

Western Tanager | Vol. 80 No. 6 July/August 2014

WESTERN TANAGER

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PUBLISHED BY LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY



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California Condor at Bitter Creek Refuge, Photo by Mary Freeman

WESTERN Tanager

Published by

Los Angeles Audubon Society, Inc

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Western Tanager is the chapter newsletter of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, published online in PDF format 6 times a year, Sept/Oct, Nov/Dec, Jan/Feb, Mar/Apr, May/June, July/Aug.

Articles, letters drawings and photographs concerning conservation, birding, chapter activities, and articles of interest to the membership are welcome for publication in the *Western Tanager*. Please send copy as Microsoft Word, RTF documents, or plain text files. Photos should be high resolution (300ppi) .jpg or .tif files. Submissions should be in the hands of the editor by the 1st of the month to be included in the following issue.

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Los Angeles Audubon Society is non-profit organization and a chapter of the National Audubon Society.

The mission of Los Angeles Audubon Society is to promote the enjoyment and protection of birds and other wildlife through recreation, education, conservation and restoration.

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Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch

By Louis Tucker

Being a birder can present family relationship problems - especially on Mother's Day. This has been a problem of mine since I became a serious birder over thirty five years ago. When I lived in New York City, this was a really tough issue: my mother lives in White Plains, a mere twenty miles north of the city - a half hour train ride. Mother's Day is generally at the peak of the spring migration in the north east. (You have to send a lot of gifts and flowers and sugary phone calls - I guess I could be viewed as a "bad boy"!) However, Central Park, Bashakill Marsh in New York, or the Great Swamp in New Jersey was too much of a "candy store" to ignore. Mom never took an interest in my feathered friends. Oh well. . .

For the last twenty-six years I'm three thousand miles away in LA. I still do the gifts, cards, and sugary phone calls. But, I make an effort that everything gets to New York in a timely fashion. Sometimes the phone call may pop up a day early; because sometimes you're in a wilderness area with no phone reception. That's what happened this year. I'm so glad my mom is gracious!

So, the big plan this year was to go back to the Tejon Ranch, because some of us just can't get enough of that place! This was a sort of impromptu but planned trip. And, the day turned out to be just stunning up there. I went up with the Sieburth family: Beatrix, Derek and Dessi. And, we met with Matthew Page and Karin Kersteter. We were all meeting our intrepid guide, Scot Pipken, who also brought along some wonderful folks from the area near Tejon, John and Theresa Barrios, and David

and Maxine Stenstrom. The objective was to do parts of Tejon that are a bit off the beaten path and get into the high back areas of the ranch.

Back to "Wonderland". We covered areas with interesting names like: Antelope Canyon - we didn't see any Pronghorn that day; Cordon Ridge, the Joshua Tree Forest - looking for Scott's Oriole, but came up empty; the part of Cordon Ridge around the water tank; Blue Ridge, Canon del Gato Montes, and Lopez Flats. A lot of our exploration was in the Kern County part of the ranch.

It is so fantastic to travel around in an area and not hear noises of the city, or noise of cars and trucks on the road; and to be so close to LA and feel as if you've journeyed off to a far off land. The bird song symphonic serenade was stupendous. Warblers singing high in trees—Yellow, Townsend's, Hermit, and Wilson's; or, singing and foraging low in bushes—MacGillivray's, or Orange-crowned. The sparrow family was well represented—White-crowned, Chipping, Brewer's, Lark, Savannah, Lincoln's, a splattering of Dark-eyed Juncos, and the rattling's of both California and Spotted Towhees. There were spectacular splashes of color from bright Bullock's Orioles, Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, House Finch, Purple Finch, Lesser Goldfinch, and Lawrence's Goldfinch.

The ethereal sounds and brilliant color of Western Bluebirds were entertaining. There was the darting around of Anna's Hummingbirds, and raucous Acorn Woodpeckers with the Northern



Poppies at Tejon Ranch, Photo by Dessi Seiburth



Louis Tucker, Dessi Sieburth, Scot Pipken, Tejon Ranch, Photo by Beatrix-Schwarz

California Condor, Tejon Ranch, Photo by Beatrix Schwarz



Flicker and Lewis' Woodpecker making their presence known. Flycatchers also sounded their calls - Ash-throated and Western Wood-Pewee and the omnipresent, and very dapper, tuxedoed Black Phoebe. In some of the wooded areas we found House Wrens and heard Bewick's Wrens. And up against the rocks were some Rock Wrens, of course flitting about from boulder to boulder. Some birds of more muted hues showed themselves— White-breasted Nuthatch, Oak Titmouse, flocks of Mourning Doves and Band-tailed Pigeons. Most of the Horned Larks have left, but there were still some around. There were fleeting appearances of Loggerhead Shrikes on tops of shrubs, California Quail running through the shrubs, and getting faint glimpses and hearing Mountain Quail.

As we gained altitude, we would see Western Scrub-Jays and hear their cousins, the Steller's Jay which were being somewhat elusive. Crows and Ravens were making us "antsy". It had been reported that California Condors were seen several weeks before we came and this was something that was a bit of a "request"— maybe more like a lively but friendly "demand"—even before we started our exploration. That is a tall order! I should probably say "big" order.

We continued to gain altitude and traveled along the ridge line. I think we were up a little more than six thousand feet and we were looking into the canyon below, when a Golden Eagle was spotted soaring low and gaining altitude. It soared around the ridge we were on from our left into a thermal. Looking over to our right above some conifers was a Bald Eagle soaring toward the same thermal. I looked down on the canyon floor and noticed what would be something totally crazy. "Condor", I said. It began rising on the same thermal. And then there was another, and another, and another, and one more. Five California Condors were soaring in the



Tejon Ranch Birders, Photo by Derek Sieburth

same thermal with the two eagles.

I don't think I can adequately describe the phenomenon that was before our eyes. I think when I said "Condor" some of the people in the group might have suffered "whiplash" trying to turn around fast enough to catch this. This will probably be one of the biggest thrills of our birding lives; especially mine—bird of prey enthusiast that I am—three of the largest species of raptors on the North American continent; all in the same air space. It was stunning, jaw-dropping, spectacular, and insane. It was a jubilant sight. Strangely enough, the eagles weren't being territorial toward each other. It seemed as though all of these birds were just enjoying soaring and riding the thermals. The condors dwarfed the eagles. I didn't think that could be possible. And, soaring in there with those big species was a Red-tail; which looked almost insignificant. The Bald Eagle was somehow out of place; because there is no big water spot on the ranch. And, I thought maybe it had drifted up from Quail Lake to the south of the ranch. But, that bird quickly disappeared. Wow!

The Golden Eagle would appear and vanish several times during the rest of the day; but, for a long while, the condors just enjoyed the thermals; it's interesting watching them doing that. What makes them so huge is that their wingspan, more than nine feet is not only impressive in its length; but, the depth, front to back is really spectacular. It almost seems as if the two wings were like bed sheets, which they would adjust according to how they would ride the thermal. You would see them fully extend their wings, and tuck them in just a bit; and from underneath they would seem like a large ruffle. I can tell you that it was quite difficult to move

away from this show. We watched them for a long time. And, a few of these birds got very high in the sky. They are so big that, I'm sure that a few of them got higher than ten thousand feet and you could still see them.

I, personally, gave a little thanks to God for this display. I must admit these displays get me a bit metaphysical and grateful to be able to see such a fantastic show. This, to me, is a wonderful "gift" from on high and I relish it. (Now, don't get your "undies" in a bunch. I'm not a member of the "flat earth society". And, I know that this planet is more than seven thousand years old. I just believe that we need to be good stewards of this beauty and be thankful as was requested in Genesis.)

Moving on... There was more. We were now pretty much on the back end of the ranch. We could clearly see Castac Lake in Lebec. There was more to see and, more to get excited about. Meandering around the back end, we were seeing aerial feats of Violet-green Swallows. That was a bit of a prelude to seeing a small but rather vocal flock of Purple Martins. The Martins were quite entertaining; they would fly about and then they would sit in a bare tree and then fly again.

However, a sort of grand finale was done all around us. We had more sightings of condors, soaring around. This time there were six in the flock. All in all, we had seven separate condor sightings that day. And, as to not be completely ignored, a male Lazuli Bunting was singing quite loudly at the top of a conifer. Now, if his song weren't beautiful enough, the sun hit this bird like a spotlight and the bird was on stage, so that the blue on the back and throat and the cinnamon/mustard colored breast, and the white belly and wing bars bounced off this bird



Tejon Ranch Road, Photo by John Barrios



Tejon Ranch Road, Photo by John Barrios

in such a way as if I were seeing it anew. This bunting, the martins, the condors and, oh, a lonely Turkey Vulture made this a spectacular, majestic feathered pageant.

A few people on this trip got some “life birds”: the condors, and the martins. The jubilation and flying high which we felt was difficult to contain. Tejon Ranch rarely disappoints, and, on Mother’s Day, we had a lot to celebrate. I’m not sure if seeing three of our largest birds in the same air space could ever be duplicated. I have to wax exuberant over this experience. This is an experience I will never forget. I was happy to see even more of the ranch than I had seen in all my other trips up there. There is so much to explore up there. We are all quite grateful that our knowledgeable guide Scot is the perfect person to take us around. I would be quite remiss if I didn’t mention the flashes of wildflowers, which were somehow quite unexpected since there has been

so little rain in Southern California this winter. There were poppies and lupine and some colorful species of buckwheat. Also a lot I can’t remember. But, the hills had orange, purples, yellows and reds in them. Not a lot, but enough to let you know that even in drought there is still some life.

Oh, by the way, a little addendum: my mom now often calls and tells me about some of the birds in her area. She tells me of Boat-tailed Grackles now invading the northeast—these birds were strictly southeastern historically—and about the expanding territory of Black Vultures in New York, going farther north and not migrating. And, speaking of not migrating, about how the Canada Geese no longer migrate back there. She also told me, and sent a newspaper clipping, of a story about Great Blue Herons setting up a nesting colony in very “ritzy” Bedford, New York, Martha Stewart country, which is in northern Westchester County. In the article it told of the “gentry” of

Bedford was so excited to have these birds in their area. I told her: “Yah, they’re excited now; but, wait until the colony expands and those birds start crapping all over the place. That will throw all the good will right out the window!” She laughed riotously. Meanwhile, she delights in seeing the first Robin of spring. And, the Blue Jays crack her up. Maybe my Mother’s Day escapes have had a bit of an effect on her. Now, if I could only get her interested in opera... 🐦



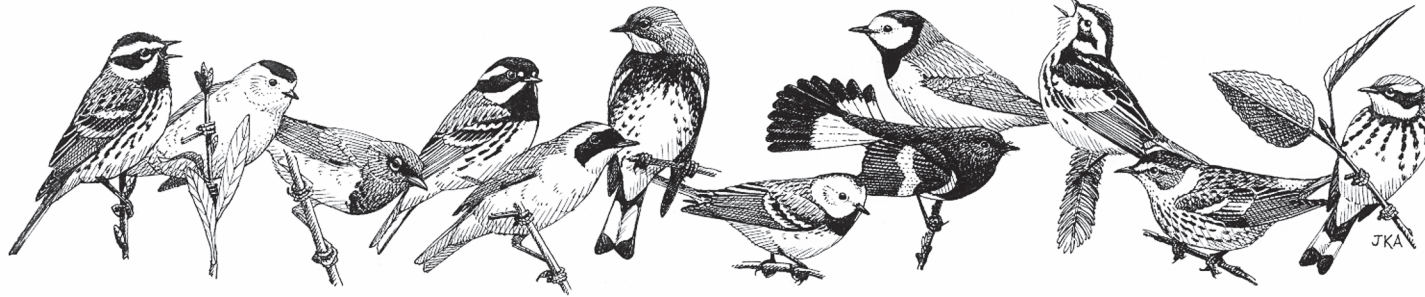
Photo by John Barrios



Tejon Ranch 2014, Group Break, Photo by John Barrios



Photo by John Barrios



Birds of the Season — June 2014, By Jon Fisher

Migration is a large part of what makes birding so appealing. The variety and constant change make time spent in the field a good deal more interesting. Thus we're quite fortunate that in southern California at least some birds are migrating virtually every month of the year.

Birds of all kinds are in the migration mix, but in spring our focus is largely and understandably on passerines. Their attractive appearance and the fact that they've been largely absent since October adds to their appeal.

At the peak of their migration our America's Birdiest County event was held from April 25-27. This year we managed to record a very respectable 272 species- our second highest count ever and just five short of the 2011 record. Spring birding weekends see most active birders out in the field anyway, but this event saturates as much of the county as possible with coverage, as well as efforts to track down lingering wintering birds and harder to find species.

Now as these spring movements have come to a close, it seems an appropriate time to ask "how many birds were there?" One estimate is that a billion passerines move through California in spring- a figure virtually impossible to comprehend. Los Angeles County gets its fair share of those birds, most of which breed well to our north.

While we were far from inundated with late spring vagrants, there were a few. There were also some remarkable rarities, yet none of these were entirely unexpected.

Scarce inland were single **Brants** at Quail Lake near Gorman on April 20 (Kimball Garrett) and along Ballona Creek in Culver City on May 13 (Kevin Lapp).

A **Redhead** at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on May 2 (Rick Pine) was potential local breeder, but a female **scaup** on the lower LA River on June 5 (Andrew Lee) was merely lingering late. Also late were **Common Goldeneyes** at the Lancaster Water Treatment ponds on April 12 (Mark & Janet Scheel), and at Quail Lake near Gorman on April 27 (Mark & Janet Scheel, Eleanor Osgood).

As they did last spring, a couple of **Hooded Mergansers** lingered at Apollo Park in Lancaster and were reported through April 21 (Jon Feenstra). Another was at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh from April 18-25 (Don Sterba).

Also reluctant to head north were two **Horned Grebes** at the Lancaster Water Treatment ponds on May 10 (Daniel Tinoco).

A buoy in the waters just off Long Beach attracted a rare **Brown Booby** from April 19-21, ap-

parently a bird released after rehabilitation at the International Bird Center in San Pedro.

Away from expected areas was a **Least Bittern** in upper Franklin Canyon from April 22-May 3 (Scott Logan). **Cattle Egrets** were at Santa Fe Dam on April 26 (Chris Stevenson) and near the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on May 15 (Don Sterba).

Even after many decades of birders exploring every nook and cranny of LA County, there's still room for something new. This spring that something was Los Angeles County's first **Glossy Ibis** that turned up at the Piute Ponds on June 11 (Jon Feenstra). This was a bird that was bound to appear in the county sooner or later, with multiple records from western Riverside County and a handful of others scattered throughout the state. As one might expect, it was found with a flock of White-faced Ibis and these two species are notoriously difficult to separate except when in their breeding colors. Following this record it's even clearer that observers should not assume any flock of ibis to be monospecific or that any lone ibis is by default a White-faced. Photographing any suspect bird is the prudent course of action.

A presumably continuing **Bald Eagle** was still at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on May 23 (Rod Higbie).

Rare as a migrant in the county was a **Sandhill Crane** at the Piute Ponds present from April 19-28 (Dave, Quady Kimball Garrett).

Scarce as transients in spring, **Solitary Sandpipers** were at the Piute Ponds from April 27-May 3 (Mark & Janet Scheel), with two there on May 1 (Jon Feenstra), at Hansen Dam on April 30 (Kimball Garrett), in the Sepulveda Basin from May 1-2 (Daniel Tinoco) and at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on May 2 (Tracy Drake).

Other shorebirds of interest included a **Baird's Sandpiper** at the Ballona Wetlands on April 17 (Dan Cooper). **Pectoral Sandpipers** were on the LA River in Long Beach on April 30 (Becky & Steve Turley) and at the Piute Ponds on May 18 (Becky & Steve Turley, Judy Matsuoka, Brittany O'Connor, Jim Moore). Rounding out the reports were five **Sanderlings** at the Lancaster Water Treatment ponds on May 22 (Mark & Janet Scheel, Matsuoka, Moore).

Quite rare in June was a **Parasitic Jaeger** off Pt. Vicente on June 14 (Ed Griffin). Almost all have passed through by late May.

A **Laughing Gull**- almost certainly the same bird found previously at Shoreline Aquatic Park- was along the lower LA River in Long Beach from May 10-June 11 (Andrew Lee). Rare in late spring was a **Herring Gull** on the San Gabriel River in the Whittier Narrows area on June 10 (Phil Richardson).

Elegant Terns took advantage of the new islands at recently renovated Malibu Lagoon, with over 700 birds present on May 2, some engaging in courtship displays and copulation (Irwin Woldman). None remained to breed however... at least not this year.

There is but one accepted record of **Sandwich Tern** for the county, that bird recorded back in 1991. Thus a possible **Elegant x Sandwich Tern** at the Ballona Creek mouth on May 2 was of interest (Darren Dowell). Away from the Lancaster area where they are expected in spring, a single **Black Tern** was at Quail Lake on April 27 (Mark & Janet Scheel, Eleanor Osgood) and four were at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on May 9 (Andrew Lee).

Inca Doves continued to be reported at Col. Leo H. Washington Park in Los Angeles with least two active nests confirmed. At least a couple of **Common Ground-Doves** continued to be reported along the San Gabriel River in Bellflower through April 26. Two **White-winged Doves** at the Crystallaire Country Club southeast of Pearblossom on May 10 were also of interest (Ruth Gravance).

The only **Black Swift** recorded was likely a migrant over Compton on May 23 (Richard Barth). Any possible local breeding birds have thus far evaded detection.

Chaetura swifts included two birds at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on June 3 (Tracy Drake) and two along the LA River near Union Station on June 6 (Tom Miko). Vaux's and Chimney Swifts are generally difficult to separate in the field when silent and even in the hand differences are subtle.



Noteworthy woodpeckers included a **Lewis's Woodpecker** along the Angeles Crest Highway on April 26 (Darren Dowell) and a **Hairy Woodpecker**- rare on the Palos Verdes Peninsula— at George F Canyon Nature Preserve on May 31 (Vincent Lloyd).

A **Crested Caracara** turned up on several of the Channel Islands, including Santa Catalina Island, between April 8 and 27, but if it ever put in an appearance on the mainland, it did so unobserved (Julie King).

In addition to the continuing pair of **Vermilion Flycatchers** at Oakdale Memorial Park in Glendora, new birds were at the Los Angeles National Cemetery on April 28 (Richard Barth), at Whittier Narrows in South El Monte on May 1 (Tom Ryan) and at Rancho Sierra Golf Course east of Lancaster from June 1-2 (David Bell).

The wintering **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** continued... and continued... at Ralph Dills Park in Paramount through May 13.

At the Ballona Wetlands, a **Loggerhead Shrike** was present as late as May 28, raising the possibility of breeding on the coastal slope which is now a rare occurrence (Jonathan Coffin).

Miscellaneous passerines of interest included a **Horned Lark** in Long Beach on April 21 (Bob Schallmann), a **Brown Creeper** at Gonzales Park in Compton on April 16 (Richard Barth) and a rather late **Sage Thrasher** at Angel's Gate Park in San Pedro on May 2 (David Ellsworth).

A brief highlight at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas was a **Gray Catbird** on May 22 (Amy Williamson). As is often the case with spring rarities, it could not be found the following day.

May is a time of year when vagrant warblers are especially likely, but there weren't many to be had this spring. **Black-and-white Warblers** were at Evey Canyon above Claremont on April 22 (Pam Dong), along the San Gabriel River in El Monte on April 25 (Jon Feenstra) and at Heartwell Park in Long Beach on May 26 (Becky Turley).

An **American Redstart** was at Heartwell Park in Long Beach from May 3–4 (Andrew Lee) while **Palm Warblers** included a continuing bird at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh through May 1 and a new one at Banning Park in Wilmington from April 22–May 7 (Richard Barth).



Cassin's Sparrow, Photo by Tom Benson

A **Townsend's x Hermit Warbler** was along the Rio Hondo in Rosemead on May 14 (Robb Hamilton), while the best of this spring's parulids was a **Black-throated Green Warbler** at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on May 9 (Andrew Lee).

Migrant **Green-tailed Towhees** were in Rolling Hills Estates for a week or more in early May, in South El Monte on May 16 (Robb Hamilton) and at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on May 25 (Tracy Drake).

It's not a bad idea to drive with your windows down... and to know your bird songs. This particular combination was rewarded with a **Cassin's Sparrow** in the west Antelope Valley that was present from May 22–28 (Jon Feenstra). Of the county's five sightings, this is the third in spring record. Typically, range expansions/extensions in this species occur after wetter than average winters, yet the last three seasons were anything but in southern California. One can't help wondering if others might have been out there given the many square miles of potential habitat, much of it private land.

Other interesting sparrows included a **Vesper Sparrow** at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia on April 29 (Pam Dong), a singing **Grasshopper Sparrow** at the Golden Valley Open Space southeast of Santa Clarita on May 28 (Brian Bielfelt) and an **Eastern "Red" Fox Sparrow** at Rancho Sierra Golf Club in the east Antelope Valley on April 27 (David Bell).

Following a handful of wintering individuals, the only spring **Summer Tanagers** were in Northridge on May 22 (Georgia Doyle) and a territorial male at a traditional riparian breeding site in Soledad Canyon on June 1 (Kimball Garrett).

A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was near Lancaster on June 9 (Jerry & Jeanie Dunn) and **Indigo Buntings** were at Hansen Dam near Lake View Terrace on April 20 (David Hurst) and at the Playa Vista Riparian Corridor from April 23–25 (Don Sterba).

Birds of the Season cont'd. on next page.

2014 Schreiber Grant Recipient—Shannon Walsh

Research Project Summary

Genetic and Phenotypic Divergence of the Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*) on the California Channel Islands

By Shannon Walsh, San Diego State University

The study of islands is a classic area of research in evolutionary biology because their geographic isolation provides a simple platform to study speciation processes. The Channel Islands of California contain many endemic forms; however, only a few of these have been studied genetically. I will use genetic data to investigate the colonization history and evolutionary distinctiveness of Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*) populations on the Channel Islands.

The Spotted Towhee occurs as a Channel Islands endemic subspecies (*P. m. clementae*) on Santa Rosa and Santa Catalina Islands, and historically it occurred on San Clemente Island. In addition, the southern California mainland subspecies (*P. m. megalonyx*) occurs on Santa Cruz Island. My research includes the first genetic assessment of the island endemic form (*P.m. clementae*), which is classified as a California species of conservation concern. My research addresses four main questions:

- 1) Are island populations distinct from mainland populations?
- 2) Are island populations distinct from other island populations?
- 3) Does colonization history follow the prediction that the Spotted Towhee colonized the islands in two distinct events? and
- 4) Do phenotypic differences among populations represent the affects of selection and adaptation to island conditions? 🐦



Shannon Walsh, San Diego State University

Birds of the Season cont'd.

The **Orchard Oriole** wintering at the Arboretum in Arcadia persisted through April 26.

Small numbers of **Red Crossbills** were reported from various locales in the mid to high San Gabriel Mountains from April into June.

Among a handful of interesting finds on San Clemente Island were a late **Hermit Thrush** on June 9 (Nicole Desnoyers), a **Tennessee Warbler** on May 15 (Justyn Stahl) and a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** on May 28 (Justyn Stahl). A **Baltimore Oriole** was present from May 19–June 9 (Justyn Stahl). While far fewer vagrants turn up here in spring compared to fall, it's clearly a productive spot at both seasons.

Though there were a few nice surprises, it obviously wasn't a banner spring for vagrant songbirds. But if that was a disappointment, take heart. Shorebird migration is already well underway. The lower Los Angeles River, Piute Ponds and usual coastal spots will receive plenty of attention and surely produce some good finds. By August there will be plenty of passerines in the mountains and lesser but growing numbers of migrants will be in the lowlands.

While there are great places to bird all over the state, you don't have to travel far to experience all that fall offers. Birders have learned that great opportunities await very close to home, no matter where you live.

What will the fall season bring? Perhaps another bird never before recorded in the county? One can only guess and guessing doesn't make us right all that often. We'll find out soon enough. Regardless, fall is arguably the most enjoyable chapter in the birding year. 🐦

Ballona Wetlands Education Program End-of-Year Summary for 2013–2014

By Cindy Hardin, Director of Outdoor Education

The 2013-2014 school year has come to a close and with it the end of our season for Audubon's Ballona Wetlands Education Program. One of my "closing duties" as Program Director is to compile both the number of tours and students that participated this year. In addition, every teacher that visits on a field trip is given an evaluation sheet to fill out. After our season concludes, I read every evaluation that was returned to me, via the self-addressed, stamped envelope that we provide. The feedback that is received is invaluable to keeping the program alive and vibrant. Of course, it's wonderful to read the largely positive response to the field trips, but all suggestions for improvements and/or changes are taken seriously, and implemented the following year if feasible. I then create a summary sheet, which is distributed to all of our wonderful docent volunteers and reviewed at our annual volunteer thank you luncheon.

This year was one for the record books. The program did 56 tours in all, with visits from 33 different schools. Of the 56 tours, 21 were able to attend because of our bus scholarship program. The bus scholarships are a crucial

and much appreciated component to the operation, and accounts for one of our most significant expenditures. Sadly, getting students out in the field is not currently a priority with the Los Angeles Unified School District, and funding for busses for field trips is all but non-existent. As anyone who has been on hike can attest, telling people about nature pales in comparison to actually experiencing nature. Our bus scholarships enable underserved students to visit the wetlands, many of whom have never had the opportunity to see Great Blue Herons nesting or a Kingfisher diving for his lunch. As you can see by the following comments, the trip awakens an interest in using binoculars to view wildlife in many of our attendees.

In total we were visited by 2865 students; our biggest number in the past was in the neighborhood of 2300. In spite of these huge numbers, we continued to present a consistently excellent program, as is evidenced by the evaluations that were returned by participating teachers. This is a summary of what they had to say. The numbers in parentheses indicate how many teachers made the same comments.

FIELD TRIP:

What would you tell another teacher who asked you what you did on this trip?

- We learned about the importance of our local wetland/open space (4)
- We learned the history of wetlands
- We learned about Native Americans (3)
- We learned about native plants and animals (4)
- We studied aquatic life under the microscope (5)
- An informative and thoughtful trip
- We did restoration
- Explored/visited a wetland ecosystem (11)
- Observed a wide variety of birds never seen before by students (4)
- Learned new vocabulary
- Hands-on learning-kids were naturalists for the day (2)
- Gave our city kids a chance to see wildlife native to California
- Two hours outdoors

What interested your students the most about the trip?

- Seeing the birds (14)
- Binoculars (10)
- Microscope Station (6)
- Spotting Scopes (2)
- Pulling ice plant (4) Several said that the students felt good knowing that they were helping the habitat
- Observing all wildlife
- Dead rabbit and pelican—this was from the same group—they were on carcass patrol!
- All of it! The best trip ever! (2)
- Being outdoors

Was your tour guide helpful, knowledgeable and informative?

Please comment.

- Very knowledgeable and pleasant (8)
- Shared excitement and enthusiasm (4)
- Very helpful (4)
- Patient/Kind (2)
- Excellent people
- Yes-also good at finding birds
- Each group came back with the same knowledge/experience. Good consistency amongst staff
- Grade appropriate
- Absolutely fabulous

What could be done to improve the field trip program?

- Conduct an experiment to show how wetlands act like a sponge
- More explicit binocular instruction
- More explicit rundown of water sources/watershed and its importance to birds
- More time at the microscope station (2)
- Advise students to listen carefully to their surroundings
- Less rushing-maybe only three stations
- Nothing—it's perfect; good as given; it was wonderful (11)

Other comments:

- Students went home and shared with their parents
- Keeping the students active was great
- Terrific trip/Great Job (2)
- Can we go more than once a year? We love it!
- And this in its entirety from a 28 year veteran teacher: *"I have been on many trips, and this is the most carefully orchestrated and well run trip. The rotations are well timed and serve to acquaint the students with the wetlands as well as allow them to understand conservation and stewardship."*

PRE-SITE MATERIALS

Did you use any of the pre-site materials that were provided, and if so, which ones?

- Yes, especially the "Birds of Ballona" booklet (13)
- Line drawings of Birds (3)
- Crossword puzzle (3)
- Word search (3) but more words in the word search! (1)
- Ballona poster (2)

How could the pre-site package be improved?

- Ballona app to download (1)
- Computer display-our students have iPads (2)
- two teachers-same school
- More info on the Tongva
- Quiz about the material covered
- Include reference resources
- Student friendly map of wetlands showing water sources, salt and freshwater marsh areas

PRE-SITE VISIT

If applicable, please comment on the effectiveness of the classroom visit by our staff members prior to your trip.

- Great "frontloading" covered location, history and preservation (4)
- Fabulous; great way to understand where we were going (3)
- Motivated students to see the wetlands in person/learn more (3)
- Knowledgeable, patient presenter
- Loved the realia (3)

In what way(s) did the outreach stimulate your students' interest in the wetlands/conservation?

- Students asked why there are few wetlands left, and about the reduced size of Ballona
- Encouraged students to advocate/protect the environment (4)
- Students had a deeper understanding of the importance of habitat; excited to see wetlands (9)

How could the pre-site classroom visit be improved?

- More Tongva
- More time for viewing artifacts/ask questions
- Perfect as is (3)
- A little shorter for third graders

As mentioned previously, the bus scholarship fund is one of our major expenditures. The cost of busses went up this year, and each one provided costs close to \$400.00. In addition, the very popular "Birds of Ballona" booklets (the students' first field guides!) cost around a dollar apiece, and we need to order a new set for the upcoming year. All donations made to the program go directly into a fund that is designated to provide these goods and services. Any amount is deeply appreciated, and all donors have the added bonus option to come down and follow a tour in order to see exactly how the monies are used, and witness our fabulous volunteers in action. We have over 35 individuals on our roster, and they all contribute their time and energy to showing local schoolchildren the wonders of nature and inspiring a whole new generation of environmental stewards. Without all of these volunteers, there would be no program. Therefore, I will close with a shout-out to all who gave their time to this extremely worthwhile endeavor:

A big thanks you to all who participated and made this year one of our best; it was certainly the busiest, ever. The volunteers are the program, and the program is terrific!

Oh, and don't forget: docent training for the 2014–2015 school year begins on Thursday, September 11th. We love to welcome new volunteers, and if you are interested please contact me at cindyhardin@laudubon.org or give me a call at 310-301-0050. Big thanks to Los Angeles Audubon for helping to make all of this possible! 🐦

Do you want to help preserve nature in Los Angeles? Here are a few ways that you can help.

Ballona Wetlands Volunteer Docent Training Begins September 11, 2014

Los Angeles Audubon is seeking volunteers to lead nature walks for schoolchildren at the Ballona Wetlands in Playa del Rey. Candidates must be available twice each month on Tuesdays or Thursdays for 4 hours (9am-noon) during the school year. No experience is necessary, just a love of the outdoors and a willingness to work with children. Naturalist training will be provided. The Los Angeles Audubon Ballona Wetlands Education Program was started in 1989 to introduce students to the wonders of wetland ecosystems. Our target audience is grades 3-5, with an emphasis on outreach to underserved, mostly inner city schools. This program serves over 2,800 students each year. On-site learnings include observations with binoculars and all the senses, plus these education stations:

- Ecology - learn about the tidal marsh ecosystem & wildlife that thrives here
- Microscope - view aquatic invertebrates and algae from the tidal channel, students create illustrations from the microscope viewing
- Migration Station - demonstration of the loss of wetlands and the role wetlands play in bird migration. Only 10% of California's coastal wetlands remain.
- Bird Station - observe shorebirds through spotting scopes and view the tidal channel

Contact Cindy Hardin at (310) 301-0050 or at cindyhardin@laaudubon.org

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area Volunteer Docent Training Begins October 3, 2014

Los Angeles Audubon is seeking volunteers to teach schoolchildren about the natural history and native habitats at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area in the Baldwin Hills. Volunteers will lead young people on nature walks and help them to restore natural areas in the park, which is one of the great open spaces found within the city of Los Angeles. No experience is necessary, just a love of the outdoors and the energy and enthusiasm to educate others about the wonders of nature found within our city. Training will be provided. All programs take place on Fridays during the school year.

Contact Cindy Hardin at (310) 301-0050 or at cindyhardin@laaudubon.org

Donate Your Business Skills

If you'd like to help support our conservation and restoration efforts in other ways - web development, marketing, fundraising, business administration, we'd love to hear from you!

Please contact: carolbabeli@laaudubon.org



Business, Community & Alumni Groups Ongoing Restoration Work Scheduled Monthly

Los Angeles Audubon is seeking volunteers to assist with ongoing habitat restoration located at two of the last great open spaces surrounded by urban LA, Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park & Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area.

The restoration work is scheduled monthly with support from community volunteers, students and local business and alumni groups. Work includes the planting of native Coastal Sage Scrub, which has been reduced to only a fraction of its original distribution, largely due to urbanization.

The Baldwin Hills area represents one of the largest remaining open spaces in the Los Angeles Basin, the largest intact portion of Coastal Sage Scrub in the Los Angeles Basin, and the only remaining natural habitat in the middle portion of the Ballona Creek Watershed.

Habitat restoration in the uplands of Baldwin Hills will have a positive affect on species here and at the watershed level. The scrublands habitat at Baldwin Hills is vital to several rare and threatened species including the California Gnatcatcher. As the coastal sage scrub habitat is restored, we hope to see the return of the Cactus Wren, once a resident here, but not seen in decades.

Contact: carolbabeli@laaudubon.org



Nick Freeman, Field Trip Chairperson
and Mary Freeman, Field Trip Leader

Los Angeles Audubon's field trips often require driving to more distant destinations and more time spent in the field than do LAAS's local bird walks. No pets. No children under 12, without permission from leader please.

When you sign-up please provide complete contact information as stated in the write-up. Name, Address, City/Zip Code, Email address, Day-of-Event/Cell number, and an optional/alternate phone number—I.C.E., In Case of Emergency (home, work or friend.)

We confirm reservations and provide supplemental trip information by email reply. If you do not have convenient email, you may mail the reservation request (and fee if applicable); include a SASE; we will mail your confirmation.

CARPPOOLING

For ride sharing purposes, your contact information may be shared with other confirmed participants unless you specify otherwise at sign-up. When carpooling, remember to offer compensation to your driver in these times of spiking gas prices.

"FEE REQUIRED" RESERVATIONS

Make checks fees payable to Los Angeles Audubon (separate checks per trip)

Mail to:

Susan Castor—LAAS Field Trips
PO Box 411301
Los Angeles CA 90041

'NO FEE' RESERVATIONS / MORE INFORMATION

Email: membership@laaudubon.org
Phone: (323) 550-8533

Please leave voice message if no answer.

Please support LAAS field trips with your donations.
Share with LAAS on Facebook and Twitter.
[facebook.com / LosAngelesAudubon](https://www.facebook.com/LosAngelesAudubon)
[twitter.com / LAAudubon](https://twitter.com/LAAudubon).

Field Trip Listings

Western Tanager | Vol. 80 No. 6 July/August 2014

Saturday, July 12

Big Bear Lake Vicinity Field Trip NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leaders: *Nick and Mary Freeman*. Meet in the Aspen Glen Picnic Area parking lot in Big Bear at 7:30 a.m. Take Hwy 18 or 38 to Big Bear Lake, then proceed about half way along the south side of the lake on Hwy 18 (Big Bear Blvd.) and turn south on Tulip Lane. The lot will be on the south side of this short street. Target birds include Williamson's and Red-breasted Sapsuckers, Calliope and Rufous Hummers, mountain finches and White-headed Woodpecker. Later, we may go to Arrastre Creek (east) or Upper Santa Ana River (south). It should be warm and there may be bugs, so come prepared. Bring lunch for a full day, and a **Forest Service Adventure Pass**. Those wishing to go owling with Mary in the evening (probably near Bluff Lake or Hart Bar Campground), plan to eat with us, and get a room for Saturday night as well.

Saturday, July 26

San Gabriel Mountains NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: *Nick and Mary Freeman*. Come and enjoy the cool mountain air in our local mountains! We will take walks at different locations along the Crest going up past the 7K' elevation level. We will learn the songs of the Fox Sparrow and Green-tailed Towhee, see how many White-headed Woodpeckers can be found, hunt for Mountain Quail, and listen for Red Crossbill. We will bird the day away up in the conifers. A Forest Service Adventure Pass is required. Meet at 7:30 a.m. on the frontage road for Angeles Forest Hwy just north of the 210 Fwy in La Canada. Turn N on ACH exit, take the second right (Milmada Dr.), and a quick left (Flanders Rd.). Meet along the first 50-yard stretch, with a full tank of gas, and we will carpool from here. Bring a picnic lunch, and bird until 3ish.

Sunday, August 3

Lower LA River Shorebird Migration NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: *Larry Allen*. Take the 710 (Long Beach) Fwy S to the Willow Street offramp, head E over the LA River, and take the first left on Golden Ave, the first left on 26th, and follow this past the pump station onto DeForest Ave. Park near the river access by the bridge, meet along the river at 8:00 a.m., and bird until noon.

Sunday, August 10

Sweltering Salton Sea \$15 FEE, SIGN-UP 8 CARS LIMIT

Leaders: *Nick and Mary Freeman*. Anticipate 95-110°F. This is the gauntlet of SoCal birding. We will see Yellow-footed (only place in the U.S.) and Laughing gulls, Black Tern, Abert's Towhee, Gila Woodpecker. We should also see Wood Stork, Lesser Nighthawk, and Stilt Sandpiper. Find a friend, as singles will be bumped if we fill up the trip. Mail \$15 cell, and e-mail address to reserve. America's Best Value Inn in Westmorland – (760) 351-7100 is \$70. Ask for AAA discount. Continental breakfast. Brawley Inn – (760) 344-1199 offers a better continental breakfast, \$80. There is a decent restaurant next door, the Aspen. Meet at Cattle Call Park at **5:30 a.m.**, and bird until 2 – 3 p.m. Bring lunch, FRS radios, scope, sunblock, gallons of water, and a big hat. Other lodging suggestions and information in e-mailer.

Field Trip Listings, cont'd

Saturday, Sept 6

Piute Ponds

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: Jim Moore. A good mix of shorebirds, with a chance at LeConte's Thrasher and Pectoral Sandpiper. Some amazing birds have been seen here over the years, including a Little Stint just two years ago! Possible extension to Lancaster Sewage Ponds or Apollo Park afterwards. Meet at the Avenue C gate at 7:30 a.m. To get here, take Hwy 14 N to Avenue D, head E to Sierra Hwy, head N to Avenue C, and go a block E to the gate at the end. Bring lunch, sunblock and lots of water. Likely hot weather, and possible afternoon wind. High clearance vehicles may be a plus. Cameras O.K.

Saturday, September 13

Condors at Hopper Mountain NWR

DONATION SUGGESTED, SIGN-UP LIMIT OF 5 HIGH-CLEARANCE VEHICLES

Dan Teppe, Refuge Manager for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, will be leading this trip to view the reintroduction program of the California Condor at Hopper NWR from a nearby ridge – to prevent habituating birds to humans too much. We should get good looks at California Condors and possibly Golden Eagles. Dan will give us an overview of the program, describe how radio telemetry and GPS tracking units are helping to save the bird, and talk about the future of the Condor. All 43 condors in the California wild population visit this area again. All new releases of condors into our wild population occur here. Take Interstate 5 North to SR 126 West (in Castaic Junction) to Fillmore. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the front parking lot of the Super A grocery store

which will be on the right, immediately after the light at "A" Street, and carpool from here at 8:00 a.m. Back in Fillmore by 1:00 p.m. or so. High clearance vehicles are required, so bring one if you have one, and check the spare. These roads are not for the timid! 5 car limit. Some of us usually eat lunch in town afterwards. We have alternate viewing plans if the roads are inaccessible or the USFWS deems our presence a detriment to the birds on this day. Reserve your place with LAAS by phone, stating phone # (preferably cell) and email address, whether you have a high clearance vehicle that can accommodate at least 4 people total (priority) or you would like to carpool with someone else. Wait for confirmation. Bring drinks, snacks, and FRS radio and a scope if you have them. No fee, but donations accepted to the Condor Survival Fund (or get a cool T-shirt).

Sunday, September 28

Huntington Central Park and Bolsa Chica Wetlands

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: Irwin Woldman. Huntington Central Park is excellent for migrating songbirds. At Bolsa Chica, flocks of shorebirds should be heading south, with gulls starting to show up. Bring a lunch for a full day of birds. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the HCP parking lot on the south side of Slater Ave. just east of Golden West St. in Huntington Beach.

September 20-21

Mojave Desert Weekend

NO FEE, SIGN-UP REQUIRED, SIGN-UP MAX: 12

Leaders: Nick Freeman and Don White. Kern County has some of the best migrant traps in the state. Western warblers and flycatchers should headline. Reptiles may be encountered! Saturday, bird California City environs; and Sunday, clean up remaining California City spots and hit Apollo Park and Piute Ponds on our way south. Dine out (then herp?) with leaders Saturday eve if you wish. To meet, take Hwy 14 about 4 miles past Mojave, then turn right on California City Blvd. Drive through town about a mile past the shops, turn left into the golf course parking lot past the fenced driving range. Meet here at 6:30 a.m. both days. To reserve, either call or e-mail Audubon with name(s), cell number, and e-mail address (for confirmation). Reserve a room at Motel 6 or other in Mojave, or the new Best Western in CA City (across the street from the meeting spot). Bring lunches, FRS radios, sun block, bird and reptile books.

Saturday, October 4

Malibu to McGrath Field Trip

NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader: Barbara Johnson. Late passerines and shorebirds should be moving through coastal migration spots, mixed with early wintering birds. Possibly 100 species. Take PCH N over the bridge in Malibu to the stoplight, and park on PCH, or turn right on Cross Creek Road for free parking along the road (and Starbucks), or turn left into the fee lot. Cross PCH, and meet at the kiosk by the lagoon at 7:30 a.m. for a full day of birding. There may be an access fee at McGrath or elsewhere. Bring lunch. 🐦

Bird Walk Listings

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON'S bird walks are for those interested in reducing their carbon footprint by birding relatively close to home. Perfect for the birder looking for an introduction to local birds and habitat.

All are welcome, but no pets or small children please. These walks are appropriate for young bird watchers age 6 years and older. Binoculars are provided on some walks as noted. Bird walks DO NOT require advance sign-up, just show up at the specified meeting time and place. Read our FIELD TRIPS LISTINGS section for birding destinations a bit further afield.

Topanga State Park Birdwalk

1st Sunday of every month

July 6 and August 3

Time: 8:00–11:30 a.m.

Leaders: *Ken Wheeland* and *Chris Tosdevin*. Ken and Chris will lead participants through this beautiful and diverse coastal mountain area. An ideal trip for a beginning birder or someone new to the area.

Directions: FROM VENTURA BLVD: take Topanga Canyon Blvd 7 miles S. Turn E uphill on Entrada Rd. Follow the signs and turn left into Trippet Ranch parking lot. FROM PACIFIC COAST HWY: take Topanga Canyon Blvd. 5 miles to Entrada Rd. Parking fee.

Contacts: Ken: (310) 455-1401, ksafarri@aol.com Chris: (310) 455-1270

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area

4100 S. La Cienega Blvd, Los Angeles 90056

3rd Saturday of the month, **Except for July and August**

Time: 8:00–noon

Leaders: *Eric & Ann Brooks*, *Eleanor Osgood*. This trip covers landscaped parkland, a man-made lake and natural coastal scrub habitats within the Baldwin Hills. We are likely to see many of the resident birds such as Black and Say's Phoebes, Cassin Kingbirds, California and Spotted Towhee, Red-tailed Hawk and Cooper's Hawk.

Directions: The park entrance is off of La Cienega Blvd. between Rodeo Rd. and Stocker St. After passing the entrance kiosk (\$6.00 parking fee) turn left (leading to the "Olympic Forest") and park in the first available spaces.

KHSRA, 4100 S LA CIENEGA BLVD, LOS ANGELES 90056 **Binoculars provided.**

CARPPOOLING IS ENCOURAGED!

To provide your information to join the LAAS CARPOOL DATABASE membership@laaudubon.org or call (323) 550-8533 leave a message. We will attempt to connect you with other birders interested in sharing a ride to our events.

More information on birdwalks contact Eleanor Osgood at birdwalks@laaudubon.org or (310) 839-5420.

Upper Franklin Canyon Sooky Goldman Nature Center

2nd Sunday of the month

July 13 and August 17

Time: 8:30–noon

Leader: *Eleanor Osgood*. Join us as we take a casual walk around the ponds and trails of this urban oak woodland nature preserve. We are likely to see the resident Wood Ducks and as well chaparral bird species such as California Quail, Common Raven, Red-shouldered Hawk, Spotted and California Towhees, Song Sparrows and California Thrasher; Nesting season is coming to an end in the low lands; we will look for adults feeding nestlings and fledglings. Meet in the main parking lot for the Sooky Goldman Nature Center.

Directions: FROM THE 101 FREEWAY: follow Coldwater Canyon Blvd. south for several miles to the intersection of Coldwater Canyon and Mulholland Drive (traffic signal). Make a 90 degree right turn onto Franklin Canyon Drive. There is no sign indicating the entrance to the park; the turn at Franklin Canyon Road reads "Road Closed 800 Feet" and "Sunrise to Sunset" — this is the park entrance; do not make a U-turn as this will take you onto Mulholland Drive instead of Franklin Canyon. Take Franklin Canyon Dr down to park entrance, turn at first left into the parking lot.

FROM SUNSET BLVD: go north on N. Beverly Drive to Coldwater Canyon Dr to Mulholland Dr. Veer left on Mulholland Drive. At the next traffic signal, make a left turn onto Franklin Canyon Dr. continue to first parking lot on the left. MEET in the main parking lot for the SOOKY GOLDMAN NATURE CENTER, 2600 FRANKLIN CANYON DR, BEVERLY HILLS 90210. If lost the morning of the walk, call (424) 298-1376 between 8–9:00 a.m. **Binoculars provided.**

Ballona Wetlands Bird Walk

3rd Sunday of the month (**Except December**)

July 20 and August 17

Time: 8:00 a.m.–noon

Leaders: *Bob Shanman* and *Friends*. Join us for a walk through L.A.'s only remaining saltwater marsh and the adjacent rocky jetty. MEET AT THE DEL REY LAGOON PARKING LOT.

Directions: Take the Marina Fwy (90) to Culver Blvd and turn left for a mile. Turn right on Pacific Ave. The lot is on the right. Lot or street parking is usually not a problem. Three hour walk. 'scopes helpful. **Contact:** Bob (310) 326-2473 wbutorrance@gmail.com

Audubon Film Fridays



Free Birds (No Subtitles Available) Friday, June 27th

Two turkeys from opposite sides of the tracks must put aside their differences and team up to travel back in time to change the course of history - and get turkey off the holiday menu for good.



Winged Planet (North America) (English with Spanish subtitles) Friday, July 25th

Winged Planet is a nature documentary that shows a flight from the view of the wings of birds. Showing some of the world's greatest natural spectacles from a bird's-eye view.

Pre-Film: Live birds with the Nature of Wildworks!



This summer, the Audubon Center at Debs Park, Los Angeles Audubon Society & Pasadena Audubon Society are presenting three great nature films.

Come to LA's fourth largest park on three special Friday evenings to watch three awesome bird movies under the stars at the Audubon Center at Debs Park. This year, entertainment will be featured prior to the start of each movie. Pre-Film Entertainment begins at 7:00 pm, followed by nature films around 8:00 pm. This is a free event, but be sure to get there early to get a seat. Here's the lineup for the summer...

WHEN: 4th Friday of the month
June 27th, July 25th, August 22, 2014
TIMES: Pre-film 7 p.m., Feature Film 8 p.m.
WHERE: Audubon Center at Debs Park
4700 N Griffin Ave | Los Angeles 90031
COST: Free

Fly Away Home (English with Spanish subtitles) Friday, August 22nd

A girl (Anna Paquin) who just lost her mom learns to raise geese while her sweetly hapless dad (Jeff Daniels) learns to raise her.

