually depart their high arctic breeding grounds shortly after giving birth leaving the young to fatten up for several more weeks. This not only means that the bulk of the immature birds arrive in our area later then the adults, but more importantly, that they are (in our case) near the middle of a journey of thousands of miles/one that they are undertaking for the very first time in their lives on their own. This makes them perhaps even more dependent upon suitable habitat with water at the right wading depth and shoreline edging.

About the South Base: I have records of my own for these ponds, along with copies that the late Mike San Miguel use to send me. We can also review a tremendous resource on line by Matt T. Heindel. (Attached site below) All would indicate that though these ponds (when wet) are only 14+/- miles to the east of the Piute ponds, they often seem to attract a few different species. One being the Snowy Plover. This tiny bird is basically threatened over much of its range. Inland breeding locations in our part of the state is rare at best and should be protected and preserved. Another example might be--that I've seen Red Knot at South Base but not Piute, and Buff breasted Sandpiper at Piute but not at South Base. Also of interest to myself and others: The ponds at South Base are in Kern County (as is most of the lands on Edwards AFB) and not Los Angeles Co. They represent one of very few locations for shorebird migrants to rest over and feed within the eastern portion of Kern county. In fact, the ponds at south base on Edwards AFB are more in a natural line of progression with the ponds at China Lake NAWS, Ridgecrest, Ca and even further to the north, the wetlands of Owens lake and the Owens river valley. It should also be noted that some species such as the American White Pelican, White Faced Ibis as well as several types of

Heron will often expend their energy to investigate land at these ponds on south base, even when they have been left to dry up. Because the birds can't tell the difference from many miles away--though they can see them.

Birds Of East Kern by Matt T. Heindel:
<http://fog.ccsf.org/~jmorlan/eastkern.pdf>

Stan Gray
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-----Original Message-----

From: Steele, Susan L CIV [<mailto:susan.steele@navy.mil>]
Sent: Wednesday, March 23, 2011 2:10 PM
To: Deal, Wanda Civ USAF AFMC 95 ABW/EM
Cc: Gray, Stanley K Civ USAF AFMC 912 AMXS/MXAC
Subject: Piute Ponds

Wanda, it doesn't look like we're going to get to talk, since we keep missing each other, so I thought I'd pass on a couple thoughts.

I'd like to see more shorebird habitat. This would be shallow water, lots of edges to the ponds, islands in the ponds. Places for shorebirds, ducks, terns to feed and rest. The islands would give them safety from predators while they rest. In the spring shorebirds start migrating in mid March and continue until the first week of June (the peak is mid-April to mid-May). In the fall shorebirds are migrating from the end of June to mid-October (with the peak late July to September).

Snowy Plovers have nested successfully at South Base ponds. I know there is plenty of water there now, but they need dry edges with water nearby into July to be successful. In recent years, there hasn't been any water maintained for them and they've had complete nest failure.

If the habitat is going to be enhanced for landbirds more willows, cottonwoods, mesquites (Lucy's warblers nest in their cavities).

I'm not sure if this is what you are looking for, so email me, or call. Work number is 760 939-1722. Susan