

# WESTERN TANAGER

Nov-Dec 2023 | Volume 90 Number 2

## Observing the Coastal California Gnatcatcher

by Daniel Horowitz

Spotting a coastal California Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) takes patience. They can be shy and elusive, never sitting still. They might appear in front of you when you're least expecting it, only to dart away before you get a good look. And it's necessary to get a good look because they can be easily confused with the more commonly seen Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. In fact, it wasn't until recently that it was considered a species separate from the blue-gray. Though elusive, the birds' call can more easily be heard- a squealing "meeew" that sounds like a squeaking dog toy pleading for help. The California Gnatcatcher can be difficult to identify. It is a small, gray bird with a black tail. It can be distinguished from the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher by the black crown that the male birds sport during the breeding season. To distinguish a female, or a look-alike male during the winter season, the best bet is to try to spot white edges on the underside of the tail feathers.

In Los Angeles, the coastal California Gnatcatcher can be seen, with patience, in natural areas that feature coastal sage scrub plant communities. The bird enjoys the same coastal areas that are appealing to humans as well, which makes visiting their habitat easy. But this has also created a problem for the smallish bird. Historically humans have placed greater value on developing the land rather than protecting the coastal sage scrub plant communities that the California Gnatcatcher calls home. The bird is not migratory- it depends on native sage scrub habitat to build nests. Human development of the coastal California Gnatcatcher's preferred habitat has led to a greatly reduced living and breeding area, and the bird is listed as Threatened by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Fortunately, the Endangered Species Act has allowed coastal sage scrub areas to be set aside as critical habitat which allows for special land management considerations.



California Gnatcatcher seen darting among coastal sage scrub Photo Credit: Daniel Horowitz



*Artemisia californica* | Photo Credit: Daniel Horowitz

Spending time in the coastal sage scrub community, you will encounter some wonderful flowering native plants including the vibrant yellow starburst flowers of the California Brittlebush (*Encelia californica*), the coastal Goldenbush (*Isocoma menziesii*), and the Lemonade Berry (*Rhus integrifolia*) with its sticky berries from which a tart tea can be made. The coastal Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia littoralis*) grows in patches in coastal sage scrub communities, and among these patches the coastal cactus wren, another bird species of concern, builds its nest.

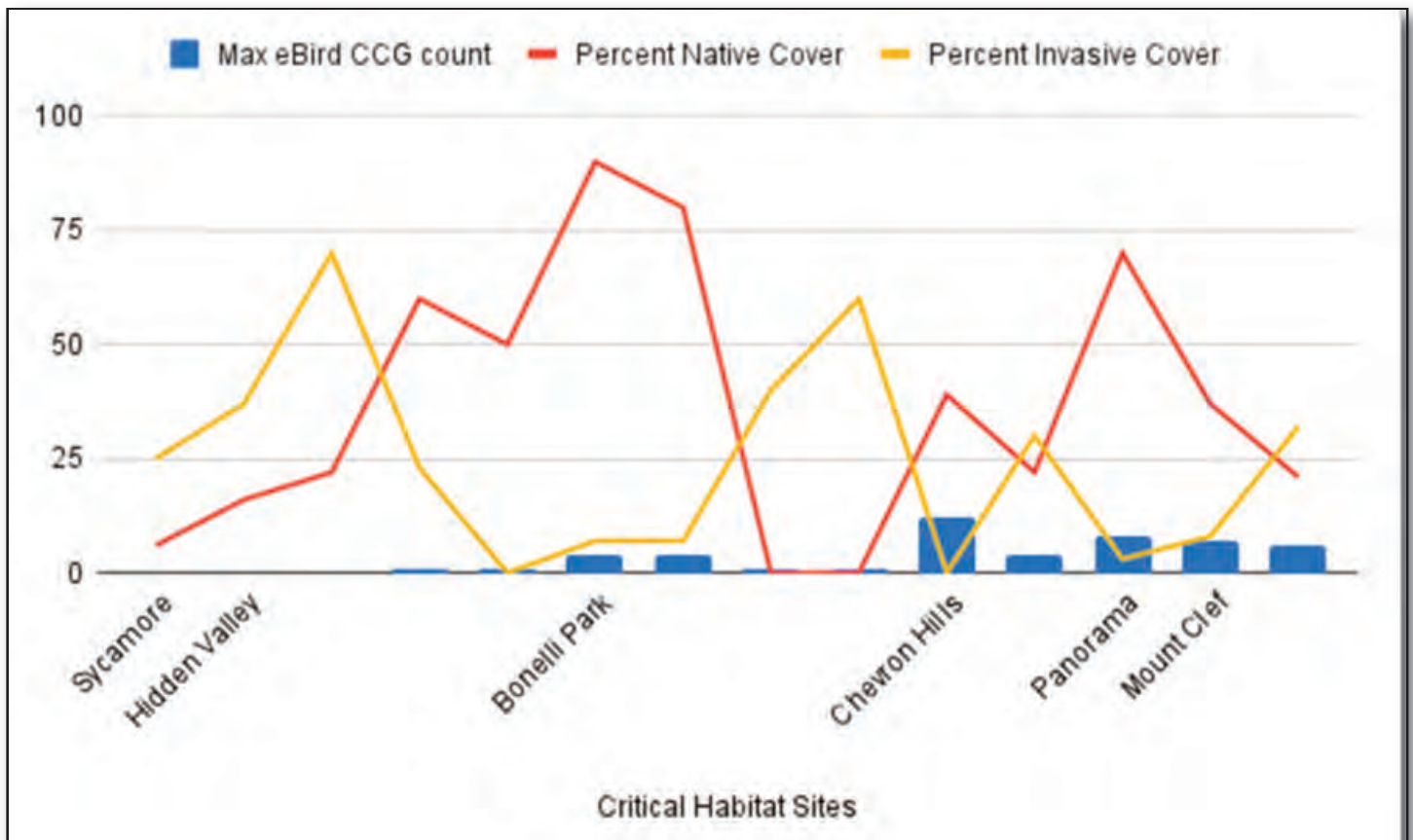
In the spring of 2022, I conducted a study in some of these critical habitat areas. I used data from two citizen science apps to verify a correlation between the presence of California Gnatcatcher and the presence of native plants. After this preliminary analysis, I surveyed vegetation areas by randomly selecting square-shaped quadrats and related it to data from both iNaturalist and eBird. I calculated percent



*Encelia californica* | Photo Credit: Daniel Horowitz

cover of native and non-native plant species within these quadrats. Areas where California Gnatcatchers were observed often correlated with two signature sage scrub plants: California Sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) and California Buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). Overall, most all California Gnatcatcher observations occurred in locations that were dominant with native coastal sage scrub plants, whereas other areas within the same critical habitat that were overtaken by non-native species showed fewer observations.

This association between bird and plant is consistent with previously published studies and promotes the importance of preserving our remaining sage scrub plant communities. Many of our local sage scrub areas have been disturbed, allowing for invasive plants to become a dominant presence.



Presence of California Gnatcatcher depended on presence of native species, in particular *Aremesia californica*

I advocate visiting and appreciating our coastal sage scrub communities to enjoy the habitat, as the California Gnatcatcher is a shy bird and is not easily seen or heard. The plant habitats often feature vibrant colors and spectacular backdrops. These areas include: the Ballona Freshwater marsh area and the bluff trail behind Loyola Marymount, the south coast of Palos Verdes from the lighthouse to San Pedro, along the hiking trail behind the Stoneview Nature Center, the shrub communities around the Santa Fe Dam Nature Center, and in the hills sloping up from the reservoir in Bonelli Park. Listen for the kitten-like “meeew” or “zeeer”.

Getting involved with local coastal sage scrub habitat restoration projects would benefit the coastal California Gnatcatcher. The Audubon Center at Debs Park holds monthly community habitat restoration projects, listed on their web page. Tidal Influence has a few coastal community restoration projects in the Long Beach area. Restoring some of these areas would benefit humans using these areas for recreation and animals who depend on native plants. These animals include the previously mentioned coastal cactus wren and coastal whiptail Blainsville Horned lizard.

The more time one spends in these habitats, the more likely a sighting of this elusive bird will happen. Any encounter with this small, gray bird with its striking black and white tail and kitten-like calls is an encounter to be savored.

Citations:

Audubon Center at Debs Park: <https://debspark.audubon.org/volunteer/habitat-restoration>


Beyers, J. L., Wirtz, W. O., & Greenlee, J. M. (1995). Vegetative characteristics of coastal sage scrub sites used by California Gnatcatchers: Implications for management in a fire-prone ecosystem. *Proceedings of Fire Effects on Rare and Endangered Species and Habitats*, 13-16.

Mitchell, T. (2017). California Gnatcatcher: Hero of the Coastal Sage Scrub Habitat. *Buena Vista Audubon* (retrieved 2022). <https://bvaudubon.org/2017/04/22/california-gnatcatcher-hero-coastal-sage-scrub-habitat/>

Mock, P. J. (retrieved 2022) California Gnatcatcher, [sdplantatlas.org](https://sdplantatlas.org/ge_files/pdf/California%20Gnatcatcher.pdf)

Rubinoff, D. (2001). Evaluating the California Gnatcatcher as an Umbrella Species for Conservation of Southern California Coastal Sage Scrub. *Conservation Biology*, 15(5), 1374-1383. doi:10.1046/J.1523-1739.2001.00176.X

Tidal Influence: <http://www.tidalinfluence.com/restoration.html>

Winchell, C. S., & Doherty Jr, P. F. (2018). Restoring habitat for coastal California Gnatcatchers (*Polioptila californica californica*). *The Condor: Ornithological Applications*, 120(3), 581-595. 

Daniel Horowitz is a birder, hiker, naturalist, artist and science teacher finishing up a master's degree in conservation science. He can be reached at this email: [dmh0716@gmail.com](mailto:dmh0716@gmail.com)



# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Margot Griswold

## LAAS Expresses Concerns with Ballona Wetlands Project

Nov. 4, 2023

Los Angeles Audubon Society (LAAS) has submitted a pair of letters regarding the proposed construction project for the Ballona Wetlands. A judge ruled that the original Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's project was deficient and ordered that the project could not proceed until a new, legally sufficient EIR was prepared. LAAS concurred that the original EIR was flawed and disagrees fundamentally with the project desired by CDFW.

CDFW recently issued a request for comments on their preparation of a new EIR with a 30-day comment period. LAAS is respectfully requesting that this comment period be extended to 75 days in the interest of public participation and transparency. You can read the letter [here](#).

The planning for the Ballona Wetlands project has been funded by the Wildlife Conservation Board and CDFW is going back to the WCB for even



*Ponded Freshwater at Ballona Wetlands | Photo Credit: Margot Griswold*

more funds to redesign the project to account for accurate estimates of future possible flooding in Ballona Creek. CDFW used a lower estimate of flooding in the original EIR, even though they knew that higher flows were possible. The Wildlife Conservation Board may schedule consideration of the additional funding as soon as November 15. LAAS opposes this timing, and is requesting that instead the funding decision be scheduled only after the scoping period for the EIR so that all parties know and understand the scope of the revisions that might be necessary.

LAAS opposes further funding of a planning process that has been flawed in many ways and has led to a proposed project that is inconsistent with current understanding of the ecology of the area, does not account for current

estimates of sea level rise, and does not address the adverse impacts to groundwater and groundwater-dependent ecosystems.

You can read our letter to the Wildlife Conservation Board that follows. And you can express your concerns to the WCB by calling them at (916) 445-8448 and requesting that they not fund further Ballona Wetlands planning until there is a commitment from CDFW to reopen the project design and to incorporate the changed environmental conditions and legal requirements since the current design was selected in 2008. A lot has changed since then and Ballona deserves a restoration plan that reflects current scientific understanding and has the full support of the environmental community. 

Los Angeles Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 411301  
Los Angeles, California 90041-8301



October 31, 2023

**Via Email** (BWERcomments@wildlife.ca.gov)

**TO:** Erinn Wilson-Olgin, Regional Manager, South Coast Region.  
Richard C. Brody, Land Manager, Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve

**RE:** Los Angeles Audubon Society Request for Extension of Comments for Notice of Preparation of a Revised Environmental Impact Report for the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project

Los Angeles Audubon Society respectfully requests an extension of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) comment period from 30 days to 75 days, in the interest of public participation and transparency. As I am sure you are aware, the current 30-day comment period will end around Thanksgiving. It is a difficult time of year to respond to the NOP in a meaningful way. We are asking for 75 days as this would completely by-pass the holiday season.

Los Angeles Audubon Society thinks that this is a reasonable request given the judge's ruling on the previous FEIR concerning what CDFW did and did not adequately describe and analyze. We need to carefully go over the NOP to make sure we understand what CDFW is revising, and how the revisions fit with the judge's order. In the long run, a careful review at this stage of the preparation of a new and legal EIR will be to everyone's advantage.

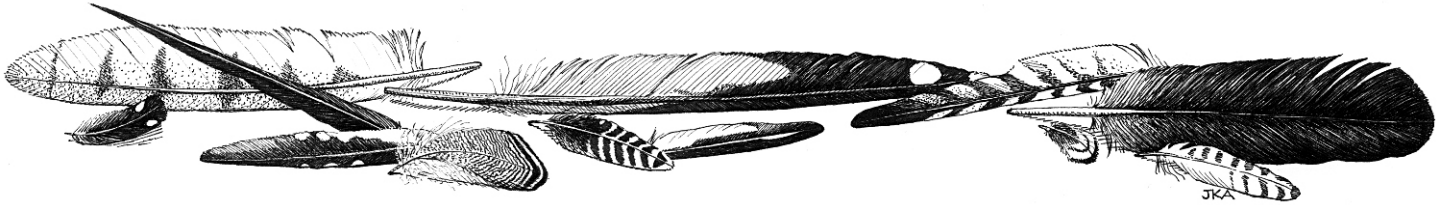
Los Angeles Audubon Society has been a voice for birds and conservation in Los Angeles for over 110 years. Our mission is to promote the study and protection of birds, other wildlife, and their habitats throughout the diverse landscapes of the Los Angeles area. We have over 3,500 members and supporters, most of whom live in the County of Los Angeles. We also manage the oldest environmental education program at the Ballona Wetlands, serving mainly Title 1 schools, and twice monthly Open Wetlands to encourage public access within the Ballona Wetlands, with both programs implemented through our dedicated volunteer docents.

Again, in the interest of public participation, we request that you extend the comment period for the NOP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Margot Griswold". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Margot Griswold, Ph.D.  
Conservation and Education Committees  
Los Angeles Audubon Society



# A C C L O S E R L O O K

by Rozy Bathrick

## Arctic-Breeding Greater Yellowlegs Tracked to Los Angeles River

**H**ow do you know when a Greater Yellowlegs is near? It'll tell you. These gregarious shorebirds (*Tringa melanoleuca*) breed in boggy forest edges in the subarctic, along the coast of the Gulf of Alaska and in central Canada. Despite their conspicuous behavior both on the breeding grounds and during migration, Greater Yellowlegs are a particularly poorly understood species. While on-the-ground observations help us understand their range and habitat use at a species-level, until this year their migration had never been tracked from a bird's eye view. We didn't know the routes different populations use, what stopover sites are important, how they are connected and what an individual bird's migratory strategy looks like. Tracking data fills these gaps and informs our conservation priorities for populations.

In the muskeg bogs of the upper Cook Inlet in Alaska, Greater Yellowlegs share breeding habitat with Hudsonian Godwits, Short-billed Gulls, and Arctic Terns, rearing their chicks in small ponds between spruce stands and defending territory from treetops. In May and June of 2023, our research team, led by Nathan Senner from UMass Amherst, with support from USFWS's Migratory Birds Division and the USGS Alaska Science Center, chased pairs of Greater Yellowlegs in the bogs and wet tundra of Beluga and King Salmon, Alaska in an effort to fill in those knowledge gaps with GPS



*Beluga, Alaska*

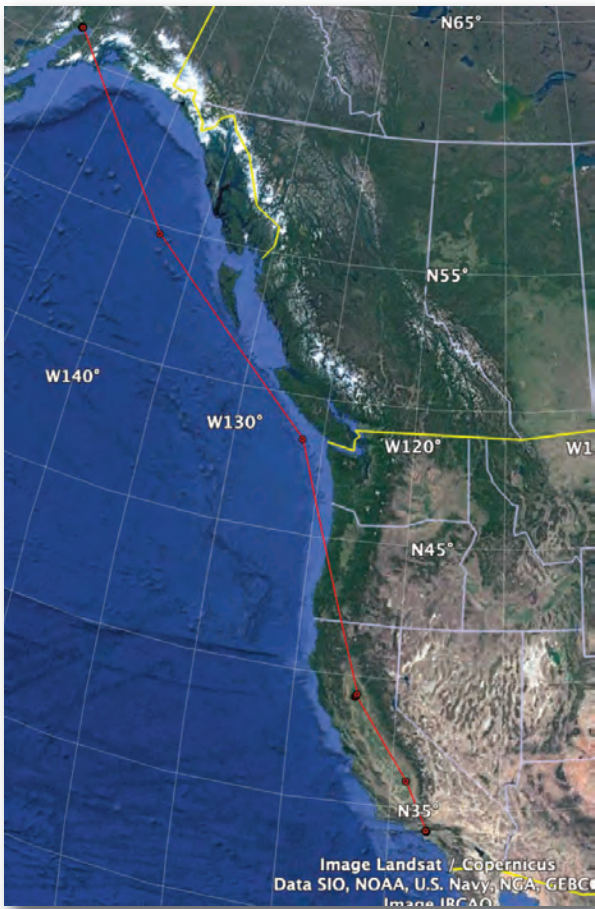
transmitters. Using mist nets and chick-call playbacks, we captured birds during chick-rearing by carefully swiping them out of the air while they dive-bombed our heads. Easier said than done - for every successful capture there were many failures, in which birds didn't perceive us as a formidable threat, dodged the net, or lost interest in our antics. All told, we deployed GPS transmitters on 16 birds this summer, which took highly accurate locations every 1-2 days during their fall migration.

On August 1st, bird #243433 departed its breeding site in Alaska and flew nonstop across the Gulf of Alaska

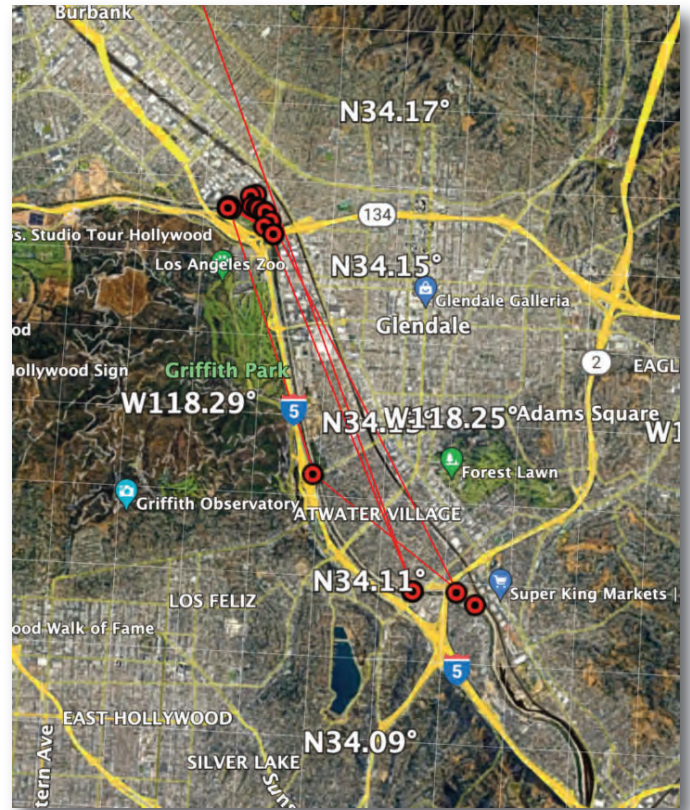
and down the Pacific Coast, about 1800 miles, to land in California's Central Valley.

For a few days, it moved around agriculture fields northwest of Sacramento, then made another flight down the state to stopover near the recently-refilled Tulare Lake in Kings County.

On August 10th, it touched down on the Los Angeles River, where it's been for nearly a month - using the Elysian Valley and, more heavily, the bend in the river where 134 and 5 meet, alongside the John Ferraro Athletic fields and Griffith Dog Park.



Gulf Alaska, Pacific Coast, California Central Valley, Screenshot 2023-09-06, 3.24.35 PM



California Central Valley, Screenshot 2023-09-06, 3.22.30 PM




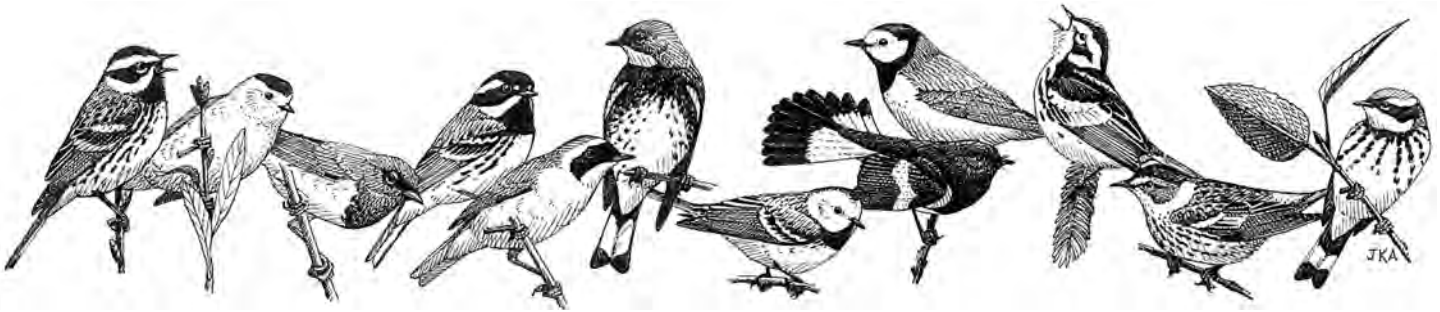
Elysian Valley, 134 at 5 Fwys, Screenshot 2023-09-06, 3.31.41 PM



Rozy Bathrick

Locations are taken every two days and are uploaded to satellites every six days - so there is a delay in transmission - but as of Sept 4, #243433 was riverside of Dreamworks Studio, at 34.1563759, -118.285988. Look for a metal band and a thin, long antennae extending past the rump.

Nearly all the other tracked birds in #243433's cohort have pushed farther south to wintering sites along the mainland Mexico's west coast - where this bird may continue to. For now, it's demonstrating, by its month-long tenure in central LA - how important and resource-rich fragments of foraging habitat in heavily urban areas is. 



# BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Jon Fisher

Birds of the Season- December 2023

**M**ild temperatures and limited precipitation were features of fall this year, and so were many rare birds. Though the traditional vagrant season for passerines ends with October, that doesn't mean the end of good birds. Increasingly, neotropical migrants are found well into November and later. Neither were these limited to songbirds; as always, the variety was ample. Additionally, Christmas Birds Counts, run from December 14-January 5, have already turned up more notable birds.

These days virtually every rarity is documented with photos, often by legions of birders. It's a far cry from just a couple of decades ago when even seeing a birder with a camera was itself a rarity. Back then, taking field notes was an art, still practiced by some, but today largely replaced by multiple JPEGs. That's mostly a good thing, since in most cases a photo seals the deal as far as confirming identification.

From waterfowl to passerines, the county had it pretty well covered. Here's a look at what was found in November and December.

The county's first **Tundra Bean-Goose** continued one of the oddest rare bird sagas in memory. First discovered in the Antelope Valley in

March of 2023, it sustained a wing injury and then appeared in Willowbrook in July where it remained through November 22. Whether the bird ended up here on its own is still in question. Finally in late November it was captured and taken to rehab for treatment, with x-rays showing a lead pellet in its right carpal bone.

**Eurasian Wigeons** were at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB on October 26 (Chris Dean), at Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area in Willowbrook on November 4 (Justin Hartsell), in Pico Rivera on November 24 (Becky Turley) and at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on December 3 (Lauren Simpson).

The Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB hosted an unusual inland **Surf Scoter** on November 7 (Chris Dean). Three **Common Goldeneyes** at Crystal Lake in the San Gabriel Mountains on November 22 were at an unexpected locale (Brendan Crill).

A **White-winged Dove** at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park in Harbor City on November 2 was the only one reported.

An **American Oystercatcher** was at the Los Angeles Harbor on November 22 and a returning wintering **Pacific Golden-Plover** was along lower Ballona Creek through December 16.

Scarce and declining, both locally and in general, **Mountain Plovers** included ten at the A&G Sod Farm in the Antelope Valley from November 1-12 (Kimball Garrett), twelve by 120th Street West and Ave. B on November 29 (Rachel Woodard) and coastally-where very rare- one was at Dockweiler State Beach in El Segundo from November 11-18 (Benjamin Vizzachero).

Two **Red Knots**, quite scarce in the county, were at the Ballona Creek mouth on December 2 (Luke Tiller).

A **Little Gull**, the county's first in twenty-one years, was off San Pedro on December 10 (Andy Birch, Naresh Satyan, Mark Scheel). Still rare but more expected was a **Laughing Gull** at Cabrillo Beach in San Pedro from December 16-21 (Chezy Yusuf).

**Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, increasing in the county, were along the lower Los Angeles River in Long Beach on November 10 (Jeff Boyd), farther upstream in Maywood from November 20-December 16, with two there on the latter date (Naresh Satyan, Van Pierszalowski), at Lake Hollywood from December 4-21 (Andy Birch) and at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia on December 8 (Grigory Heaton).



Rare inland was a **Red-throated Loon** at Legg Lake in South El Monte on December 16 (Lee Pace). Likewise was a **Pacific Loon** at the flood basin in the Antelope Valley just off the 14 Freeway from November 10-13 (Kimball Garrett).

Thirty-two **Western Cattle Egrets** were recorded over the period including a notable count of twenty-five at Bonelli Regional Park on October 31 (Keith Condon).

Unusual seabirds included a **Flesh-footed Shearwater** and a **Brown Booby** in Santa Monica Bay on December 7 (Jon Feenstra).

At least thirteen **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** were found over the period, with most of these continuing at Ballona Lagoon in Marina del Rey.

Late **Swainson's Hawks** were at Quail Lake near Gorman on November 10 (Brad Rumble), at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on November 21 (Keith Condon) and at Rosemead Park in Rosemead on December 10 (Luke Tiller).

Up to three **Zone-tailed Hawks** continued along the coastal slope of the San Gabriel Mountains in Monrovia and Glendora.

**Short-eared Owls**, always a good find in the county, were at the Ballona Wetlands near Playa del Rey from November 9-22 (Rick Pine), in Griffith Park from November 11-12 (Andy Birch) and in the west Antelope Valley on December 2 (Grigory Heaton).

**Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were at Hopkins Wilderness Park in Redondo Beach on November 12, continuing on Santa Catalina Island through December 10, at Monte Cristo Fire Station in the San Gabriel Mountains on November 29 (Luke Tiller), at El Dorado Park in Long Beach from December 4-5 (Nancy Salem) and at Veteran's Memorial Park in Sylmar on December 17 (Teresa Palos).

Pale "**Prairie**" **Merlins** were in the

east Antelope Valley on November 1 (Kimball Garrett) and just southwest of there- possibly the same bird- on December 1 (Luke Tiller)

Late and potentially wintering **Ash-throated Flycatchers** were at Willow Springs Park in Long Beach on November 12 (Brad Dawson), along San Jose Creek in Whittier on November 19 (Alex Coffey) and at Pierce College in Woodland Hills on December 16 (Dan Cooper, Nurit Katz). A returning wintering **Brown-crested Flycatcher** was at the South Coast Botanic Garden in Palos Verdes Estates from December 9-16 (Manuel Duran, Alejandra Cedillo).

Five **Tropical Kingbirds** were present during the period. Of greater interest was a returning wintering **Thick-billed Kingbird** at Griffith Park from October 23-December 22 (Mario Pineda). Also of note was a late **Western Wood-Pewee** at Lincoln Park in Lincoln Heights on November 15 (Ed Stonick).

**Hammond's Flycatchers** were at Tournament Park in Pasadena from November 10-December 18 (Jack Wickel) and at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on December 16 (Ken Burgdorff, Seth Thompson). Late **Dusky Flycatchers** were at St. Andrew's Abbey near Valyermo from October 23-November 12 and at the Piute Ponds from October 27-December 16 (both Kimball Garrett). A **Gray Flycatcher** was unusual on the desert at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB on December 14 (Jon Feenstra). Over ten **Western Flycatchers** were recorded over the period.

**Eastern Phoebes** were at Lake Lindero from November 15-December 17 (Dan Cooper) and at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB on November 24 (Naresh Satyan).

Seven **Cassin's Vireos** were reported over the period, all on the coastal slope. A great find was a **Yellow-green Vireo** at the West San Gabriel River Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood on November 22 (Becky

Turley). It was reported through December 16.

**Red-breasted Nuthatches** continued to be found seemingly everywhere, with hundreds present. This was a remarkable contrast to last year when fewer than two dozen were recorded in the lowlands.

Eight **Pacific Wrens** were recorded during the period, an above average number.

A rare **Brown Thrasher** was at the West San Gabriel River Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood from November 16-24 (Joyce Brady).

Equally rare was a **White Wagtail** seen briefly along the lower Los Angeles River in Long Beach on December 1 (Jeff Boyd, Richard Barth, Juan Limon).

A non-native **Scaly-breasted Munia** at 6,500 feet at Buckhorn Campground in the San Gabriel Mountains on November 18 was unusual (Jodhan Fine, Russell Campbell). This species is common and widespread on the coastal slope and continues to expand its range.

A **Lapland Longspur** was in Griffith Park from November 12-14 (Andy Birch) and a **Chestnut-collared Longspur** was there from October 28-29 (Jodhan Fine).

Single **Evening Grosbeaks** were at Islip Ridge in the San Gabriel Mountains on October 28 (Catherine McFadden, Paul Clarke) and at Lake Hughes on November 9 (Will B.).

**Grasshopper Sparrows** were at Pt. Vicente on November 12 (Naresh Satyan) and in Griffith Park on December 3 (Andy Birch). **Lark Buntings** were at El Dorado Park in Long Beach on November 4 (Joyce Brady), in Griffith Park from November 11-14 (Andy Birch) and at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB on November 13 (William Tyrer).

Very rare in the county was an **American Tree Sparrow** at Switzer's Picnic Area in the San Gabriel Mountains on November 10 (William & Emily Tyrer). **Clay-colored Sparrows** were at Angel's Gate Park in San Pedro on October 30 (David Ellsworth), in Griffith Park on November 5 (Andy Birch) and at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on December 8 (Chris Dean). A **"Red" Fox Sparrow** was at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB from November 24-25 (Naresh Satyan).

A **Dark-eyed "Pink-sided" Junco** continued at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas through December 4 and another was in Signal Hills on November 25 (Kim Moore, Christine Jacobs). A returning **Dark-eyed "Gray-headed" Junco** was at Hahamongna Watershed Park from November 11-December 3 (Jeffrey Hale) with two there on December 1.

Fifteen **White-throated Sparrows** made their way to the county this fall as did a dozen **Swamp Sparrows** and seven **Green-tailed Towhees**.

An **Orchard Oriole** was at Satellite Park in Cerritos on November 9 (Thomas Lopez), while **Hooded Orioles** were in Rolling Hills from November 23-December 10 (Jim Aichele, Cathy Nichols), at the LA County Arboretum in Arcadia on November 25 (Mitch Walters) and at the Huntington Gardens in San Marino on December 10 (Danny Perez). Also notable was a **Baltimore Oriole** in Zuma Canyon in Malibu on November 11 (Max Breshears).

**Rusty Blackbirds** were at the San Gabriel Coastal Basin Spreading Grounds in Pico Rivera from December 6-15 (Sarah Boscoe) and at Hansen Dam on December 9 (Brad Rumble).

Seven **Black-and-white Warblers** were detected as were four **Tennessee Warblers** including birds at St. Andrew's Abbey near

Valyermo on October 23 (Kimball Garrett), at Neff Park in La Mirada on October 24 (Jonathan Rowley), at Rolling Hills Landfill Loop on the Palos Verdes Peninsula on November 5 (Naresh Satyan) and at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on December 16 (Darren Dowell).

A **Lucy's Warbler** was at La Mirada Community Regional Park in La Mirada on November 15 (Jonathan Rowley) and **American Redstarts** were at Oakdale Memorial Park in Glendora from December 3-9 (Rick Fisher).

A **Cape May Warbler** returning for its third winter was at Loyola Marymount University in Westchester on October 28 but has not been reported since (Kevin Lapp). A **Bay-breasted Warbler** was found on November 22 at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena, also never to be seen again.

Unusual in winter on the deserts was a **Yellow Warbler** at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB from November 17-December 16 (Femi Faminu). **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were on the UCLA Campus in Westwood on November 16 (Chris Sayers) and at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena from November 19-December 16 (Darren Dowell).

Eight **Palm Warblers** were detected in November and December, while **Pine Warblers** were at Wardlow Park in Long Beach from December 3-10 (Christine Jacobs) and at Satellite Park in Cerritos on December 10 (Charles Thomas, Adam Lopez). Quite rare in the county was a **Grace's Warbler** on the UCLA Campus in Westwood on November 5 (Chris Sayers).

**Painted Redstarts** were in San Dimas Canyon Park from November 12-December 21 (David & Patty Thorne, Mary Ann Ruiz), at Cheviot Hills Park from November


23-25 (Kevin Lapp) and in Arcadia on December 5 (Eric Gai).

A very good bird for Los Angeles County was a **Hepatic Tanager** in Griffith Park from November 20-December 22 (Adam Cunningham). Sixteen **Summer Tanagers**, expected in small numbers, were found in November and December.

**Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were in Eagle Rock on October 21 (Julie Desmond), at Elysian Park on October 30 (Andy Birch) and at Hopkins Wilderness Park in Redondo Beach on November 13. Late **Black-headed Grosbeaks** were at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on November 5 (Darren Dowell, Jeffrey Hale) and in Griffith Park on November 8 (Otto Mayer). Wrapping things up was a **Dickcissel** continuing on Santa Catalina Island through October 24.

It's hard to believe we've come to the end of another bird year. Like all others, this one was filled with vagrants both major and minor, unexpected surprises and many enjoyable days in the field.

Soon after we officially get into winter, northbound migrants will be appearing. In the meantime though, there is still plenty for birders to do. No doubt there are still undiscovered wintering vagrants waiting to be found, gulls to be debated and new places to be explored. Parks and various green patches, deep water inland lakes and sea-watching locations and more all have potential to produce good birds. The deserts offer an interesting mix of specialties, including possible longspurs. Even the higher mountains can offer something of interest.

Despite human development, traffic congestion and large numbers of people, Los Angeles County continues to be one of the best places in the country for birds and birding. Yet most who live here have no idea that's the case. 

# 124TH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The Audubon Christmas Bird Count occurs December 14 to January 5 every season. Sign up to receive information and results about all of Audubon's community science programs through American Birds, our newsletter by email.

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>

## LAAS Sponsored CBCs — Calendar

### Antelope Valley CBC

*Saturday, December 16, 2023, Compiler: Mary Freeman*

Greetings SoCal Birders! You are cordially invited to participate in the 124th National Christmas Bird Count, and specifically the 44th annual Lancaster Christmas Bird Count! That means Mary and I will have compiled this CBC for 24 years! The count is sponsored by the LA Audubon Society, and the data is organized in an on-line database by the National Audubon Society. To view last year's results, check "audubon.org", and follow the prompts. I can easily send you an Excel file, if you want to see Lancaster 2022 only, or all 43 previous years.

LeConte's Thrasher, Mountain Bluebird, Mountain Plover, Prairie Falcon; and less frequently one or more of the longspurs and / or a Golden Eagle are amongst the feathered fare seen (by someone!) on this count. And all participants will likely see Nick's famous brownies. To inquire about participating, please contact us directly; or get a hold of your teammates from last year and contact us. Mary (and Nick) Freeman: mnfreeman [at] earthlink dot net, (818) 636-4361.

### Malibu CBC

*Sunday, December 17, 2023, Compiler Dick Norton*

Contact: richardjnorton[at]yahoo.com or (310) 455-1138

All areas are assigned before the count. Contact Dick by email or telephone to be assigned an area. There is no early morning gathering. Participants meet for lunch and a preliminary assessment at about 1:00 p.m. at Malibu Bluffs Park, located at the southern end of Malibu Canyon Road.

### Los Angeles CBC

*Sunday, December 31, 2023, Compiler: Dan Cooper*

Contact: dan[at]cooperecological.com or lathrotriccus[at]gmail.com. On count day, contact by text to (323) 397-3562.

Email Dan if you would like to bird as a "dispersed group" in the following locations: Del Rey Lagoon, Playa Del Rey; Kenneth Hahn Park, near Culver City or Echo Park Lake.

Otherwise, even, if you have done this CBC last year/before, please contact Dan and let him know if you would like to do the same area you covered in the past. If you would like a new area, contact Dan and let him know that too.

If this is your first time on the Los Angeles count (or if you were with a group before and now want to go solo), please either: count in your neighborhood, or contact Dan for ideas on where to go.



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#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Observing the Coastal California Gnatcatcher, by Daniel Horowitz

CONSERVATION CONVERSATION—LAAS Expresses Concerns with Ballona Wetlands Project and A Letter to the Wildlife Conservation Board, by Margot Griswold

A CLOSER LOOK—Arctic-Breeding Greater Yellowlegs Tracked to Los Angeles River, by Rozy Bathrick

BIRDS OF THE SEASON—December 2023 (Coming Soon), by Jon Fisher

124th Christmas Bird Counts: Antelope Valley, Malibu, & Los Angeles

2024 Call For Applications, Ralph W. Schreiber Ornithology Research Award

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## Call for Applications — 2024 *Ralph W. Schreiber Ornithology Research Awards*

Los Angeles Audubon Society presents an annual research grant, the *Ralph W. Schreiber Ornithology Research Award*, to support research relevant to the biology of birds. Award recipients are limited to students and amateur ornithologists who are not able to secure research funding through channels available to professional ornithologists, and who reside in southern California (from San Luis Obispo, Kern and San Bernardino Counties south) or are currently enrolled in a southern California academic institution. There is no geographical restriction on the research area. While a more favorable consideration of research that is of a local nature involving local species and conservation issues, all researchers are encouraged to apply. Only one award will be given for an individual project or thesis.

One or more awards will be given out in 2024, with the maximum of \$2,000 per award. The application deadline for the 2024 Research Award is April 30, 2024, and it is anticipated that grants will be awarded in June 2024. In the past, grants were awarded for projects ranging from studies of urban parrots in Los Angeles to Emperor penguins in Antarctica.

Interested applicants can obtain further information regarding this award, and application materials, by downloading the materials from the Society's website: ([laaudubon.org](http://laaudubon.org)), or by contacting **Dr. Ryan Harrigan, Grants Committee Chairman, @ Institute of the Environment & Sustainability, University of California, Los Angeles, La Kretz Hall, Suite 300, Box 951496, Los Angeles, California, by email at: [iluvsa@ucla.edu](mailto:iluvsa@ucla.edu)**. We look forward to receiving the always inspiring and exciting applications!

Dr. Schreiber was curator of birds and mammals at the Los Angeles County Natural History Museum, known for his research on Pacific seabirds, including the impacts of the pesticide DDT on Brown Pelicans. Dr. Schreiber passed away during the prime of his career, and this award is meant to continue the spirit of research that he contributed to throughout his life.