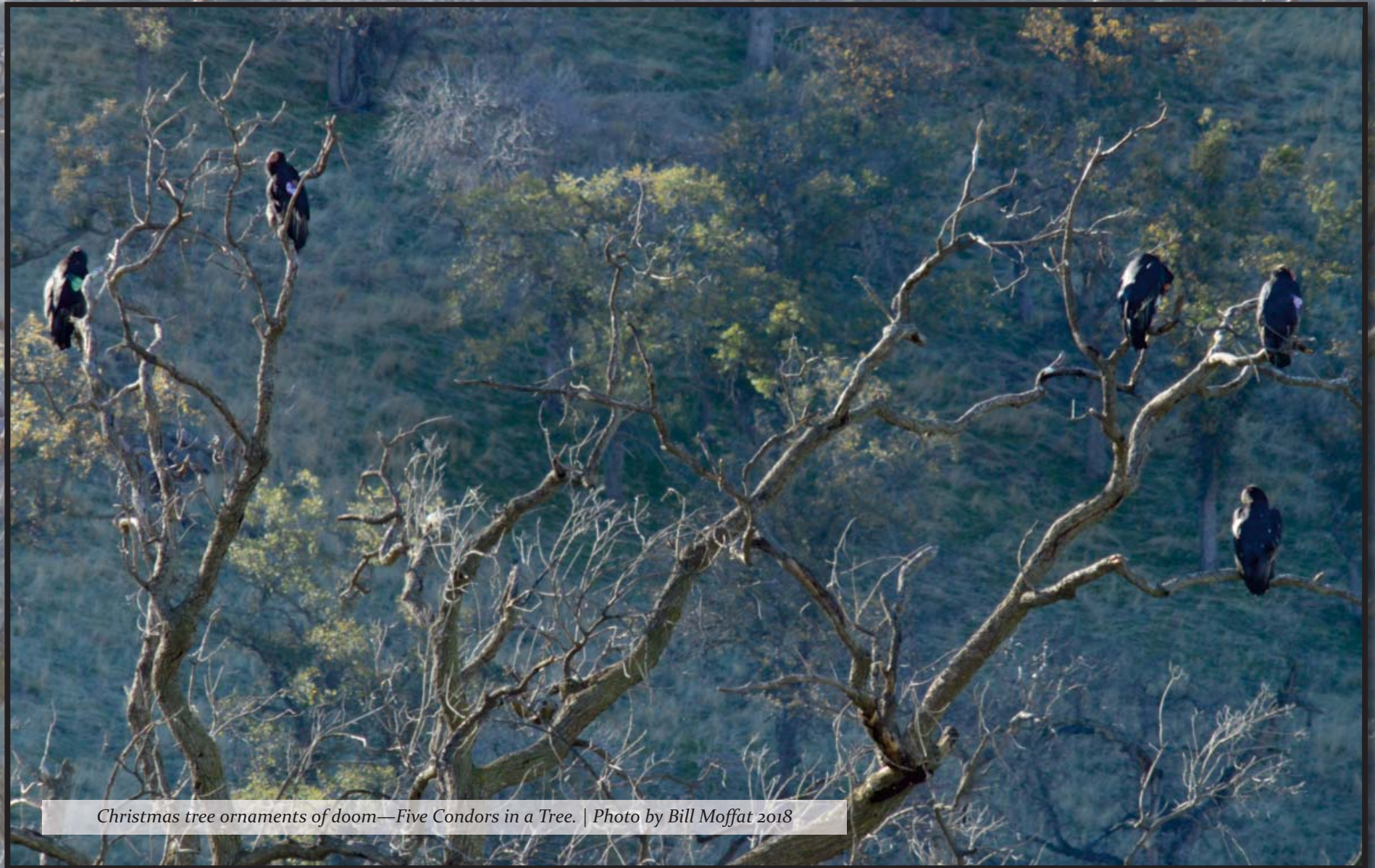


WESTERN TANAGER



Christmas tree ornaments of doom—Five Condors in a Tree. | Photo by Bill Moffat 2018



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The Western Tanager is the chapter newsletter of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, published online bi-monthly in PDF format. 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 submission. Please send copy as Microsoft Word, RTF documents, or plain text files to westernanager@laaudubon.org. Photos should be high resolution (300ppi) .jpg or .tif files. **Submissions are due the 1st of the month to be included in the following issue.** All rights reserved. All photographs are used by permission and are copyrighted material of the credited photographers.

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SCHEDULES

FIELD TRIPS
 BIRD WALKS

Wed., Jan. 9 Public Lecture Seabirds on the California Islands David Mazurkiewicz

The Channel Islands off the coast of Southern California are an extremely important location for over 14 breeding species of seabirds. This talk will highlight restoration efforts for several seabird species on the Channel Islands and Baja California Pacific Islands, including invasive species removal, habitat restoration, and social attraction. David Mazurkiewicz is a wildlife biologist with Channel Islands National Park.

WHEN: Wed., Jan. 9, 2019 at 7:30 PM – 8:30 PM PST

WHERE:

Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook
 6300 Hetzler Rd, Culver City, CA 90232
 (310) 558-5547

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BEING INSPIRED BY A BRAND NEW BIRDER

By Louis Tucker | Photos by: Bill Moffat, Jason Koenig & Terri Kashima

I have been birding for quite a while. In January of 2019, it will be forty years, and that's not counting the times, as a child, where I would observe the behavior of ducks and geese by ponds and rivers where I grew up in White Plains, New York. That would add a couple more years to the forty. However, when I started taking this hobby seriously, in 1979, there was an excitement about each species I would see for the first time. It also helped that my initiation to this hobby was in south Florida. So, there were Great Blue Herons, Snowy and Great Egrets, Tri-colored Herons, Laughing Gulls, Herring Gulls, Ring-billed Gulls, Great Black-backed Gulls, Royal and Caspian Terns. There were Ospreys, Turkey and Black Vultures and the bird that got me hooked: a breeding pair of Swallow-tailed Kites building a nest. I was so filled with excitement and wonder watching this pair, which had a beauty about them that seemed like it was from another world.

I was in a show, and we had finished our Broadway run and then embarked on a national tour. I used my day off, being in south Florida, to try to at least skim the northern portion of the Everglades. This was also the beginning of my appreciation for the magic of lands set aside for wildlife, and the environment. And, I was beginning to be aware of the importance of these special places and to keep them pure. Those first outings were like being in the most incredible candy store. Each new place was like the discovery of gifts on Christmas morning. I used my days off while we traveled around the country to find these wild places. And, the wild places never disappointed. They were akin to when I was a kid and I would wonder through the woods, streams, rivers and ponds near where I grew up. The difference is that these places are a part of the bigger world we live in. You've heard people say how beautiful this country is. And, I was taking it in as we went around

the country. It is truly beautiful and so are the creatures which inhabit it.

The first years of this discovery would have me buzzed for days following every time I went out. So, I had my excitement refreshed recently on a couple of field trips when I met up with a good friend, Jason Koenig, and a woman he has been dating, Terri Kashima. Jason and I have a bit of history. He and I worked out at the same gym for quite a while and we run into each other from time to time. Jason was also training to become a professional photographer; a status he has now reached. I invited him to go on a field trip to the Tejon Ranch some five years ago. He brought along his cameras and once on the ranch started snapping pictures. Many have illustrated some of the articles I've written.

Our first field trip for the three of us was with Los Angeles Audubon to Hopper Mountain Condor Refuge. The first test for camaraderie starts with the car ride to your destination. On these trips, I like to have fun - have great conversation in the car. Use this to get to



Jason Keonig & Terri Kashima | Photo by Jason Koenig



Red-tail Hawk with full crop of food | Photos by Terri Kashima

know one another. The chemistry was perfect. Lots of laughter, lots of talk about a lot of different subjects - all enlightening and edifying. Well, that was so easy. How does this translate to the field trip itself? The morning unfolded slowly. A condor was spotted, perched on a rock, miles away. The only way to notice it was a condor was that the silhouette in proportion to its perch was so large. This really isn't the look that's going to make an impression on a "newbie". However, a little later, a big bird popped up. It was not a condor, but, a Golden Eagle. I noticed that Terri was getting excited about this.

I'm noticing the eyes widen and the excitement build up. I also notice her wanting to learn about things. At Hopper Mountain, we had an expert Field and Wildlife guide in Joseph Brandt, an imposing figure with wild "Rasta" hair extensions. More than a "fount of information", this guy. Even seasoned birders can learn a lot from his knowledge of the land and the creatures which inhabit it. Terri was taking it all in. What I didn't notice until our 2nd outing, several weeks later, was that she was studying my field guides in the back seat and taking notes. During our watch, and after seeing one magnificent condor fly near us, she and Jason went to a wooded area to look for owls, an errand, which unfortunately came up empty.

There were also a few song birds, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and a few woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, Acorn, and Nuttall's also caught interest. And, a small bird receiving a few oohs and aahs was the American Kestrel, both male and female. I just observed Terri watching with keen interest. Another condor soared over a hill top as did another Golden Eagle. And, when we were in the car, Terri was looking up the birds in the field guide. At one point during the day long before we were finished, I think I heard her say: "I like this!" I also noticed during the day that she had an enthusiastic smile on her face the whole time. I was excited for her and her enthusiasm.

This was also a day which was incredibly beautiful and clear, as many of the days can be in southern California. As has been with this ongoing drought, it was also incredibly dry. And, there can be times on the mountain when nothing happens. You are literally at the mercy of whatever species decides to show up. That's the thing about being out in the wild. However, when things show up, each appearance of whatever bird, on that mountain, becomes special, even the ubiquitous Red-tailed Hawks. And, when it's all new to you, it's a little bit of Christmas.

In the barracks near the mountain top there were live creature cams; and cameras were focused on the condors' nesting areas, which are usually some big hollow cave-like space along a hillside of solid rock. We would stay around the barracks for a while and eventually moved on. Our interest was mainly for the big soaring birds. And, luckily we saw a few. A surprise came, as we were leaving the refuge however, when we spotted a condor which was the first wild condor born in the wild by wild parents. All of the vehicles stopped and everyone exited the autos. Those with cameras had a field day watching this bird which now is an adult slowly glide along the ridge. I think of



Yellow-rumped Warbler at Hopper Mountain | Photo by Jason Koenig



California Condor & Raven | Photo by Terri Kashima

the several condors we saw during this magnificent day, this bird was the most thrilling. Joseph Brandt had stated that there was no assistance from researchers in the hatching of this bird, which gives hope for this condor restoration program. It is so successful that Oregon now wants to get in on the action.

The California Condor's original range was as far north as going through British Columbia and going all the way down to Baja and populating a lot of the southwest. I was taken by Terri's interest in all of this. Of course, seeing a lot of birds over a small period of time is also overwhelming. But she seemed excited about it. And, Terri and Jason were taking a lot of pictures.

Our next excursion took us on another LA Audubon field trip, led by Nick and Mary Freeman. We went to the San Jacinto Wildlife Refuge in Riverside County. This brought more wonders for our "newbie". Since during the winter, on select days, this is a place for hunters to hunt ducks, and on other days are for bird observation. It was here that I really got inspired again about birding as an exciting adventure. And, it was observing Terry and Jason using their cameras to try to get as many good shots as possible on every potential subject. The species number on this trip was much higher, for a number of reasons: there are hills and a lot of foliage for songbirds to feed and of course, hide. There are man-made ponds for the waterfowl and herons and rails. Lots of reeds for Marsh Wrens to defend territory come out and scold and then duck and hide. There are open areas for raptors to forage.

This day had its excitement. The ducks, of course were skittish. You might be skittish too if you were on the menu of a menacing hunter and shotgun. So, some of the looks of the ducks: Green-winged and Cinnamon Teal, Shovelors, Mallards, Gadwall, Ruddy Ducks, and Ring-necked Ducks were sometimes hard to get a close look at. Yellow-rumped Warblers were feeding in the trees and also making it hard at times for a good look.

However, Bushtits were flying around in their little flocks. I always have a bit of an evil laugh whenever a bird species' name with the word "tit" or "booby". Possibly this is a bit of my sophomoric humor? I explain to Terri, because women new to birding always flinch with these two families of birds, while they are being introduced to the hobby. They have to get used to these names which really originate from Western Europe. The name "booby" also has European origins. It comes from the Spanish word "bobo" meaning "dunce". Apparently the Spanish sailors in their exploration of the "new" world discovered these birds and that the birds had no fear of humans and were easily captured and killed.

Or course, we weren't in the right part of the globe for those fun birds, with their incredible ability to slice through water like a spear to nab fish; or their amazing mating dances. Around the fields and ponds, there were exciting appearances by an American Bittern flying over. This big secretive bird flying over in the clear daylight was something wonderful to see. Also in a field near where the Bittern took off, was a White-tailed Kite hovering - delicate and beautiful. Also, there were a number of American Kestrels showing how spectacularly stunning they can be. Along with this



Condor at Hopper Mountain | Photo by Jason Koenig



Ducks at man-made pond in San Jacinto | Photo by Terri Kashima

were lots of different races/morphs of the Red-tailed Hawk: from the normal Western, to a rusty color, to an incredibly dark bird which wasn't a Harlan's. And, several called out. I love hearing that sound. Of all of the birds of prey, it has the most formidable and ominous sound (we can't count on our Eagle for that.) There was also a Golden Eagle sitting in a tree in the distance.

But, what got me jazzed was standing by a pond near some reeds and a Sora came out in the open and was foraging around and not in the least concerned about our presence. This is where I observed a very intimate duet, a "pas de deux" between a photographer and a bird. The Sora was completely occupied with finding food and Terri was able to photograph this bird very closely as she was hunched down almost level with this little creature. And what I also noticed, Terri was very aware that she was not in the least disturbing this little rail. This inter-species ballet went on for some time. I would estimate a good fifteen to twenty minutes. And then the Sora unspooked, undisturbed slowly went back and disappeared into the reeds. This action took me back several years to when I wanted a better look at an Arctic Loon which was in San Dimas. A much better look than the one in Malibu in 2013 which was my life bird. In this lake in San Dimas, the loon was just sitting in the water very close to shore. I wondered just how close I could get to it without disturbing it. I very slowly walked down to the water's edge, and the bird didn't seem to care. I just observed it swimming very close to me, preening, occasionally tucking in its head to nap for a few minutes. I observed this bird for about an hour and I felt so privileged for the bird allowing me to do that.

It's moments like that that gets me excited about bird watching. My being allowed to observe as Terri was also allowed by the Sora to photograph it. What a wonderful honor that is. This inspires me. These wild creatures which sometimes let us in on their lives; to observe and give us joy as they live their lives, as they

go through their days on earth and in the sky. It took me back to the three hours I observed the Wood Duck family in the Great Swamp in New Jersey, although a blind was involved. I think that's one of the important things that Terri showed me in her beginning bird watching steps. Her angle, a bit different from mine. She came at this using photography to help her take it all in. I come to it as an actor, whose professional job is to observe and take in, make note of behavior. Interestingly, this is what I did as a 5 year old in White Plains, New York. I loved watching the behavior of the ducks and geese: their feeding habits, their rearing of their young, and their squabbles. The Swallow-tailed Kite pair building their nest in the Everglades as another example; their team work in setting up their proper home where they will lay eggs, incubate and hatch, and rear their young; I wished I could have been around for that miracle.

Toward the end of the San Jacinto outing we saw some Bald Eagles. There were five of them. Perhaps it was a family, although two youngsters looked like birds that were hatched this year and one youngster looked to be a year older. And, I wonder if the two adults were their parents. They were possibly foraging around a couple of



Sora at San Jacinto | Photo by Jason Koenig



Sora at San Jacinto | Photo by Terri Kashima

waterways which were close together. And, the eagles didn't appear all at once. But, one by one they appeared around the ponds and either were on the ground or up on telephone poles. What made me think it might be a family was because they weren't being territorial. Also as I'm observing, the youngsters, because they are dark brown birds looked as though they were bigger than their parents. The dark hues of the youngsters and dark birds in general make them look slightly bigger. The "wow" factor in these five eagles was about a "10". I was also observing my camera shooting friends. They were shooting with such enthusiasm. We watched these eagles for quite a while and eventually, we drove away from them and headed for home.

For the next field trips, I was on my own. But, I approached the day with "new eyes" and a new attitude. These are all places I've been before; but, the observations and the creatures are not necessarily the same. That's what draws us to these places. Life is variable. You may go to the same spot, but a different creature shows up. Or you can have a situation that each time you go to a spot, the same creatures show up. Being a creature of habit can translate to other life forms as well. I mention this obvious thing because there was an annual trip to Upper-Newport Back Bay for the highest tide of the year. The tide as it rises, flushes out secretive birds which stay in the cover of the vegetation in and around the bay. So, you have the possibility of seeing rails, and small skulking birds. This year there weren't as many rails flushed out, nor was there a hoped for appearance of the rare Nelson's Sparrow.

What was plentiful as opposed to previous years was huge numbers of ducks. A big flotilla of American Wigeon, sounding like the squeaky toy when they call, was some of the most numerous. There were also a great number of Green-winged and Cinnamon Teal. Both ducks are beautiful and colorful. There were also Shovelers, Gadwall, the ubiquitous Mallard, and North-

ern Pintail. There also weren't many flying predators. A female Northern Harrier was flying low looking for something. And, a beautiful American Kestrel made a kill of a little vole and just perched on a low tree out in the brush and mercilessly devoured it.

Going to another part of the bay, I observed a male Osprey foraging. This guy had me transfixed. He would hover, then dive but wouldn't submerge and climb up again and hover and go for a dive but didn't enter the water. This kept up for quite some time. And, then he struck. He totally submerged under water and gradually started to rise; but his meal was not going to give up without a fight. And, a fight it was. The Osprey's head came out of the water, but most of its body was still subject to the fish. The bird started to rise but could not lift off. The fish was fighting and dragged the Osprey around in circles. The Osprey struggled valiantly, trying to get its wings above the surface of the water. This was a real creature wrestling match. The Osprey would rise and then sink, and then trying like crazy to flap its wings so it could get out of the water. Not yet seeing the fish, I knew this had to be some big "whale". The Osprey continued to fight. This had to be a good meal he was struggling for, because it took this bird a while before he could get his wings high enough out



Bald Eagle juvie at San Jacinto | Photo by Terri Kashima



Bald Eagles at San Jacinto | Photo by Jason Koenig

of the water to start to make some headway. The wing beats were strong and hard and eventually it got its entire body out of the water and then we could see this monster fish. It must have been some big carp or something. It was big. And, the bird slowly flew off to eat this hard earned meal somewhere in peace. But, the Osprey, in carrying its prize, never really got more than two or three feet off the ground. That was exciting to watch. This “fish hawk” is one of the most powerful birds of prey; because it has the ability to totally submerge its body and then powerfully lift itself out of the water and fly away with its food. This time, I have to say, I’ve never seen an Osprey work so hard.

My next field trip was to go up to the Tejon Ranch and help them with their Christmas Bird Census. I could not wait for this day to come, even though I would have to get up around 3:30 in the morning and drive to the Conservancy office to meet my partner, Steve Justus, who I’ve worked with before. He and I did the last year’s Christmas count in really miserable conditions –60 to 70 mile an hour winds –up in the mountain, that’s not an ideal for counting anything. This year the weather was really good with no really big wind gusts to make us crazy. We were meeting an additional birder to help us; because a number of people cancelled this CBC and we were going to have to take on as much as we possibly could on the San Joaquin Valley side of the ranch. I’m in my new mindset and I’m up for the challenge. Our third person for the census was Bill Moffat, who also does a lot of volunteering at the conservancy; and we made a jolly trio. I have to say that the task of finding and counting birds was a lot of fun. There was some great chemistry and cooperation among us. Everybody was easy going and that made the long day with little sleep a pleasure.

Going to the back side of the ranch, really has a different feel than the Antelope Valley side of the ranch. It’s every bit as stunning as the south side of the ranch; but to me some of the canyons seem less spacious as

the other side. Riding along the main road, once we entered the Sebastian Road Gate, we were seeing Red-tails and Kestrels and of course Ravens. We must stop and look over south of the vehicle. In several trees, were Bluebirds: Western and Mountain Bluebirds. These species have different hues of blue, and seeing them in the field is just magical. There is nothing like it when the sun hits them. You really have to catch your breath. There was a visitation by a female Northern Harrier and further down the road to the north of us in a bare tree was one of the super guest winter appearances. At the top of this tree, a Ferruginous Hawk just perched there and stared around. I am taken aback with this barrel chested buteo, with the rusty shoulders and rusty feathered legs.

We leave this beauty and drive a little further and Bill tells Steve to stop the SUV and we look to the south of us and sitting in the top of a leafless tree are five California Condors. They are waiting for the sun to heat up things so they can take off and soar for the rest of daylight to forage. But, it is just 7:00 a.m., and it’s chilly, and they are perched there; each one on its own branch. And your jaw drops! You are in awe of this sight. We exit the vehicle for better looks, and Bill is snapping away at photos. Normally, this would be the



American Kestrel in Flight | Photo by Terri Kashima



Two Bald Eagles at San Jacinto, likely juvenies. | Photo by Terri Kashima

highlight of any birder's day, but, ours has really just started. And, we watch, mesmerized. But, then their repose is interrupted. A raven flies up and sits on one of the branches next to a condor. This is the beginning of a comedy sketch. The disparity in the sizes is the first thing that strikes you. The condor is not disturbed by this visit. But, you know there is going to be mischief afoot. And, at first, nothing happens. You have two black birds on a branch. The thing that comes to my mind as far as the disparity in sizes is if you could imagine a little Yorkie sitting next to a Great Dane. It was that silly. And, then it starts. The raven which has krypton chutzpah, harrasses the condor. And, briefly, at first, the condor does nothing. Then the raven pecks at the condor and the condor snaps back. And, it is hilarious because the raven awkwardly, quickly, and barely avoids getting an attack from the condor's very sharp beak. But, the raven, not knowing how to quit just flies to another branch and gets in more trouble and flies to another branch where it decides to just "be cool".

The day has barely started, and it's already a good time. We head to one of the ponds. With the windows open, you hear ethereal melodies sung by Western Meadowlarks. And, there are fields of them, singing, flying up and down into the high grasses. Also, the vehicle tends to flush Horned Larks. There are also a lot of them, and Savannah Sparrows and Lark Sparrows. At one of the ponds, there is an array of waterfowl: Mallards, Coots, Common Mergansers, Buffleheads, Ruddy Ducks, Lesser Scaup, an American Wigeon and Canada Geese. Plus around the pond is a Great Egret, a Killdeer. On opposite sides of the pond are two Greater Yellowlegs.

As we went through the day, there were sightings that were just great to pick up for the list like a couple of Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and some White-breasted Nuthatches. In one of the reed filled ponds was an army of a number of Blackbird species: Brewer's, Tri-

coloreds, and mostly the very noisy but beautiful Red-winged Blackbird. That particular pond also yielded a Wilson's Snipe which Bill persisted to look for and found. There was also a flock of American Pipits, with the pumping of their tails and the pipit chirping as they flew off.

There are always Common Raven up at Tejon. But for the count, the sky and fields seemed to be teeming with them. There were kettles of Raven, hundreds upon hundreds of them soaring in the air in circles with the thermals. A couple of times, there were several different kettles at once. There were also many of them on the ground. And, crows —Lots and lots of crows. We would see Black Phoebes and Say's Phoebes snapping up insects. In an area by the Native American old school house, there were a bunch of White-crowned Sparrows on the ground - juveniles and adults. And, they would sing. There were Acorn and Nuttall's Woodpeckers, and Dark-eyed Juncos flitting around. And, California Towhee's also running around.

During this count we would see Merlin, Prairie Falcons and one Rock Wren that disappeared faster than when he appeared. Our venture into Tunis Canyon gave us more Ruby-crowned



Cassin's Kingbird | Photo by Terri Kashima Nov. 2018



Five Condors and one Raven at Tejon Creek | Photo by Bill Moffat

Kinglets, but also a beautiful unexpected surprise. A Peregrine Falcon flew over us into a tree. None of us had seen a Peregrine on the ranch before. This was awesome. It perched itself at the top of this tree and stayed there for quite a while motionless. And, then it took off, and instead of flapping its wings, it caught a thermal and just soared out of sight. That was impressive enough, but, our send off, before we left that canyon was the sharp “peek” call of a Hairy Woodpecker. And, he flew in to the bottom of a tree and started working the tree. This woodpecker gave us some grand looks. And, it was such a “clean” bird; meaning, all of the colors was clearly defined. There was no collision in its patterns. The colors were very bright: the white undersides the mainly black back with not many white spots on its wings. The middle of the back was bright white with a beautiful white mustache and white eyeline which ended with the deep red patch on the side of the head. While we were there it continued to work a small area on opposite sides of this little stream.

There were a couple of occurrences that happened on the count that was surprising and delightful. In one instance, I expected to see a fair number of this species and I will get to that after this first surprise. All through the day we were visited by Northern (Red-shafted) Flickers. I have never seen so many Flickers in one place in my life. We counted at least forty, maybe even more. They were always calling and they were everywhere. They were very busy working the trees. There seemed to be no end to them. And, it was a pleasure.

Not to be outdone by woodpeckers, the resident Golden Eagles were out in full force. They also were everywhere. Tejon Ranch is the place, if you want to see Golden Eagles, they are there, and it is incredible. I more than exceeded my total of Goldens in one day. Several years ago, when Tejon did their first bio-diversity blitz, I saw six soaring in the same thermal. And, during that day, I saw several more. But, this count day,

we counted an even dozen! It was insane. And, for all you cynics out there, we didn’t see the same bird twelve times. They were foraging and soaring and flying high in the sky and low to the ground. One occurrence was particularly odd. One eagle went down into the high grasses and completely disappeared. So, we stopped and watched. The high grasses were on a steep hill. The eagle stuck its head out above the grasses, and then it would disappear again. We didn’t know if it had made a kill or what. Like the Osprey, it tried to fly out of the high grasses and couldn’t and it disappeared back into the “sea” of grass, and started to walk up the hill, sometimes under the grass and sometimes with its head up. It couldn’t fly out, so, it continued to fight the obstacle and walk up the hill to the clearing up at the top. That was a sight.

As we were leaving our count area we kept seeing Golden Eagles. We didn’t realize we would be in for another predator treat. There was a large dark bird on the ground. It was really big. And, it started to fly off. At first, we thought it was another Golden Eagle, it was so large. But, then I saw the windows on the upper side of the wings: these whitish crescents on the wings. And, the tail was also an almost dirty white tail which in an instant told me that it was a female, dark morph



Female Merlin at Tejon Ranch | Photo by Bill Moffat



Large Ferruginous Hawk at Tejon Ranch | Photo by Bill Moffat

Ferruginous Hawk. This lady was very dark and just incredibly huge. She started flying off and the wing span was awesome. This bird was stuck in my memory, even with all of the wonderful things my eyes and head took in this wonderful day. I had to go home and look up measurements, because her size was staggering. Three of the four reference books I used: National Geographic, text by Jon L. Dunn; The Sibley Guide To Birds, text by David Allen Sibley; and Raptors of the World, text by James Ferguson-Lees and David A. Christie all have the Ferruginous Hawk's measurements as length: 23 inches and wing span: 56 inches. Only Richard Crossley's Crossley ID Guide to Raptors has measurement variations that even come close to the bird we saw. Crossley's dimensions have the length between 20 and 26 inches. And, its wing span between 53 and 60 inches. He must have seen "our girl"! Seeing her, in relation to the Ferruginous Hawks I've seen before, makes her the largest of this species I've ever witnessed. Just amazing!

This was a crazy send off after a mind blowing day on the ranch. It was an exciting day. It was a day, although we were "ticking off" species and tallying the numbers that was more than being a census taker. We were enjoying these creatures encased in feathers and taking time to watch them and watch their behavior, even though there was a lot of ground to cover, and a lot of birds to count. It also ends up being one of the most spectacular days I've ever spent on the ranch, or being out bird watching, for that matter. I always feel that I never get disappointed up there. Every time I visit, I get surprised. The terrain may change with the seasons. But, as in nature whatever shows up ends up being nothing short of a precious gift. I am always elated to see things up there. It always raises my spirit. And, even though I don't take pictures, these images stay in my head; and I'm blessed to be able to write and share what I see. It is an amazing feeling. It's a spectacular feeling. It changes your whole perspective. It makes this planet something incredibly special, a

place that we simply must take care of. It's adorned with all of these jewels, big and small. They are precious gifts. And, I feel so privileged to be a witness to them.

I would also like to extend to Terri Kashima, Jason Koenig and Bill Moffat my total appreciation for their gift of photography; and for the wonderful photos they have contributed to this article. I am gratefully in their debt for their submissions and I feel that they have enriched this article, at least to me, more than you will ever know. My deep thanks to you all. 🦅



Golden Eagle engulfed by high grasses at Tejon Ranch. | Photo by Bill Moffat

MAKING SOME NOISE, AND GETTING RESULTS | By By Cindy Hardin

There is a parcel of land in Marina Del Rey, squeezed between the 90 freeway and a community of condominiums known as Villa Marina. Thousands of people pass by this spot every day as they enter the freeway, and it is safe to say that most don't even register that this open space exists. Even fewer take the time to wonder about what might be present at this spot. And for the past decade, this land has been overlooked and left on its own. It is the proverbial "vacant lot".

As a child, vacant lots held a powerful allure for me and my brother. We would seek them out, explore them, and discover plants and creatures that were quietly going about the business of living. Lack of oversight by absentee or negligent property owners allowed for natural habitats to remain, in the midst of surrounding development. But, these little slices of inadvertent nature are rarely permanent in the ever growing region of Los Angeles. Sooner or later, the owner of the land will decide to embark on a project that will monetize their investment, at the expense of open space and the life that is present on that particular spot.



Pollination is happening as this bee forages amongst the Goldenbush at the Tule Wetlands. This California native plant blooms in late summer and fall, and is an important food source for our pollinators during the driest time of year.

Such was the case in this piece of land, which has been dubbed the Villa Marina Tule Wetlands. Over the past couple of years, the landowner, Toyota of Marina Del Rey, has been going through the process of getting approval to pave over the area and create a storage lot with 300 parking spaces, in order to harbor inventory for the dealership. Plans were drawn up, and communication initiated with the residents of Villa Marina. Suddenly, lots of people took an interest in the parcel, especially the homeowners, some of whom had property that backed up directly to these Tule Wetlands.

Of course, many local environmental activists were already aware of the site. Marcia Hanscom and Robert "Roy" Van der Hoek of the Ballona Institute had been working to raise awareness of the property for some time. They knew that a wetland was present, with its accompanying flora and fauna. These "obligate wetland species" include tules, Mulefat, and Arroyo Willow. An oak tree and A Catalina Cherry are growing in adjacent upland habitat. Water was present in some sections for most of the year, and during rainy season pools of freshwater formed and lingered for weeks. Lizards, rabbits, gophers and invertebrates make this habitat their home, and local and migratory birds can be found roosting, nesting and foraging in the canopy that lines the area with over 100 mature, established trees. These are all factors that, according to the state, make this wetland habitat. In addition, this parcel, which is 60 feet wide and the length of five football fields, is positioned directly next to Area C of the state owned Ballona Ecological Reserve. And the Toyota MDR project planned on paving over the area with 4100 tons of asphalt and removing most of the trees, replacing them with sapling size, non-native species. This assured destruction of habitat would not only impact the species present on the land; it would also prevent rainfall from flowing into the Reserve, depriving Ballona of freshwater that is slowly absorbed by the open ground, re-charging the groundwater and aquifer close beneath the surface. Instead, water would be channeled into a concrete pipe and pushed directly out to sea. This water is literally the lifeblood of the wetlands.



Tules and Mulefat line the waterway of the Villa Marina Tule Wetlands. The presence of these “obligate wetland species” demarcate the site as a wetland in the eyes of the State, and was essential in establishing that it is, indeed, a wetland, and well worth saving.

In its negotiation with the homeowners of Villa Marina, Toyota offered residents a choice of either a chain link fence or a nine foot wall, to be constructed between the parking lot and the housing complex. The residents of Villa Napoli, one of the homeowners groups within the community, voted unanimously to oppose the project, as they found neither option to be acceptable. Several Villa Napoli residents spearheaded the fight. Paul Lupi, president of the Villa Napoli HOA, and homeowner Andy Simpson played an integral role in initiating the process. Ric Burch, another denizen of Villa Napoli, wrote and sponsored a book, “The Marina Wetlands”, which was used to inform and educate the public about the unique and sensitive

habitat present on this land. Roy Van der Hoek generously donated his time and expertise to identify and document the “obligate wetland species” present throughout the area in question; much of the text of “The Marina Wetlands” is taken from Roy’s plant surveys. Jane Usher was called upon to provide legal counsel.

Another resident, Richard Harmel, had never before been involved community activism, nor did he have a background in any kind of study of the environment or natural habitat. He too was adamantly opposed to the project. Richard began to reach out to local environmental organizations, including the Los Angeles Audubon Society, to assist the group in opposition to the project. He soon found that many people shared his views, and began a crash course in the value of native habitats and their accompanying species. Richard also became aware of the how the proposed paving would impact the site and the adjoining wetlands of the Ballona Ecological Reserve. Many entities joined in this fight, including the Ballona Institute, Jeanette Vosburg of the Sierra Club, Deborah Gregory of Ballona Creek Renaissance, and others too numerous to list. Our own Travis Longcore wrote a letter of support, which said in part “The proposed development of a lighted parking lot is not appropriate for this site because of its existing ecological value, including the presence of areas that meet the definition of wetlands under the Coastal Act”.



Richard Harmel—newly minted Environmental Activist. Richard’s advocacy for the environment is far from over; he has just been elected to serve on the Board of the Airport Marina chapter of the Sierra Club!

Armed with this support, Richard expanded his leadership role on a tireless campaign to save the Tule Wetlands. Multiple appearances were made at the Del Rey Neighborhood Council meetings, which had originally approved the project. After carefully listening to Tule Wetlands advocates, the Council reversed their approval. The next step was to appeal to the Westside Planning Commission, which had also approved the project. In May, 2018, the Villa Napoli Homeowners Association and the Ballona Institute jointly filed for an appeal of approval of the project. On August 1st, many of those involved attended a meeting of the Commission to support the appeal, only to find that the hearing on this particular issue would be postponed till December 5th. Rather than be discouraged, the postponement served to invigorate those involved in this worthwhile fight. Richard continued to write letters and keep everyone updated.

The big day arrived, and along with it, a much needed rain storm that was replenishing these wetlands as we journeyed to the meeting to state our case. Approximately 30 people in attendance spoke out against the project. The Planning Commissioners had done their own homework, and were well informed about the case. Still, it is very rare in this city for an appeal to be accepted once a development has been approved. Although the Save the Tule Wetlands group was hopeful that we would prevail, we were also realistic, knowing the history of how the Planning Commissions usually work. Those representing Toyota MDR were also aware of this history, and seemed quite confident at the onset of the meeting. After nearly four hours of listening to both sides present their case, the Westside Planning Commission approved the appeal! We were overjoyed! It was wonderful to see all of the hard work pay off, but even more wonderful to see an easily overlooked and undervalued piece of wetland saved from development.

This is not the end of the story. It is hoped that the land will be acquired by the state, city or some other agency. There have been efforts by previous owners to develop the parcel, and plans were ultimately rejected for many of the same reasons-this is wetland habitat, and protected by the state! Acquisition by some public agency would be an opportunity to create a nature spot, enhanced by more native plantings, and possibly meandering paths and signage that would help to inform the public about the special qualities of wetland ecosystems. It could eventually serve as a kind of gateway to the Ballona Ecological Reserve, which is already a state property. This is all in the realm of possibility.

Much of the work that I do as Director of Outdoor Education for LAAS revolves around coordinating field trips to the Ballona Wetlands for local school children. At one of the stops on their tours we talk about the fact that California has lost 90% of the wetlands that were present prior to European contact. We also give a brief synopsis of how Ballona became a 640 acre Ecological Reserve, primarily through the efforts of ordinary citizens, via a campaign that lasted for 30 years. We also tell them that change for good is possible, especially if people are made aware of important issues, well organized and not willing to give up. The successful outcome of the Save the Tule Wetlands endeavor is tangible proof of this approach. Opportunities to make a difference abound, and the threat to sensitive habitats is all too prevalent in a society that often values commerce over nature. Issues like these are present on a

local, state, national and international level, and a success like the saving of the Villa Marina Tule Wetlands should be an inspiration to all who have an interest and passion for the natural world. And you can rely upon the Los Angeles Audubon Society to do their part support these efforts, and to keep you informed on how we can all do our part. Good things happen if citizens are willing to “make some noise”, and many voices are more effective than just a few. Hooray for this win and all who helped to make it happen. 🐦



Beautiful sunrise as seen from the Tule Wetlands. Much more pleasing than a parking lot!

THE BIRD THAT FOLLOWS THE CONES: THE RED CROSSBILL (LOXIA CURVIROSTRA)

By Dessi Sieburth

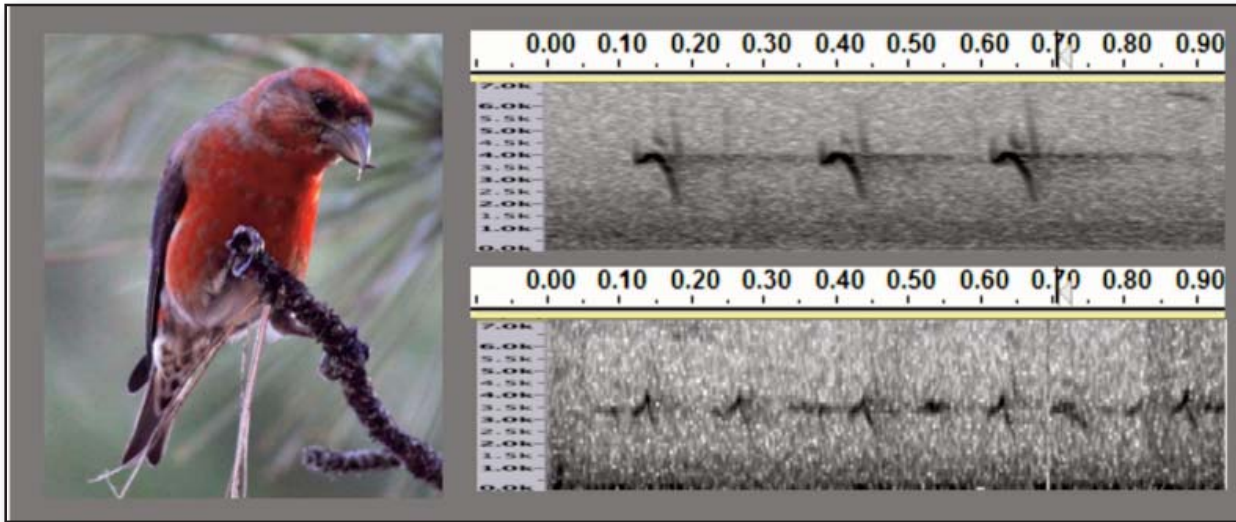


Figure 1: Red Crossbill flight call types. Left: a photo of a Red Crossbill (photographed by Lance Benner). Upper Right: a spectrogram of a Type 2 Red Crossbill call (recorded by Lance Benner). Lower Right: a spectrogram of a type 10 Red Crossbill call (recorded by Dessi Sieburth).

The Red Crossbill is a medium-size, finch-like bird that is found in mature coniferous forests throughout the northern hemisphere. In the Americas, this species occurs north to Alaska, south to Nicaragua, and east to Newfoundland. Crossbills are unique among birds because their upper mandible crosses over their lower mandible, giving them the “crossed” bill for which they are named. Males of the Red Crossbill are easily identified by their bright reddish-orange plumage. The females are yellow throughout, and juveniles are brown and heavily streaked on the breast. The crossbill’s primary diet throughout its range is the seeds found within the cones of coniferous trees. In fact, the purpose of its crossed bill is to reach deep into the cones to extract the seeds. Red Crossbills can breed any

time of the year depending on when cones are abundant, which varies greatly. They primarily nest from mid-December to early September.

The Red Crossbill is a scarce species in Los Angeles County. It is an uncommon resident in the high San Gabriel Mountains from about 5200 feet to 9100 feet. Locations such as Cloudburst Summit and Throop Peak in the San Gabriel Mountains can be good locations to search, especially in years when the Ponderosa Pines have lots of cones. In some years when cone production is high, the Red Crossbill population irrupts, and individuals spread into the lowlands, where they are not usually found. During irruption years, Apollo Park and Pearblossom Park in the Antelope Valley often host this species.

In 1993, ornithologist Jeff Groth discovered eight different types of Red Crossbills in North America, which he distinguished and categorized by their flight calls (Groth 1993). Since 1993, two more types have been discovered, and an eleventh type was recently discovered in Central America. The different types of Red Crossbills show small morphological variations, but in the field, they look almost exactly alike. However, each type prefers a specific habitat. Type 2, for example, mainly eats the seeds of the Ponderosa Pine, while Type 5 prefers Lodgepole Pines. Type 3 prefers Western Hemlock, while Type 4 can be found in Douglas Fir.

The different flight calls are not easily distinguished by ear, but when examining spectrograms, the differences become visible. A spectrogram shows a graphical representation of the call. For example, Figure 1 shows two spectrograms of flight calls of Red Crossbills. Based on the spectrogram, you can see that the flight call of Type 2 (recorded in Horse Meadow, Tulare County, CA, on July 9, 2017 by Lance Benner) falls steeply downward. Type 10 (recorded at Hog Island, Maine, on June 20, 2017 by Dessi Sieburth), on the other hand, has a slight upward component.

Prior to 2011, birders in Los Angeles County suspected that Type 2 occurred in the San Gabriel Mountains because Ponderosa Pines are common there. Between 2011 and 2014, Walter Szeliga, Lance Benner, John Garrett, and Kathi Ellsworth took audio recordings of Red Crossbills at several locations in California including the San Gabriel Mountains and



Red Crossbill male, illustration by Dessi Sieburth



An adult female Red Crossbill at Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, in March 2018. Photo by Lance Benner



An adult male Red Crossbill at Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, in March 2018. Photo by Lance Benner.



Red Crossbill, photographed at Cloudburst Summit, San Gabriel Mountains, August 13, 2017.
Photo by Dessi Sieburth

the Antelope Valley in Los Angeles County. Through analyzing spectrograms, the birders confirmed that the crossbills in the San Gabriel Mountains were indeed Type 2. During the winter of 2012-2013, there was a major irruption of crossbills into the Antelope Valley (Szeliga et al. 2014). Recordings revealed that some of the crossbills in the Antelope Valley were Type 2, presumably irrupting from the local mountains into the desert. Surprisingly, Type 3 was also found in the Antelope Valley. This type is normally found in the northwestern United States as far north as Alaska.

Because of their different ranges and different flight calls, you may be wondering whether the different types of the Red Crossbill may actually be different species. In fact, Type 9 was awarded species status in 2017 due to its genetic differences and especially distinct flight call. With a range of just 70 square kilometers in the South Hills of southern Idaho, this type is now called the Cassia Crossbill (Cassia is the county in Idaho in which the species occurs). It seems possible that with more genetic

analysis, other types may be split as well.

The recent findings about the differences in Red Crossbill flight calls illustrate the scientific importance of recording birds in the field. Any birder with a recording device can contribute to scientific knowledge. When I went to Mono Lake for a birding trip, for example, I saw and heard some Red Crossbills coming to drink in a ditch near the Mammoth Mountain Ski Resort. When I recorded them, I was surprised to learn they were Type 5—just the fourth record of this type in California!

I use a Tascam DR-05 for recording, which fits easily into a small pocket and costs about 80 dollars. Even iPhones and point-and-shoot cameras have recorders in them that are good enough to obtain quality recordings. Once you obtain a recording, you can download RavenLite or Audacity, free software programs that are used to process the recordings. Then, you can upload your recordings on eBird or xeno-canto, programs where birders and scientists can report and access information about birds. There are still many areas in which the Red Crossbills calls have not yet been recorded, especially in many parts of Canada and Central America. Therefore, it is possible that new types may be described in the future. Even here in California we don't have many recordings of Red Crossbills. Everybody can help make new discoveries by recording birds they hear in the field.

Special thanks to Lance Benner who introduced me to recording birds and has mentored me about how to use various recording equipment. Also, if you like to learn about how to help birds please visit my website: <https://protectingourbirds.my-free.website/>. 🐦

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INTERPRETING NATURE

New Community Connections

By Ingrid Carrillo, Intern; Stacey Vigallon, Director of Environmental Education

This issue's Interpreting Nature column is written by Ingrid Carrillo. Ingrid is a Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program alumna, and she recently completed an internship with Los Angeles Audubon. As a graduate of Humboldt State University, majoring in Recreation, Ingrid values community and knows how important it is for community members to have access to nature. Below, Ingrid talks about her experience working with one of Los Angeles Audubon's newest community connections.

Los Angeles Audubon and Exceptional Children's Foundation have been working together for the past two years. Exceptional Children's Foundation (ECF) is a non-profit organization that offers a training program to children and adults with developmental, learning, and emotional disabilities around the world. We partnered with their branch in Inglewood. Tania Romero, former Los Angeles Audubon staff member, worked hard to connect ECF with the work that Los Angeles Audubon does in the Baldwin Hills area, Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area in particular.

Once a week a team from ECF volunteers with Los Angeles Audubon staff at Kenneth Hahn Restoration Area. They engage in habitat restoration including collecting seeds, planting, and transplanting native plants; as well as engage in nature walks where they learned to identify

bird and plant species. After two years of hands-on work, I had the opportunity to interview volunteers and I gathered great feedback on their experience working with Los Angeles Audubon.

When asked about what he enjoyed about coming to Kenneth Hahn, Jose Ayala, an ECF volunteer, said that visiting the park is a fun experience that can also help work towards his career goal of becoming a landscaper. Jose is currently a receptionist at ECF as well as being an ECF client - he spends a lot of time sitting inside answering phones all day. He expressed how he enjoys the outdoors because it's a great escape from his everyday routine. He revealed how because of this experience, he has been looking for jobs with similar work that we do at Kenneth Hahn SRA. Jose recently applied for a gardening position and is very excited to tell them about the habitat restoration work he does with Los Angeles Audubon.

Mahbod Molarabie, another ECF volunteer, was recently hired at Universal Studios. He shared that he mentioned the work he has done with Los Angeles Audubon during the interview process, which he felt helped him stand out from the other interviewees. Mahbod's favorite part of being at the park is being able to hug the plants before planting them into the ground and coming back to watch how much they've grown. He said he loves his experience so much he has shared some planting tips with his mother as well.



ECF client, Mahbod Molarabie, watering plants in the greenhouse at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. (photo credit Marc Anthony Campoy)



*The deer grass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*) ECF volunteers seeded in April is beginning to sprout. (photo credit Marc Anthony Campoy)*

Felicia Hill is another ECF client that volunteers with Los Angeles Audubon. She disclosed being very hesitant to participate in our bird walks because she had never done anything like it before. After learning how to use the binoculars and identifying her first bird, she quickly started to appreciate the activity. During our walk we spotted a puddle of water near the trail and decided to look at it through our binoculars. We saw four different bird species using this body of water in very distinct ways. Some were bathing and others were drinking but they all shared the same water. Felicia said she had never witnessed so many birds interacting with one another in such a way, this was all very new and exciting to her.

Lastly, I interviewed Shawntice Fleming, an ECF client who also experienced her first bird walk while volunteering with Los Angeles Audubon. Her favorite part about being outdoors is being able to breath in fresh air and experience places beyond the city. She shared that volunteering with Los Angeles Audubon offers her a great opportunity to get out in nature and learn about different birds. She revealed how now she enjoys learning about birds and shares her new knowledge with her cousins. Her interest in birds has increased after volunteering with us and she finds herself being more intrigued in learning about various bird species and how they nest.

My experience working with ECF has been very enlightening. I truly enjoy helping people connect to nature in their city. We design restoration and nature watching activities to be inclusive of a range of abilities. Development of clients' social skills is one of ECF's goals, and we take the time to make sure we carry that idea

throughout our activities. Many of our activities include relaxed conversations, where ECF volunteers and Los Angeles Audubon staff get to just talk about their lives and express how we feel at the moment. This connection has not only benefited ECF, but has also helped Los Angeles Audubon engage new community members and develop more inclusive activities.



Los Angeles Audubon staff members, Tania Romero and Emily Cobar, taking an ECF crew on a bird walk right outside the ECF Inglewood facility. (photo credit Marc Anthony Campoy)



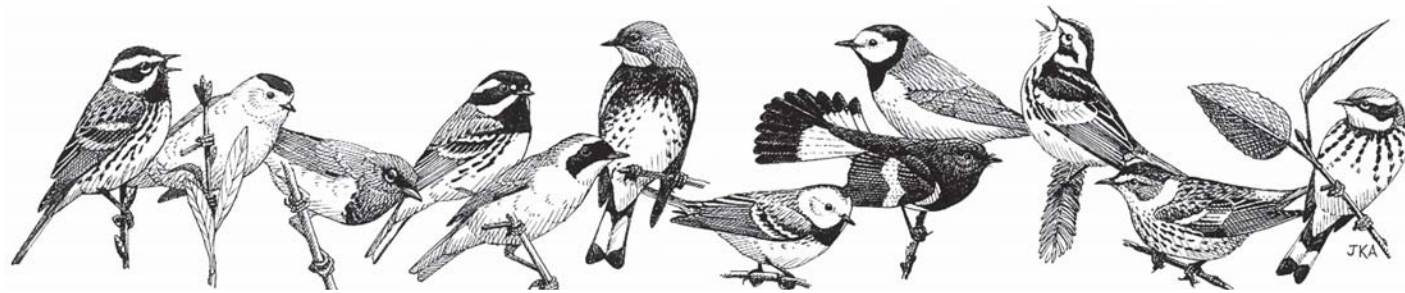
Client and receptionist at ECF, Jose Aguayo, collecting California golden bush (*Ericameria ericoides*) seeds. (photo credit Marc Anthony Campoy)

Marc Anthony Campoy, the Accelerated Preparation Program Community Integration Instructor, says that most ECF clients spend most of their time indoors. Los Angeles Audubon activities provide a rare opportunity for ECF staff and clients to get outside. Marc Anthony finds himself trying to identify birds everywhere he goes, from bird calls and sightings. "Birding here has elevated my knowledge in acknowledging different bird species," he said. He tries to never forget his camera when working at Kenneth Hahn. for fear of missing a great shot of one of his favorite birds, the Red-tailed Hawk.

Finally, I asked all volunteers to express how they felt when they were out in nature in one word. The expressions I got back were, happy, relaxed, calm, beautiful, excited, at peace, and free. Los Angeles Audubon is proud to be ECF's connection to nature in the city and hopes to continue to keep this relationship powerful. 🐦



Los Angeles staff member, Arely Mendia Perez, teaching ECF volunteers about local wildlife at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. (photo credit Marc Anthony Campoy)



BIRDS OF THE SEASON December 2018, by Jon Fisher

The bird year- at least as far as the calendar is concerned- is now at an end. In reality it's simply a cycle of changes as seasons come and go, and many of our birds come and go with them.

Though no major rarities were discovered this season, it was a fall migration brimming with vagrants. The numbers tapered off a bit after October, but plenty of good birds were still being found.

A number of Christmas Bird Counts have already been conducted and all will be wrapped up by early January. As usual, these recorded continuing rare birds, produced some new ones and gathered hard data on all of the birds within their respective circles.

While most of 2018's fire season was relatively uneventful, it did not end that way. The Malibu count had half of its circle altered- to put it mildly- by the massive Woolsey Fire in November. With nearly 150 square miles burned, the damage to property and habitat was staggering. Our current long term drought, modestly alleviated by the occasional wet winter and coupled with dry and windy weather, is a combination destined to cause more such events.

On a much more pleasant subject, the variety of both rare and regular birds recorded from late October through December was impressive, though not at all surprising given the diversity of habitats and the sheer number of birders in Los Angeles County.

Returning "**Eurasian**" **Green-winged Teal** were on the LA River adjacent to the Bette Davis Picnic Area in Glendale from December 1-4 (Andrew Birch) and at the San Gabriel Coastal Basin Spreading Grounds in Pico Rivera from December 15-22 (Larry Schmahl).

Unusual inland was a **Surf Scoter** at Quail Lake near Gorman on November 27 (Mark Scheel, Chris Dean). A **White-winged Scoter** was near the LA River mouth on October 19 (Tom Miko), with three seen there on November 27 (Richard Barth). Up to three were off Dockweiler State Beach in El Segundo from October 24-November 8 (Richard Barth).

Two **Black Scoters** were off Dockweiler State Beach from November 12-December 3 (Richard Barth) and seven were at the LA River mouth on from December 1-4 (Jeff Boyd, Richard Barth).

Other inland waterbirds of note included a **Long-tailed Duck** at Quail Lake near Gorman on November 26 (Becky Turley) and a **Red-necked Grebe** was at Lake Palmdale from December 9-23 (Ryan Terrill).

Formerly more regular in late fall and winter were up to a dozen **Vaux's Swifts** over the LA River in Glendale on November 17-23 (Rhys Marsh). Fifteen over Silver Lake Reservoir on December 15 were possibly the same group of birds (Brad Rumble). One was also in Bel Air on December 15 (Rhys Marsh).

American Oystercatcher continued in the Royal Palms Beach area in San Pedro through December 19. Others sightings were at King Harbor from November 24-December 17 (Brooke Keeney, Gabriel Gartner) and at the Ballona Creek mouth on December 11. It's possible these reports involved the same bird, as this species is quite rare in the county and these locales are not all that far apart.

Lower Ballona Creek hosted a **Pacific Golden-Plover** from October 31–December 19 (Kevin Lapp). A **Mountain Plover** was at Dockweiler State Beach in El Segundo from October 19 (Kevin Lapp) and up to eighty of them were in the east Antelope Valley from November 3–December 15 (Mark & Janet Scheel). This was welcome news as this species has been declining as a winter visitor there of late.

Shorebirds of note included a **Ruff** at the Piute Ponds from November 4–15 (Chris Dean) and two **Pectoral Sandpipers** there on November 1 (John Birsner).

Quite scarce in the county was a **Franklin's Gull** near the LA River mouth on November 27 (Jeff Boyd). Two **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were at the San Gabriel Coastal Basin Spreading Grounds in Pico Rivera on December 13 (John Garrett) with at least one present through December 17. A **Glaucous Gull** was there from December 15–20 (Larry Schmahl)

Rare but regular inland were two **Pacific Loons** at Castaic Lake on November 20 (Jon Fisher) and one at Quail Lake near Gorman on November 24 (David & Holly Coates).

A **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** continued at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh through November 4 and an **American Bittern** was found there on October 28 (Dean Schaff).

The LA River adjacent to the Bette Davis Picnic Area in Glendale attracted a **Neotropic Cormorant** from October 22–December 1 (Andrew Birch). What was likely

the same bird was at Lincoln Park in Lincoln Heights from December 7–15 (Ed Stonick).

A **California Condor** was just inside the county near Frazier Park on November 28 (Becky Turley, Judy Matsuoka).

Late **Swainson's Hawks** were at Heartwell Park in Lakewood on November 9 (Kim Moore), at Hansen Dam in Lake View Terrace on November 10 (Kimball Garrett) and in Cheseboro Canyon in Agoura Hills on December 16 (Dan Cooper).

Long-eared Owls, rare on the coastal slope, were at El Dorado Park in Long Beach on October 30 (John & Lindsay Fitch) and at Peck Road Park in Arcadia on December 18 (Darren Dowell, Mickey Long). This species is rather difficult to detect however and may be more numerous than sightings would seem to indicate.

Short-eared Owls were found west of Lancaster on November 6 (Ann Van Kohn), at Cal State Dominguez Hills on November 15 (John Thomlinson) and at Ken Malloy Harbor Park in Harbor City on November 19 (John Ivanov).

A wayward **Burrowing Owl** inside the Topanga Mall on October 30 made for an unusual shopping experience (Daniel Tinoco). Another was in much more suitable habitat at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on December 15 (Frank & Susan Gilliland).

Small numbers of **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were recorded over the period, but there was no significant movement into the region. Away from expected areas was a **Hairy**

Woodpecker at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Gardens in Claremont on October 22 (Will & Lois Fulmer).

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were at the Sepulveda Basin in Van Nuys from October 20–December 18 (Daniel Tinoco) and at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach from October 23–November 1 (Jun Wu & Bin Cao).

Among the more numerous intergrade birds which feature yellow underwings, pure **Northern "Yellow-shafted" Flickers** were confirmed at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on October 23 (Alan Levin), at Angelus Rosedale Cemetery in Los Angeles from November 10–December 8 (Brad Rumble), in Beverly Hills on November 20 (Scott Logan), in Cheseboro Canyon in Agoura Hills on December 16 (Dan Cooper) and at Veteran's Park in Sylmar on December 22 (Scott Logan).

A "**Prairie**" **Merlin** (*richardsonii*) was at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on November 19 (Jon Fisher) and a "**Black**" **Merlin** (*suckleyi*) returned for another winter to the Bette Davis Picnic Area in Glendale as of December 10 (Andrew Birch). Of note away from the deserts was a **Prairie Falcon** at Brackett Field in La Verne on October 20 (Rod Higbie).

A handful of Empidonax were discovered. **Hammond's Flycatchers** were in the Sepulveda Basin on December 1 (Alexander Barrios, Emma Hanna) and at Madrona Marsh in Torrance from November 30–December 18. **Gray Flycatchers** were at Hahamongna on November 7 (Darren Dowell) and at Oakdale

Memorial Park in Glendora on December 2 (Richard Fisher).

Pacific-slope Flycatchers were at Madrona Marsh in Torrance from November 30–December 8 (Melissa Loebel), at the West SGR Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood on December 2 (John & Lindsay Fitch) and at the Huntington Library in San Marino on December 15 (Jon Fisher, Sarah Ngo, Molly Hill).

An **Eastern Phoebe** at the LA County Arboretum from November 9–12 (Darren Dowell) apparently moved on to spend the winter elsewhere.

At least two dozen **Vermilion Flycatchers** were recorded on the coastal slope during the period. Sightings of this species have increased significantly in the past few years.

Late and likely wintering **Ash-throated Flycatchers** were at Madrona Marsh in Torrance from November 9–December 20 and in the Sepulveda Basin on December 1 (Daniel Tinoco).

Nine **Tropical Kingbirds** were found during the period, all on the coastal slope where they are expected in small numbers in fall and winter.

Formerly almost unheard of in late fall and winter, late and potentially wintering **Western Kingbirds** were at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park in Harbor City on November 4, at Hollydale Park in South Gate on November 10 (Richard Barth) and at Colorado Lagoon in Long Beach from November

10–18 (Tracy Drake). Others were in Bel Air from December 5–15 (Rhys Marsh) and at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on December 20 (Layton Pace, Jonathan Nakai).

A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** returned for another winter along the LA River just above the Pacific Coast Highway as of November 27 (Jeff Boyd). It was reported there through December 19.

Very rare after October, **Bell's Vireos** were at Peck Road Park in Arcadia on November 23 (Curtis Marantz) and at Palms Park in West Los Angeles on December 12 (Kevin Lapp).

An above average ten plus **Cassin's Vireos** were detected in November and December. By contrast, about two dozen **Plumbeous Vireos** were found. A **Red-eyed Vireo** was at the UCLA Botanic Gardens in Westwood from October 25–31 (Andy Kleinhesselink).

The LA County Arboretum in Arcadia continued to host a **Pacific Wren** through October 31. Another was along Winter Creek above Arcadia on November 15 (Bas van Shooten).

Chestnut-collared Longspurs were in the east Antelope Valley from October 21–November 4 (David Bell) and briefly at Hansen Dam on November 12 (Kimball Garrett). Less expected was a **McCown's Longspur** in the east Antelope Valley at 50th Street East and Avenue L from October 21–25 (Mark & Janet Scheel, Dessi Sieburth).

Green-tailed Towhees, very scarce as migrants away from the deserts, were at Loyola Marymount University in Westchester on October 21 (Russell Stone) at Horsethief Canyon Park in San Dimas on October 25 (Tom Miko).

Clay-colored Sparrows were along the San Gabriel River in Pico Rivera on October 21 (Larry Schmahl), at Pepperdine University in Malibu on October 23 (Dan Cooper) and at Harbor Park in Harbor City on November 10. Another continued at Madrona Marsh in Torrance through December 20.

A **Lark Bunting** was in the east Antelope Valley at 50th Street East and Avenue M from October 23–November 4 (Curtis Marantz).

"Red" Fox Sparrows included two at the Piute Ponds on November 2 (Kathy Duret) and one at Loma Alta Park in Altadena on December 15 (Catherine Hamilton).

Swamp Sparrows were at Peck Road Park in Arcadia from October 20–21 (Jon Fisher), at Castaic Lagoon from November 7–21 (Cal Yorke), at Legg Lake in South El Monte on November 12 (Mickey Long) at L.A. Valley College in Van Nuys from December 19–22 (Richard Barth) and at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on December 22 (Cathy McFadden, Paul Clarke). About reported during the period were about a dozen **White-throated Sparrows**.

A half dozen **Dark-eyed "Gray-headed" Juncos** were found between October 23 and December 16, all but one on the coastal slope. **Dark-eyed "Pink-sided" Juncos** were at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB on

October 23 (Chris Dean), at Rosedale Angelus Cemetery in Los Angeles on November 7 (Brad Rumble) and at Apollo Park near Lancaster on November 11 (Kathy Duret).

Orchard Orioles were at Entradero Park in Torrance on October 26 (Charlie Keller) and continuing at Loyola Marymount University in Westchester through December 26. Rare in winter were **Hooded Orioles** at the Huntington Gardens in San Marino from December 2–15 (Jared Weisman, Dorian Charnis) and in the Sepulveda Basin on December 18 (Holly & David Coates).

Baltimore Orioles were at the UCLA Botanic Garden on October 19 (Samuel Bressler), at Bonelli Park in San Dimas from November 10–December 3 (Catherine McFadden) and at Colorado Lagoon in Long Beach on December 15 (Tracy Drake).

Now back on the CBRC review list due to a decline in records, a **Rusty Blackbird** was at Lake Balboa from December 1–4 (Mike Stensvold).

Eleven **Black-and-white Warblers** were either found or continued during the period. **Tennessee Warblers** were at Desert Aire Golf Course in Palmdale on November 4 (Kimball Garrett) and at the UCLA Botanic Garden in Westwood on November 6 (Andy Kleinhesselink).

San Clemente Island produced a **Lucy's Warbler** on November 13 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole Desnoyers). **Nashville Warblers** were at the UCLA Botanic Garden in Westwood on November 14 (Andy Kleinhesselink), on San Clemente Island on

November 16 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole Desnoyers), at Entradero Park in Torrance on December 3 (Charlie Keller) and at the Sepulveda Basin on December 12 (Rebecca Marschall).

American Redstarts were at El Segundo Library Park on November 1 (Richard Barth) and at Vernon Hemingway Park in Carson from November 16–December 1 (Richard Barth).

A **Magnolia Warbler**, presumably the same bird that spent last winter there, was at Peck Road Park in Arcadia from November 3–24 (Darren Dowell). Santa Catalina Island produced a **Blackburnian Warbler** on November 18 (Andrea & Neil MacLeod).

A remarkable thirty **Palm Warblers** were present from October 22–December 2. Though fairly common as a fall vagrant, this number is above average. Far less common was a **Prairie Warbler** at Rustic Canyon in Pacific Palisades from November 11–19 (Lars Jonsson).

A **Painted Redstart** at Brookside Park in Pasadena from December 10–20 was the only one reported (Roger Schoedl).

Dickcissels were at Agua Amarga Canyon from October 20–21 (Jun & Bin) and on San Clemente Island on October 27 and another was there on November 15 (Justyn Stahl).

Summer Tanagers were at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles from October 21–December 10 (Don Sterba), continuing at Veteran's Park in Sylmar from No-

vember 7–December 5 (Nathan Barkley), at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on December 1 (Brooke Keeney), in Altadena on December 15 (Luke Tiller) and at Pt. Dume in Malibu on December 16 (Kimball Garrett). Quite rare was a **Scarlet Tanager** at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park in Harbor City on November 7 (Robert Trusela).

A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at the Pepperdine University Ponds in Malibu on October 23 (Dan Cooper) and a late or wintering **Black-headed Grosbeak** was at the UCLA Botanic Garden in Westwood on December 5 (Andy Kleinhesselink).

It was undeniably a great fall for birders, with many good birds recorded. Even so, we discover only a fraction of the vagrants that occur. On the flip side, there are increasing numbers of birders in the field finding a higher percentage of them.

As we move into January, the earliest of spring migrants will start passing through. It will be a few months before spring migration for passerines gets seriously underway. Even as migration begins, unusual wintering birds are still to be discovered.

Flycatchers, orioles, warblers and tanagers are attracted to the plantings in suburban yards and parks that offer shelter and food. Deep water lakes and reservoirs may host unusual ducks as well as numbers of regular species. The Antelope Valley offers a number of reliable specialties in winter and has many square miles of territory to be explored. Now and at any time of year, there are many options for the active birder. 🐦

FIELD TRIPS



Nick & Mary Freeman
Field Trip Chairperson
& Trip Leaders

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. *We do not sell, trade, or re-use contact information; cell and email simply improve our chances of contacting you at home and in the field.*

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.

CARPOOLING

For ride sharing purposes, your contact information will be shared with the other confirmed participants unless you specify otherwise at sign-up.

FEE REQUIRED RESERVATIONS

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

Mail to:

Los Angeles Audubon
PO Box 411301
Los Angeles CA 90041-8301

MORE INFORMATION

Email: membership@laaudubon.org | (323) 876-0202

Please visit www.laaudubon.org for updates to Los Angeles Audubon's field trip listings.

For more information: (323) 876-0202 or membership@laaudubon.org

Saturday, January 12

West Antelope Valley Raptors and Less Consequential Birds

NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP of 20

Louis Tucker will lead us from Avenue A near Rosamond (by Hwy 14), heading west to Quail Lake, viewing the Antelope Valley through the warped lens of his raptor-loving mind. Ferruginous Hawk and Prairie Falcon likely, Golden Eagle possible. Wear warm clothing, bring lunch, and have a full tank of gas. Meet at Denny's at 6:45 a.m. to carpool. Take 405N to Roxford in Sylmar. Turn right, then right into the Denny's parking lot at 12861 Encinitas Ave, Sylmar, CA 91342. Trip leaves at 7:00 a.m. Rain in the AV cancels, as decided at Denny's by Louis. 'Scopes and FRS radios helpful. *Please e-mail Audubon to sign up and for confirmation: membership@laaudubon.org.*

Sunday, January 20

Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge

LIMITED SIGN-UP REQUIRED, NO FEE

Nick and Mary Freeman and refuge volunteer Carolyn Vance will guide. We should have two short buses for our silly band of birders. Throngs of wintering shorebirds and numerous raptors will be seen. Nelson's (Sharp-tailed) Sparrow, Peregrine Falcon and a few Pacific Golden-Plover are usually sighted. The refuge is part of the Naval Weapons Station. Please send ZIP Code, first, middle-initial & last names, DOB, e-mail and home phone number, cell ph# optional but helpful; **by JANUARY 10**. Only LAAS-confirmed individuals of U.S.

citizenship with photo ID allowed on base. No weapons, camera OK. Meet at the main public lot at 800 Seal Beach Blvd. at 8:00 a.m., bird through the morning as the high tide of 5.7 feet around 9:00 a.m. catches us at Hog Island, and bird until about noon. Take Seal Beach Blvd. S from the 405 Fwy, pass Westminster Blvd., turn left onto the base at the Forrestal Lane light, and left again into the lot. Spotting scopes helpful.

Sunday, January 27 (NOTE: This date was corrected from last WT issue)

Techniques for Better Bird Photography

Marina del Rey / Santa Monica

\$40 FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP OF 10

Your workshop host will be *Christopher Taylor*. During the field lab, shorebirds and gulls should highlight. Christopher will be addressing a basic approach to one of the most difficult arenas of photography. Christopher will cover different aperture, lighting and metering techniques to help make your photographs POP! Meet at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot at 7:30 a.m. with a DSLR camera and 300mm-plus telephoto lens (required). Take the Marina Fwy (90) to Culver Blvd and turn left for a mile. Turn right on Pacific Ave. Turn into the lot on the right. After lunch, Christopher will review basic post-production Photoshop techniques, and tips to make good photos great and great photos truly eye-catching. A charged laptop with Photoshop loaded is useful but not required. Finish up 3 or 4 p.m.

Friday, January 25

Gull Study Workshop – Lecture

\$20 FULL WORKSHOP FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP

Speaker *Larry Allen* will discuss most gulls that have appeared in North America – the majority of which have made it to California. So, you've been avoiding gulls for the last decade (if that's possible), hoping that they would migrate out of the Southern California region. Well, that's not going to happen. But Larry has a gentle touch when it comes to Gull I.D., and will rapidly get you up to speed with how to evaluate and identify our gulls. Larry will specifically address general aspects of gull topography, the confusing (but orderly) logic of molt sequences, and the finer aspects of identifying to age and species. Slides, study skins and handouts will be used. This is a Ralph Schreiber Grant fund-raiser.

Please register with Susan at membership@laaudubon.org, providing name(s), cell phone number, and e-mail address; and mail a check for \$20 each, which gets you the lecture & field trip, and an e-mailer with directions and details. Not offered separately. Private residence in Altadena, from 7:30 - 10:00 p.m., with one refreshment break. 20 maximum.

Saturday, January 26

Gull Study Workshop – Field Trip

Leader: *Larry Allen*. Put your new knowledge to use in the field, perhaps even identifying immature California & Ring-billed gulls as they fly overhead! Meet in the field at 9:00 a.m. and ogle the gulls until we're all gull identification experts! Location will be confirmed during the lecture. We will likely go to the San Gabriel Coastal Basin Spreading Ponds in Pico Rivera, but the destination and directions will be disseminated after the Friday lecture. Some pretty amazing gulls have shown up here over the years, including Glaucous, Slaty-backed, Lesser Black-backed, "Iceland & Thayer's", and Kelp (yes, Kelp!) gulls. Let's hope for one or two of these. Maximum of 20 participants. See above to reserve lecture & field trip. Doheny Beach parking fee. If goodly numbers of gulls are present around the Los Angeles Basin, we will assemble there instead. Bring a lunch.

Photo Workshop Cont'd.

Please register with Susan at membership@laaudubon.org, providing •name(s), •cell phone number, and •e-mail; and •mail a check for \$40 each.

February 2 & 3 Weekend

Carrizo Plain

FEE: \$20, LIMIT: 16

Leaders: *Mary and Nick Freeman*. Meet at 8 a.m. in Maricopa. Spectacular scenery. We will see Ferruginous Hawks, Prairie Falcons, Golden Eagles, LeConte's Thrasher, Merlin and pronghorn; with possible Rough-legged Hawk, Mountain Plover, Pronghorn, Elk and Sage Thrasher. We will meet in Maricopa (vacant lot at 800 Stanislaus St., west of Shell station on south side of Hwy 166), drive around the Plain all weekend, then leave the Plain heading north via Bitterwater Road on Sunday before we away to LA. If possible, please carpool or avail your vehicle to others when you reserve. Your phone number will be released for carpooling unless you request otherwise. Please register with Susan at membership@laaudubon.org, providing •name(s), •cell phone number, and •e-mail address for exact directions and further information; and •mail a check for \$20 each. Net profits go to the Schreiber Grant Fund. Reserve your own room in Buttonwillow for Saturday night. Motel 6 is one option here. FRS radios & 'scopes helpful. Limit: 16.

Saturday, February 9

Chasing Parrots in Pasadena

NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader: Larry Allen. The famous "Temple City" parrots have moved to Pasadena! Join Larry as we follow the evening flock as it gathers members and moves to roosting sites in suburban Pasadena. Possible Red-crowned, Lilac-crowned, Red-lored, and Yellow-headed Parrots and perhaps other parrot and parakeet species as well. Bring scopes if you have them. We will meet at 5:00 p.m. and bird until fully dark (about 6:30 p.m.). Meet at La Pintoresca Park at 45 E Washington Blvd. in Pasadena, at the northeast corner of Fair Oaks Ave. and Washington Blvd. Exit the 210 Freeway at Fair Oaks and proceed north about 1¼ miles. Park on the surrounding streets and gather around the small parking lot on the east side, off Raymond Ave. If you don't find the group there, look on the west side of the park. Depending on the location of the roosts, we will either walk or drive from the park.

Sunday, February 10

Ventura County Game Preserve

NO FEE, SIGN-UP, NO LIMIT

Leader: *Irwin Woldman*. The private duck hunting club in Ventura has a long history of producing the kinds of birds that most rich, well-birded and disappearing habitats can lay claim to, including Virginia rails, American Bittern, occasional Ruff, Solitary Sandpiper, and single Lesser Sand-Plover and Wood Sandpiper. Emphasis on this date will be late raptors and waterfowl, with shorebirds starting to move through. Get to the preserve by taking the 101

Fwy W to Rice Avenue S, following the Rice Ave. prompts to the T-intersection terminus, then take Hueneme Rd. west (Rt.), take the first left turn, Casper, to the end, proceed through the gate and park across the street from the barn (6500 Casper Road, Oxnard). Meet here at 8:00 a.m. *Sign up by e-mail with Susan membership@laaudubon.org, giving city of residence.* We will walk the property, so good hiking/mud shoes with energetic legs inside a plus. We may have one car. Scopes & FRS radios helpful. There is a slight chance of cancellation, so please check the LAAS website for trip status the day before.

Saturday, February 16

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: *Kris Ohlenkamp.* "Freeway close" morning of birding. Kris has led this walk on-and-off for over 30 years, noting 240 species, and averaging 60-65 per walk. Osprey likely, Peregrine Falcon less likely, and Least Bittern rarely seen. Take the 405 Fwy N into the San Fernando Valley, turn W on Burbank Blvd. and N (Rt.) on Woodley Ave. to the second Rt., which is marked "Wildlife Reserve". Turn here and park in the lot at the end. Meet at 8:00 a.m., and bird until about 11:30 a.m.

Saturday, February 23

Salton Sea South

FEE: \$10, SIGN-UP REQUIRED

Leaders *Nick and Mary Freeman.* Large to huge flocks of Snow & Ross' geese, White-faced Ibis and Sandhill Cranes. Stilt Sandpiper, Lesser Black-backed Gull and Gila Woodpecker all possible to certain. This is the only place in the U.S. to see the impressive Yellow-footed Gull (likely)! No Limit, but sign up by phone, and send e-mail and cell ph# for more details. Meet at 7:00 a.m. Saturday at Cattle Call Park south of Brawley (just downhill from 550 Cattle Call Drive, Brawley). Brawley Inn 760/344-1199, Calipatria Inn 800/830-1113, and Americas Best Value Inn in Westmorland 760/351-7100 are recommended. Arrive fed with full tanks, and bring lunches and snacks. Those who wish to will eat together Saturday night. Please register with Susan at membership@laaudubon.org, providing name(s), cell phone number, and e-mail address for exact directions and further information; and mail a check for \$10 each. FRS radios & 'scopes helpful.

March 16 & 17, 2019 Weekend

Anza-Borrego State Park

\$20 LAAS MEMBER FEE / \$40 FOR NON-LAAS MEMBERS, LIMITED SIGN-UP OF 20

Leader: *Kurt Leuschner.* Peak time for both wildflowers and Swainson's Hawk migration! Caravan through the State Park from the Colorado Desert up to Julian, with short forays to take in the sights and the wildlife. Kurt is a professor of desert ecology, and knows all of our deserts very well. Reserve your accommodations at Hacienda del Sol, Stanlund

Motel or others in Borrego Springs months early, as this is wildflower season too! Meet at the Anza-Borrego Desert Natural History Association (652 Palm Canyon Drive, Borrego Springs). Please register with Susan at membership@laaudubon.org providing name(s), cell phone number, and e-mail address; and mail a check for \$20 LAAS member / \$40 non-LAAS fee to: L.A. Audubon—Field Trips. PO Box 411301, Los Angeles CA 90041. For more information call (323) 876-0202.

Friday, April 19

Small Owls of the San Gabriels #1

NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP (10 Max.), PLEASE REGISTER FOR ONE OWL DATE ONLY

Leaders *Mary and Nick Freeman.* We will be looking for Northern Saw-whet, Western Screech-Owl, possibly Spotted Owl, as well as the vanguard of Flammulated Owl migration. Sign up, and meet at 6:00 p.m. on the frontage road for Angeles Forest Hwy just north of the 210 Fwy in La Canada. Turn N on ACH, take the second right (Milmada Dr.), and a quick left (Flanders Rd.). Meet along the first 50-yard stretch, fed and gassed up, and we will carpool from here. Bring quiet clothing for very cold weather (no nylon if possible), a small walking flashlight, binoculars, powerful flashlight optional. Photo ops possible.

SIGN-UP: Email sign-up mandatory. Send email to: membership@laaudubon.org. Provide name(s) email addresses, & cell phone #s and wait for email confirmation. (10 max.) Please allow others to attend this popular series by signing up for one date only. (Other dates:

Friday, May 17, Friday, June 21) For more information call (323) 876-0202, leave voice message if no answer.

April 27 & 28 /weekend

Owens Valley Grouse Trip

SIGN-UPS LIMITED TO 20, FEE \$55

Leaders: *Mary and Nick Freeman*. Friday (April 26) evening in Bishop, a grouse biologist will hopefully be available to present a slide show on the Sage Grouse, at the BLM headquarters building. She's really knowledgeable! We will meet at the Crowley lek turnoff ("the Green Church" at 34 Benton Crossing Rd, Mammoth Lakes – GPS address) very early on Saturday for Sage Grouse photos and viewing, distant Bald Eagles, waterfowl and shorebirds down by Crowley Lake afterwards, and later possible Black-backed Woodpecker and Evening Grosbeak! Sunday, plan to meet in Bishop at Jack's Restaurant (437 N Main St) as we foray to Aspendell, Glacier Lodge and elsewhere for Grey-crowned Rosy-Finch, Sooty Grouse, Bank Swallow, Juniper Titmouse, and perhaps Golden Eagle or Chukar. An e-mailer will be sent out to the participants who have signed-up and paid for this trip, including some hotels. Arrange your own lodging in Bishop for Friday and Saturday nights. Net profits go towards the Ralph Schreiber Grant Fund.

TO REGISTER: 1) Send an email to: membership@laaudubon.org providing •names, •cell phone number, and •Zip Code/town of residence for possible carpooling. 2) •Mail \$55 per person check payable to: Los Angeles Audubon, and mail to: Los Angeles Audubon, PO Box 411301, Los Angeles CA 90041-8301. For more information call (323) 876-0202.

Saturday, May 11

Tejon Ranch

\$20 FEE, MAX SIGN-UP OF 12, MIN 6

Leader: *Louis Tucker*. Visits to the Ranch are by special arrangement with escort only, as one could easily get lost on the web of gated dirt roads covering this huge working ranch. Hopefully the ranch will have dried out by May from the winter storms we've so desperately needed. This is spring bird migration peak time. This will be a great time to see various passerine species: warblers, flycatchers, bluebirds, and other songbirds. There are resident Red-tails, Burrowing Owls, Golden Eagles, and Prairie Falcons, which are all out there to be found. Even Swainson's Hawks may be passing through or nesting! California Condor is also a possibility if it's a bright sunny day. There also is a chance of catching sight of some Pronghorn Antelope. FRS radios and scopes useful.

We will meet at Denny's in Sylmar. Take the Roxford Exit off of the 5 Fwy. Denny's can be seen on the east side of the Fwy. 12861 Encinitas Ave. Sylmar. Be prepared to carpool and leave from there at 7 a.m. to be at the 300 St. West Gate at 8 am. At the gate at Tejon Ranch, we will transfer to the ranch vehicles, for a number of reasons - first and foremost, safety - as roads on the ranch can be treacherous. Bring lunch, as we will be out most of the day.

Any decision to cancel due to rain will be made at Denny's.

LIMITED SIGN-UPS: 12 participants only.
HOW TO SIGN-UP: Please pre-register by pulling up the Tejon Ranch website at: tejonranch.com / The Ranch / View All Events (bottom) / and click on May 11. Pay \$20 at this site with a credit card.

Then, contact Susan by e-mail at membership@laaudubon.org and inform her that your party is paid up for the trip. If you receive a fairly prompt email confirmation, you have made the cut! (NO drop-ins.) Include the email address, cell phone number and Zip Code for each participant.

For more information call: (323) 876-0202. 🐦



Owens Valley Eastern Sierra - Farmers Pond | Photo by Mary Freeman

BIRD WALKS

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.

OPEN WETLANDS AT BALLONA

1st Sat. of each month, (Except August)

Jan. 5 & Feb. 2

The first Saturday of every month, from 9 a.m. to noon, Los Angeles Audubon Society hosts the "Open Wetlands" event at the Ballona Salt Marsh. Binoculars will be available to borrow, and volunteers will help visitors view aquatic invertebrates through microscopes, learn about the unique ecosystems found at Ballona, and view birds through powerful spotting scopes along Ballona Creek. The buckwheat is in bloom and lots of butterflies to see. Please drop-in!

TOPANGA STATE PARK BIRDWALK

1st Sunday of every month

Jan. 6 & Feb. 3
Time: 8:00 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. 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

UPPER FRANKLIN CANYON / SOOKY GOLDMAN NATURE CENTER

2nd Sunday of the month

Jan. 13 & Feb. 10
Time: 8:30 a.m. -12:00 p.m.

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 as chaparral bird species such as California Quail, Spotted and California Towhees and California Thrasher. Winter birds have arrived; we will look for Ring-billed Duck, Hooded Mergansers, Merlin, White-crowned Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow and Fox Sparrow among others.

Directions: Please visit our website for directions to: (2600 Franklin Canyon Dr., Beverly Hills 90210) (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. Binoculars provided.

KENNETH HAHN STATE RECREATION AREA

(4100 S. La Cienega Blvd, Los Angeles 90056)

3rd Saturday of the month (no walks in July or August)

Jan. 19 & Feb. 16
Time: 8:00 a.m.-12:00p.m.

Leaders: *Eric and 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 Phoebe, Cassin's Kingbird, California and Spotted Towhee, Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper's Hawk. We will also look for wintering birds such as Merlin, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Rufous-crowned, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrow, Western Meadowlark, Ring-billed Duck and American Wigeon among others.

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 into the first parking lot on the right leading to the lake. Binoculars provided.

BALLONA WETLANDS BIRD WALK

3rd Sunday of the month (with the exception of December)

Jan. 20 & Feb. 17
Time: 8:00 a.m.

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. 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



THANK YOU FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP & DONATIONS

The following folks renewed their financial support of Los Angeles Audubon Society in our 2018 End-of-Year drive.

Please call or write if you would like to check the status of your LAAS chapter membership.

(323) 876-0202 | membership@laaudubon.org

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DOCENTS AND VOLUNTEERS 2018

Equally important and valued are the efforts of our volunteers and docents. We thank the many hands and hearts of folks that help Los Angeles Audubon in meeting our mission statement ...

THE MISSION OF LOS ANGELES AUDUBON IS TO PROMOTE THE ENJOYMENT AND PROTECTION OF BIRDS AND OTHER WILDLIFE THROUGH RECREATION, EDUCATION, CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION.

It takes sharing knowledge and correct actions to best move forward in environmental matters in ways that do no new harm. Los Angeles Audubon is sharing our love for the land and wildlife with school children and adult leaders. Please join us in 2019!

Thank you for your participation and hard work!

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