

WESTERN TANAGER



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*Juvenile Northern Pygmy Owl, Angeles Crest 2012,
Cover Photo by Nick Freeman*

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San Gabriel Mountains / Mt. Wilson Observatory Field Trip Report

By Heather Sabin, LAAS Member and Volunteer

On August 25th, 2012, a group of Los Angeles Audubon field trippers birded the morning away up in the conifers off the Angeles Crest Highway, then ended up at Mount Wilson Observatory. After lunch there at the Cosmic Café, participants took the guided 2-hour tour around the Observatory grounds and facilities, including an especially close look at the 100-inch telescope. Birding highlights were a female CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD, CLARK'S NUTCRACKER, WILSON'S WARBLER, 5 species of woodpeckers, and a NORTHERN PYGMY OWL.

There was not a cloud in the sky and the temperature was perfect on Saturday morning, August 25th, when a group of 17 of us met Nick and Mary Freeman at 7 a.m. along the Angeles Crest Highway just north of the 210 in La Cañada to organize our carpools. Joe and I hopped in with



a very friendly couple named George and Grace. How many more years will it be until people don't remember the Allens and think of them when they hear those names? Anyway, we wound our way to up the Crest to Red Box where we met Norm Vargas and we looked out over the canyon for a couple of minutes. We spotted a couple Phainopeplas, and I think someone saw some Lawrence's Goldfinches here. Mary thought she heard a Mountain Quail, but I missed it.

From Red Box we continued on to Charlton Flats where we lingered for quite a while looking at some Pygmy and White-Breasted Nuthatches, Mountain Chickadees, Western Bluebirds, Dark-Eyed Juncos, etc . We also spotted 4 different kinds of woodpeckers here. It took a few minutes to finally spot the White-Headed Woodpecker, but we got it, as well as a Hairy Woodpecker, tons of chatty Acorn Woodpeckers, and a Nuttall's. Adding some nice color to the conifers were 3 Wilson's Warblers that we admired for a bit.

Then, George spotted some bright emerald green that definitely wasn't a plant color, and lo and behold, it was the back of a female Calliope Hummingbird. She was very cooperative and sat for us for a long time, which was helpful, because being a female hummer meant it took quite a few minutes of analysis for people to finally decide she was definitely a Calliope.

We finally pulled ourselves away from the Flats since we had a schedule to keep, and drove on to an area just next to the road where there was a small spring. Sometimes Nick and Mary have had good luck here, and there was definitely a bird or two near the water, but I only spotted what I think was an Anna's Hummingbird feeding on some of the wildflowers along the water, which was still a pretty sight.

We drove on to another place just next to the road where you could look out at a large expanse of canyonside. Here, Mary brought out her electronics and began to play the call of a Northern Pygmy Owl, saying she had had luck



View from the Angeles Crest

The Solar Telescopes. The shorter one is 60' tall and was built in 1908, and the taller one is 150' tall, and was built in 1912.



finding them here before. I have to admit, I felt a little silly standing by the road staring at 1,000 trees while Mary's phone made "tooting" noises. I thought to myself, "Oh, there's NO way this is EVER going to work!" We all stood quietly by the road for a few minutes, during which time two Clark's Nutcrackers flew by, one of which even alighted on the top of a tree right across from our group, just long enough for a low cheer, then it was off again. My attention returned to the canyon in front of us then as I began to hear a low toot from the woods. I thought to myself "OK, I must be hearing things. Am I hearing the phone echoing out there??", but no! It was a Northern Pygmy Owl calling back! Even more miraculous than that was that after just a few more minutes of intensely concentrated effort someone (Bettsie) said, "I've got it!!" then she proceeded to assist others in getting it into the scopes for all of us to view. Our little owl was not going anywhere, so we were able to look at it as long as we liked. Everyone was very excited, though I think none more than Mary!

After we'd all had as many looks as we liked at the owl, Mary said we'd better move on to Mt. Wilson so that we'd have time for lunch, so that was where we headed next. We sat together at the picnic tables outside the Cosmic Café and enjoyed our sandwiches and watched hummingbirds feed at the 2 feeders hanging from the side of the covered patio there. We also took a look at a bat, squeezed into a space in the roof of the patio, trying to rest despite all of our lunchtime chatter.

At 1 p.m. we began our group tour of the Observatory which was very interesting and informative. Our docent had tons of astronomical knowledge, history and trivia at his fingertips, and not only that, he had Norm Vargas there as well, for real-live astronomer backup. We had a very

extensive two-hour tour in which I think we walked almost a mile around the various buildings there.

We started with a stop into the little museum to take a quick look around and take a look at the model of the buildings and telescopes there. Then we moved on to the 150' solar telescope built in 1912, where we were just in time to meet the solar astronomer before he went up in the same bucket that people like Einstein have been in to go to the top to make adjustments. He even already had his climbing safety harness on. He very kindly interrupted his day to take a lot of time explaining to us the history of the telescope and what they do there, and he even brought us into a back room to show us the daily hand-drawn pencil sketches of the sunspots. While in that room, we all admired the still working, absolutely ancient Raytheon computers in the room, as he proudly told us that he had found ways to keep all of that old equipment running.

Once we'd had our fill of the solar telescope, we stopped in front of a very diminutive (in comparison) telescope and learned how it was part of cutting edge technology called optical astronomi-

cal in-



Our docent attempts to explain how the CHARA array telescopes work.

terferometry. Six one-meter telescopes are connected together on the mountaintop in such a way as to produce data as if it were from one much larger telescope. How it works is all very complicated though, as computers need to make sure that the data from each telescope reaches the same point at exactly the same time, despite their different locations. We were told that these telescopes are already making amazing discoveries, like whether stars we're seeing are being viewed from their sides or from the top or bottom for example.

We then moved on to the 100 inch Hooker reflecting telescope, which was apparently the largest telescope in the world from its completion in 1917 until 1948. We heard how the very still air over Mt. Wilson makes for good astronomical viewing conditions, called "seeing". We were told how people like Edwin Hubble made important discoveries here with this telescope, such as that our galaxy is not at the center of the universe, and that the universe is expanding.

We also learned that the 100" telescope had never had an eyepiece, but that the telescope was currently being rigged up with one and will be available for groups to rent. It was exciting to imagine what the view through such an impressive



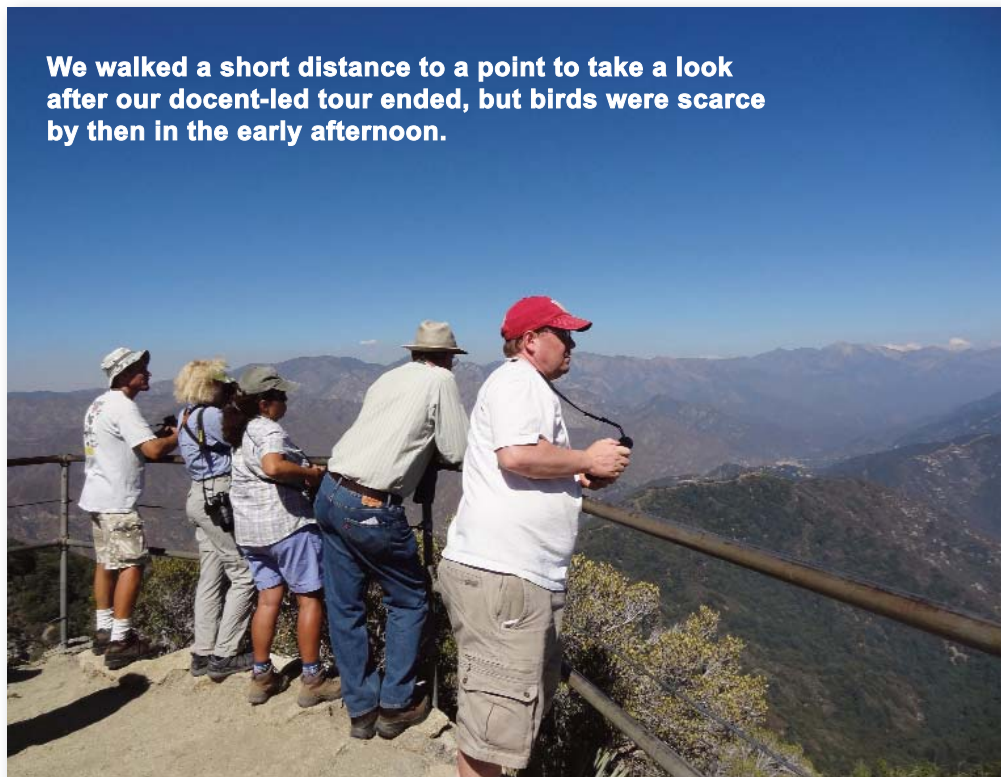
The 100" telescope.

telescope would be like.

This was an outstanding trip. It was the perfect combination of a couple hours of productive birding with a couple hours of visiting a site of important historical and scientific interest. I hope this trip will be repeated in the future, but I also recommend people consider replicating this trip on their own if they already like birding up the Angeles Crest and have been meaning to visit Mt. Wilson. Just be sure to check the tour times in advance! 🐦

Check out the complete photo album on our Facebook site: [facebook.com/LosAngelesAudubon](https://www.facebook.com/LosAngelesAudubon)

Photography by Heather Sabin



We walked a short distance to a point to take a look after our docent-led tour ended, but birds were scarce by then in the early afternoon.

Owls in Our Lives

By Mary Freeman, Field Trip Leader and Monthly Programs Chairperson

We have friends who love to watch and study gulls. Other friends love raptors. Some of our friends focus in on certain families of birds and take international trips to locate members of their favorite bird family. Some birders hone in on the exact migration dates of certain species; they love the stats. Many birders in the course of their bird watching careers eventually focus in on certain aspects of bird study.

I picked up my first bird book in elementary school, “Introducing Our Western Birds” by Vessel & Wong, from which my first critical identification was made of a White-crowned Sparrow in the backyard. Since then, this species has always been special to me. When Nick and I lead fieldtrips for Audubon and the white-crowned are present, a full rundown on the various subspecies of this sparrow including a lesson on their song is guaranteed. The Red-breasted Nuthatch is near the top of my favorite bird species. The lovely salmon color on the breast, the supercilium lines through the eyes and the lovely slate gray upperparts make it a very handsome bird. Its ringing “yank yank” is a sound not to be forgotten as these charming birds climb down trees in search of insects. Coming across one makes a birding trip complete for me! Participants seem to get a kick out of finding one for me during a fieldtrip. As much as I still love these birds, and many others, a few particularly elusive species have come to captivate us.

This summer marks the 12th year Nick and I have surveyed the San Gabriel Mountains for owl species. Thanks to the Los Angeles Breeding Bird Atlas Survey, Nick and I have continued our focus on the Northern Saw-whet Owl, trying not to ignore the other owls of the Crest. We have accumulated many hundreds of travel hours on the Angeles Crest Highway in search of the Northern Saw-whet Owl.

Although Nick and I are not biologists by trade, this beautiful little owl has led us down the path to becoming “citizen science researchers.” The Northern Saw-whet Owl continues to stretch our imaginations. Our early survey work resulted in an abstract and presentation for the Western Field Ornithologist conference in 2008. Attending Walt Sakai’s Zuma Canyon banding station, took us



Mary with the first banding of a Northern Saw-whet Owl, Angeles National Forest, 2008

on a path to a sub-permit for banding owls. We wrote a short article for the Mt. Wilson Observatory discussing our owl encounters nearby.

After the Angeles National Forest was 2/3 destroyed by the Station Fire of 2009, banders persuaded us to continue our owl surveys since we had the kind of baseline data that biologists often yearn for. After submitting a report of our fieldwork through 2011 to the US Forestry Service, we were granted a five-year permit to conduct post-fire owl surveys.

Why do we study our local Northern Saw-whet Owl? Little solid information existed on the true status and distribution of the Saw-whet Owl in our local mountains. Since 2000, we have learned to recognize their familiar toots, clicks, screams, and the “sssst” calls of juvenile Saw-whets.

Over the years, we have documented many locations where the Saw-whet frequent and breed, giving us an understanding of their preferred habitat and elevation.

Saw-whet Owls breed along the Crest from April to July, after which they disperse to begin setting up territories. Their calls can be heard each month of the year – especially October through May. Numerous detections have been made during the fall and winter showing they are resident even at higher elevations. We have attempted banding a number of times, but so far have been rewarded with a single female Saw-whet. We will attempt to learn site fidelity and distance traveled should we be fortunate enough to have a recapture of a banded owl. We will continue trying to band owls, but we also do a lot of audio surveying, to study basic questions of status and distribution in various types of burn areas.

Our interest in the Saw-whet Owl has allowed us to encounter and study other owls found in our local mountains as well. We've come to understand when our local Flammulated Owls return from their winter vacation in Latin America. We've learned the Spotted Owl will try to remain on territory even after a devastating fire, and the Western Screech-Owl is by far the most tolerant of moderate to severe fire damage in the forest. We have encountered two separate families of Northern Pygmy-Owl, a first for our owl survey work with a few breeding records in the county!

As members of a listserv that focuses on owl banding concerns such as recaptures, trends, and techniques, Nick and I have gained and shared a great deal of knowledge about the breeding, vocalizations and behavior of Saw-whets. The listserv is mostly made up of a number of banders in the eastern part of the US where Northern Saw-whet Owls are studied in large numbers during migration. Through this listserv, we have developed friendships with banding researchers that stretch out to the east coast, up into Canada, and back to California. A six-day visit to Wisconsin was spent attending a hands-on class on techniques of owl banding. Since 2005, Nick and I have made visits to banding stations in Pennsylvania, northern California, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and we have just returned from visiting a site in Colorado. Each banding station has been an exciting learning experience.

Through a friend's contact, biologists tapped us to participate in Flammulated Owl surveys in the southern Sierra. Nick and I have visited these mountains frequently in the past and have found the density of Flammulated Owls and others to be significantly higher than what we encounter locally. The summer of 2012 marked the second year of this survey project, during which we also joined the researchers in a nest box building project geared towards Flammulated Owl. We will participate in monitoring the nest boxes in 2013. I would like to place nest boxes for the Northern Saw-whet Owl in our local mountains at some time in the future. It will take a lot of work, but it may be the best way to study the breeding biology of Saw-whets in our extremely rugged mountains.

To share our enjoyment of owls, Nick and I have scheduled fieldtrips from the Southern Sierra's Quaking Aspen to nights on the Angeles Crest. Stay posted for newsletter announcements of upcoming trips to focus on the Northern Saw-whet Owl and other denizens of the night.

I encourage you to consider picking a species (or a small group) to focus in on, and learn all you can about that bird's life. It's a fulfilling endeavor! You'll soon find out that the more you know, the more you'll know you don't know. It never ends! 🦉

*In Remembrance of My Brother
Benjamin Alonzo Carmona
1952-2012*



**Nick and Mary Freeman with Scott Weidensaul
Hidden Valley Banding Station,
Freidensburg, Pennsylvania, 2009**

Interpreting Nature

By Stacey Vigallon,
Director of Interpretation

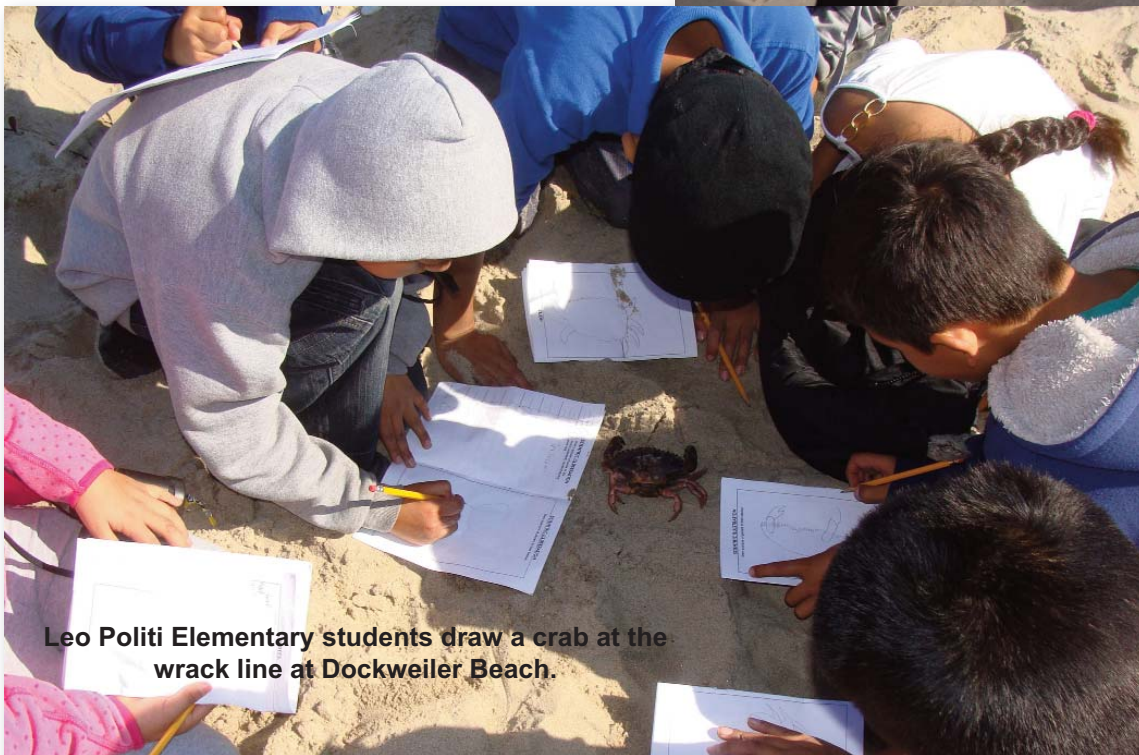
Six years of students helping coastal species

The 2012-2013 school year is well under way, and this October marked Dorsey High School Eco-club's 11th visit to the Least Tern Colony on Venice Beach. This is the sixth consecutive school year that these students have played an important role in Least Tern conservation by assisting biologists in maintaining habitat at the colony. And thanks to Toyota and the TogetherGreen Volunteer Days Program, students from 186th Street Elementary School have joined Dorsey students at the Venice colony each fall over the past five years as well.

Snowy Plovers on our Los Angeles County beaches have also benefitted from the help of students over the past six years. Students have helped spread the word about plover conservation through film, illustration, and presentations. During our fall field trips to Dockweiler Beach, students in the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program lead elementary school students through a beach ecology curriculum they created, helping younger students to find Snowy Plovers, explore their habitat, and write down observations in field notebooks.



Dorsey graduate, Elia Arispe, was one of the first Dorsey students to ever visit the tern colony back in 2007. Her younger sister, Ariam Arispe, is now a Restoration Leader in the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program.



Leo Politi Elementary students draw a crab at the wrack line at Dockweiler Beach.



A Baldwin Hills Greenhouse student helps an elementary school student spot a Snowy Plover at the Dockweiler Snowy Plover enclosure.

Do you want to get involved in Snowy Plover and Least Tern conservation? We are always happy to welcome new volunteers to our monitoring program. We are also offering beach walks this winter through the Dockweiler Youth Center and the Annenberg Community Beach House. For more information, contact Stacey Vigallon at tern@laaudubon.org or (323) 481-4037. 🐦



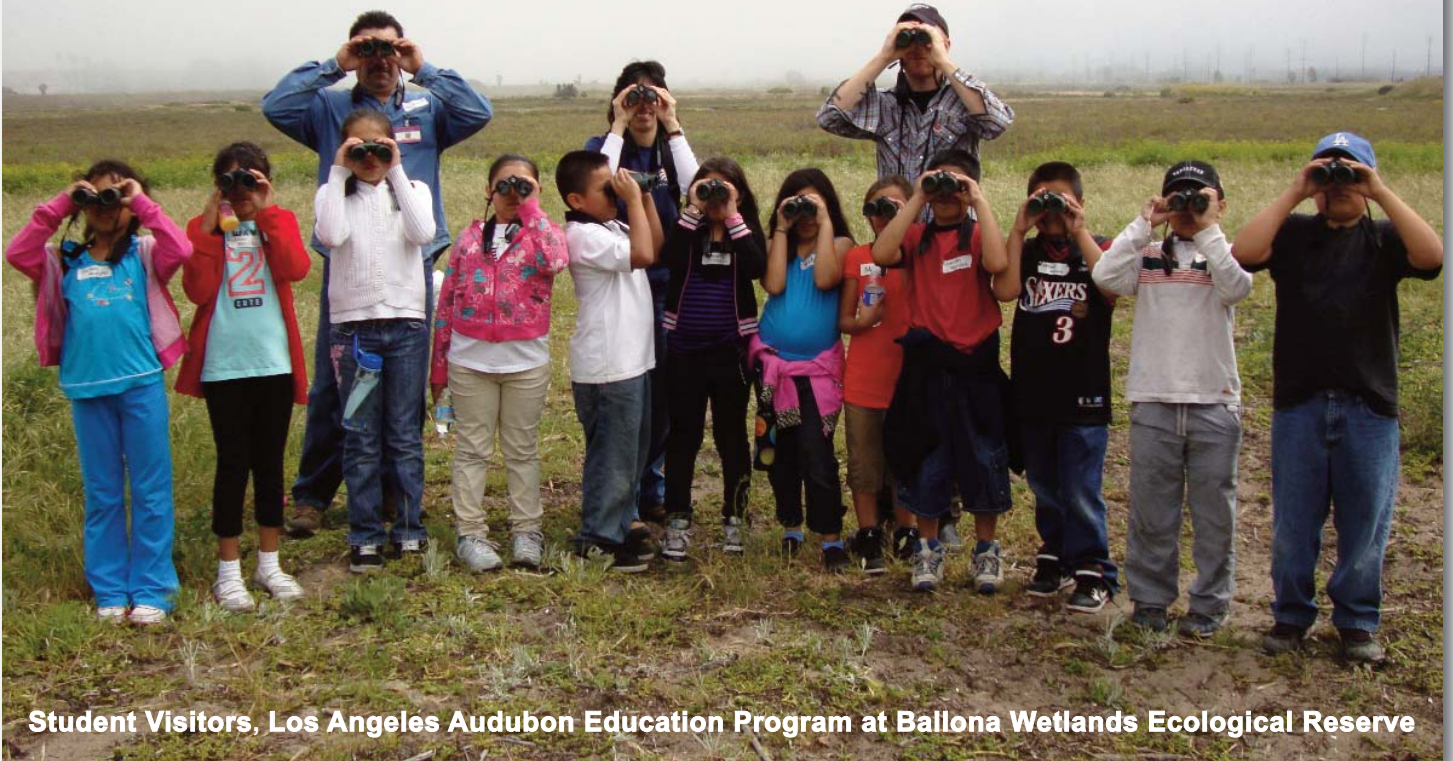
Dorsey High School eco-club students help create dune habitat in the Venice Least Tern Colony.

The Audubon Education Program at the Ballona Wetlands

What Goes on Down There?

By Cindy Hardin, Director Environmental Education Programs

Photography by Leslie Davidson



Student Visitors, Los Angeles Audubon Education Program at Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve

Many times when I tell people that I manage the Audubon Education Program at the Ballona Wetlands I get questions. The first one is “Where’s that?” When I explain that the wetlands are located in Playa del Rey off of Culver Boulevard, people often say: “I drive by there all the time; what wetlands?” It is difficult to notice the wetlands through the windows of a car traveling at 50 mph, but once I describe the site, most people are intrigued, and want to see it. I then tell them that although Ballona is not really open to the general public, they could visit most every Tuesday and Thursday during the school year if they become volunteer docents for our program. It never hurts to be on the lookout for new recruits!

Of course, the natural follow-up to this offer is “Well, what exactly do you do down there?”. I realize that many members of Audubon are aware of and support our work at Ballona, but might not be really sure of what it is we “do down there”. The answer is: Many things!

Almost every Tuesday and Thursday morning during the school year a bus rattles into the gravel parking lot behind Gordon’s Market in Playa del Rey and disgorges 60 ten-year-old stu-

dents. The children are already excited about the wetlands because a Ballona volunteer docent visited their school in the previous week to prepare them for their field trip. This pre-site visit is provided to every class that comes to Ballona, and includes exhibits of realia, feathers and bones that the children can handle, and panels on native plants, animals of the wetlands and the Tongva Native Americans who once used the wetlands as a hunting and gathering ground.

The students enter the Ecological Reserve and immediately see a half size model of a *ki`iy*, the type of home used by the Tongva. We stop here briefly and discuss the first people of Ballona, making sure to point out the nearby willow trees of the same type that were once used by the Tongva to frame their homes. A major component of Social Studies for fourth-graders in California is the study of the mission system, and we like to complement that unit with some education about the Tongva.

After the stop at the *ki`iy* the students are taken to our amphitheatre, where they are quickly divided into four groups of equal size, and assigned a docent tour leader. Binoculars are distributed, and each docent gives a quick lesson on binocular use

and safety. Now it is time to get out into the wetlands!

Each group rotates between four stations, so although the itinerary varies, every child participates in each activity. First stop for tour number three is the “Ecology Station”. We lead them along the “Trestle Trail” out to our viewing platform. Along the way we might see a Belding’s Savannah Sparrow flitting amongst the Pickleweed or a Northern Harrier foraging for a furry feast! The platform is perched at the edge of the tidal channel that feeds the marsh. We never know what we might see, but a good bet is the Great Blue Heron or Egrets of both the Great and Snowy variety. Here’s our chance to discuss the unique and vanishing ecosystem that characterizes a salt marsh. We also look into the water to see if we can spot any aquatic invertebrates or fish that are an important link in the local food web. The students scan the marsh with their binoculars, and some sharp-eyed birders in training might spot a Kingfisher sitting atop the dead Myoporum down the channel, or ask about the hundreds of Black-Bellied Plovers resting on the salt pan to towards the creek.

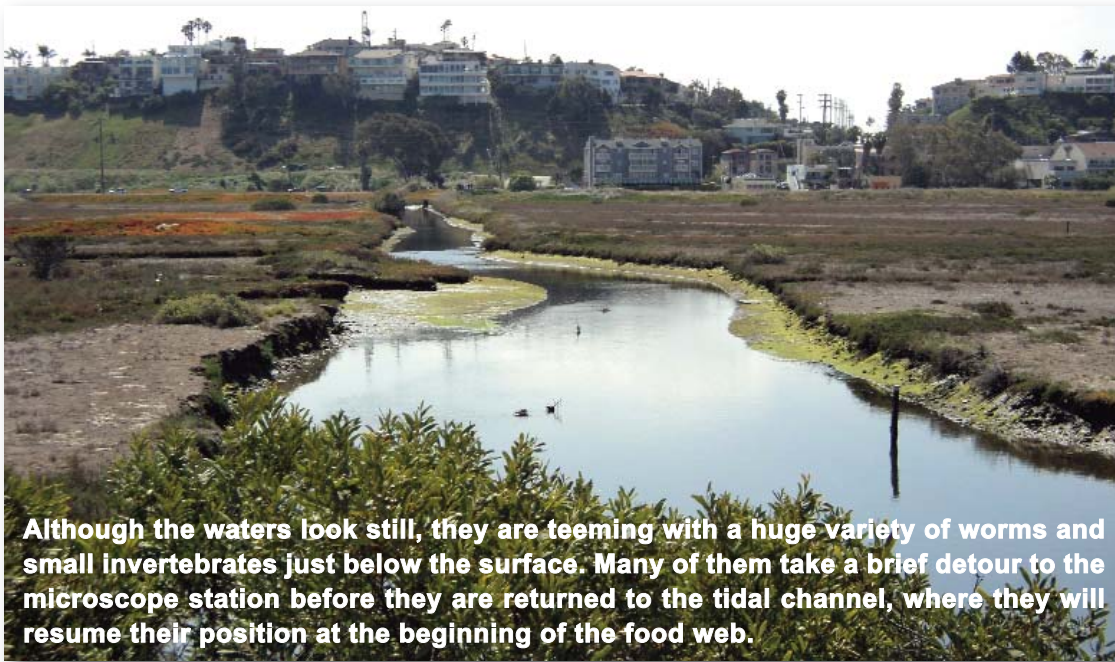


The groups study aquatic invertebrates and algae from water samples drawn from the tidal channel.

We move the group on to the next station, which features microscopes. Aquatic invertebrates and algae are the main attractions at this stop. Every week we draw a water sample from the tidal channel, and on tour days we fish out the “critters” to be viewed under the microscopes. During the rainy season we also take samples from our vernal pond, which hosts freshwater invertebrates, including mosquito larvae, dragonfly nymphs and water boatmen. At this station the students learn that Algae has its very own Kingdom, Protista, and that through the process of

photosynthesis provides approximately 65% of the oxygen on this planet. The initial reaction to algae includes words like “slimy”, “nasty” and “gross”. Upon learning its importance to our very survival, distaste turns to awe. After a brief lesson on invertebrates and their role in the food web at Ballona by our Microscope Station docent, it’s time to view the creatures. California Horn Snails extend themselves out of their shells, looking like elephant trunks under the ‘scopes. Shrimp-like amphipods scud across the watch glasses, hiding amongst the algae. Nematode worms give us a chance to talk about indicator species and e.coli bacteria. The students record all of this action by drawing what they see. Each drawing is sent back to school with the students to help remind them of the importance of “the little things” in the food web.





Although the waters look still, they are teeming with a huge variety of worms and small invertebrates just below the surface. Many of them take a brief detour to the microscope station before they are returned to the tidal channel, where they will resume their position at the beginning of the food web.

Now it's time to go out onto the dune trail. To the east students can view the salt marsh, and to the west are thickets of willow and native dune plants. Initiated by the Friends of the Ballona Wetlands, restoration of these dunes has been ongoing for over twenty years. Areas that were once covered by thick mats of Ice Plant or weedy introduced grasses now host a profusion of California natives. Silvery Dune Lupine glints in the sun, Dune Buckwheat is swarmed by Marine Blue and Wandering Skipper butterflies, and Caterpillar Phacelia is surrounded by buzzing bees. Much of the removal of introduced plants was done by visiting students, and we still put them to work when we stop at the Restoration Station. Our project of the last two years has been removing introduced grasses in a meadow area off of the dune trail. This has been extremely successful, and a carpet of Marsh Heliotrope now covers the area. Along the trail we are often accompanied by a flitting Black Phoebe, who is attracted by the insects that are stirred up by the train of children passing through.

Finally, we reach Ballona Creek, location of the Bird Station. Along

the creek we scan for shorebirds. Sometimes a Brown Pelican will plunge dive into the creek right in front of the students—a real show stopper. If we're lucky we might see an Oyster Catcher or two, with its "glow stick" beak. We come upon the spotting scopes that have been set up by our Bird Station docents. Look across the creek. Are those rocks moving?! We look more closely through the 'scopes and see that hundreds of Willets and Marbled Godwits are

roosting on the north side of the creek—they're not rocks at all! This is an opportunity to talk about the foraging techniques of the "stabbers and grabbers", camouflage, migration or nesting, depending on the time of year and activity present. This last spring we were lucky enough to have a pair of Tree Swallows in a nesting box directly adjacent to the Bird Station. They were often seen swooping and diving as they hunted for insects to feed their offspring nestled deep inside the box.



Great Egret at Ballona Wetlands

All too soon it is time to take our trek back to the amphitheatre as the tour concludes. If time allows we make a stop at the Arroyo Willows and look for the red bumps on the leaves that are the hallmark of the Willow Sawfly Gall Wasp. We ask the children to guess as to what are the prominent red bumps on the leaves. No, they're not berries; they harbor a small worm-like larva that will soon gnaw its way out, fall into the leaf litter and morph into a tiny wasp. If we look carefully we can see small holes in some of the galls that provide evidence of this process. This activity happens most abundantly in the Spring, at the exact same time that our insect-eating birds have extra mouths to feed. It's a great chance to talk about how well Nature works when left to its own devices.

The children return to their seats at the amphitheatre and are given a chance to ask any last minute questions about the things they might have seen or learned on their field trip. Drawings that were done at the Microscope Station are distributed to the teachers, along with a brief evaluation sheet for the teachers to fill out upon their return to school. If they have not received them during their pre-site visit, each student is given a "Birds of the Ballona Wetlands" booklet, which contains illustrations of and information about 43 species of birds common to the wetlands. This gives every child their very own starter field guide, something that is probably not commonly found in their homes. Thanks are exchanged all around, and we bid goodbye to the classes. All of the docents participate in the breakdown of the stations and storage of our equipment, and the day is done.

Our program hosts over two thousand students every year, primarily from "underserved" inner-city schools. The lion's share of donations that we receive goes to our bus scholarship program. As funding cuts continue to be made to public education, the biggest hurdle to getting kids to the wetlands is transportation. In the

2011-2012 school year we were able to provide buses to twelve different groups of students, which means roughly 700 schoolchildren were able to visit who otherwise would not have had this opportunity. We are so grateful for the support of Los Angeles Audubon, Santa Monica Bay Audubon and several private donors who enable us to provide this service. I sincerely invite anyone who wants to know more about "what we do down there" to tag along on a tour. It's fun, it's inspiring and we are always happy to share our field trip experience with anyone who has an interest. The volunteer docents, who are the backbone of our program (we absolutely could not do it without them), would love to have a chance to thank you personally for your support, as would I. If you would like to spend some time at Ballona with all of us and the students, I can be reached at cindyhardin@laudubon.org or (310) 301-0050. I look forward to hearing from you. 🐦

Cindy started volunteering at the Ballona Wetlands in 1999. She likes to tell the student field trip participants that she has been coming down to Ballona since before they were born, and still sees exciting and new things almost every time that she is at the wetlands. She is currently Director for the environmental education programs at Ballona and at the LA Audubon Native Plant Garden at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. She is thrilled to be a part of Los Angeles Audubon and the wonderful learning opportunities that the Society offers to local school children.



FROM OUR READERS

If you would like to share your articles and photos for use in the *Western Tanager*, please send them to our editorial staff at: membership@laaudubon.org or WesternTanager@laaudubon.org.

Surveying the Snowy Plover: A Sighting with a Difference

By Judy Thompson, LAAS Member & Volunteer


A balmy day at the beach, Zuma Beach in Malibu, could not be imagined: clear, no wind, blue sea, blue sky, waves lazily lapping at the sand, warm. And it was January. And I was dressed in turtleneck, sweatshirt, nylon jacket lined with puffy fleece, hiking boots, corduroy slacks. I was ready for Arctic conditions for my first quarterly snowy plover survey for the LA Audubon Society. In addition I had a backpack with nuts, granola bars, two peeled and sectioned tangerines, and water; a clipboard and pen, and binoculars. No Marine in Afghanistan was better prepared for the elements and the task at hand.

Stacey Vigallon, our able Audubon Director of Interpretation and trainer, gave me instructions, told me how to fill out the reporting form, and showed me photos of the little birds we would be looking for. Snowy plovers are the cutest little things – and endangered, so it's important to monitor their numbers, nesting sites, habits. Stacey also showed me photos of other plovers and shorebirds so I could compare them and identify the one I was after. They all looked exactly alike.

We started out walking, she at the “wrack line” – where seaweed and debris pile up, and I further away from the water. Trudging through that soft sand in my clodhoppers was – good exercise. Not far along Stacey alerted me to a group – a hive – a flock – a social gathering? of snowy plovers. I saw nothing. She pointed to a patch in the hillocky dry sand where yes! I could just see little heads with button eyes peeking above depressions where someone had dredged a shallow hole when walking or running. Cutest! We counted diligently – 23 birds. We continued on, I beginning to raise a sweat in my Arctic gear. Stacey motioned again that a hive of snowy plovers was in view. I saw nothing; Stacey must have X-ray eyes. This time they were ranged at intervals among clumps of seaweed. I could be forgiven for not seeing those little humps among other little humps. And so it went – we saw a total of 53 snowy plovers together. And some black-bellied plovers, a curlew, a godwit, gulls. How exciting!

Stacey had to get away and left me to survey the remaining beach. She pointed to a murky speck far far away. Sure – no problem! There appeared not to be any bird of any description at that end of the beach, and Stacey agreed it would be unlikely that I saw any more of our specific targets. Bird or no bird, that had to be reported.

I strode along in the sun with my clipboard, binoculars and hiking boots, having stashed my nice warm jacket in a handy sandy place where I could retrieve it when I walked back (along the endless miles of beach). Not far along I did encounter a rare species: a man and woman and dog were just settling in to lawn chairs up on the rock berm that protected wealthy Malibu residents from raging Pacific storms, and people. I looked up and acknowledged them (being a friendly sort), and they said hello and had the expectant look of wanting to chat. I approached the bottom of the berm, waved my clipboard, and said, “Audubon bird survey!”, like a ninny. The man clambered down the rocks. Do I know him? It is Malibu, after all. Isn't that --- ? “I'm Pierce Brosnan, my wife Keely, and my dog.” I forget the dog's name. It had an attractive bandana tied around his neck. We chatted about snowy plovers and the new house they had recently built, up there beyond the chain link fence, graced with DayGlo orange No Trespassing signs. He was down to earth and completely unpretentious, and I want my husband and me to be close friends with him and his wife, as soon as possible.

I waved goodbye and spent the next hour and a quarter trudging along to the murky speck end-point of the survey (just short of it actually; I had had it, and all my vittles were consumed), then turned and trudged back at least 40 miles to my car, confident in the knowledge that now I am an expert Audubon Snowy Plover surveyor. 

Judy Thompson is a member and volunteer of Los Angeles Audubon, participating in Snowy Plover surveys every quarter, Least Tern monitoring, and helping Stacey Vigallon and Dorsey Highschoolers' with research.

113TH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

THE CBC IS NOW FREE!

Effective with the upcoming 113th Count in December 2012, the Christmas Bird Count is now a free program. Audubon will no longer charge the \$5.00 fee of field participants and Audubon will move to an online delivery of the summary results of the CBC.

In order to continue to fund the Christmas Bird Count program in the long term, Audubon will be moving to a voluntary donation model for the CBC. With the online delivery of *American Birds* via a new interactive web presence including photos, summaries, and features, content can now be presented online as they are completed.

Thank you for your work in making the CBC the continued success that it is. Thanks very much, and have a wonderful ...FREE ... Christmas Bird Count season.

Listed are some of the Los Angeles area CBC's.

Sunday, December 15, 2012

Lancaster Christmas Bird Count

Compilers Nick and Mary Freeman at: (818) 247-6172 or mnfreeman@earthlink.net to be placed are on a team or be given an area. All welcome, but please contact ahead of time!

Sunday, December 16, 2012

Malibu Christmas Bird Count

Compiler Dick Norton at: (310) 455-1138 or richardjnorton@dslexreme.com to be matched up with a team or a survey area. Historically, our best-attended count!

Sunday, December 23, 2012

Santa Clarita Christmas Bird Count

Compiler Dan Cooper at:
dan_cooper_90042@yahoo.com
or (323) 397-3562.

Sunday, December 30, 2012

Los Angeles Christmas Bird Count

Compiler Dan Cooper at:
dan_cooper_90042@yahoo.com
or (323) 397-3562.

For more information about Audubon's CBC visit www.christmasbirdcount.org or cbcadmin@audubon.org

RALPH W. SCHREIBER ORNITHOLOGY RESEARCH AWARDS FOR 2013

Call for Applications By Walter Sakai

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

One or more awards will be given out in 2013, with the maximum amount of an award to be \$1500. The application deadline for the 2013 Research Award is December 1, 2012, and it is anticipated that grants will be disbursed in April, 2013. In the last few years, grants were awarded for projects ranging from studies of urban parrots in Los Angeles to Emperor penguins in Antarctica.

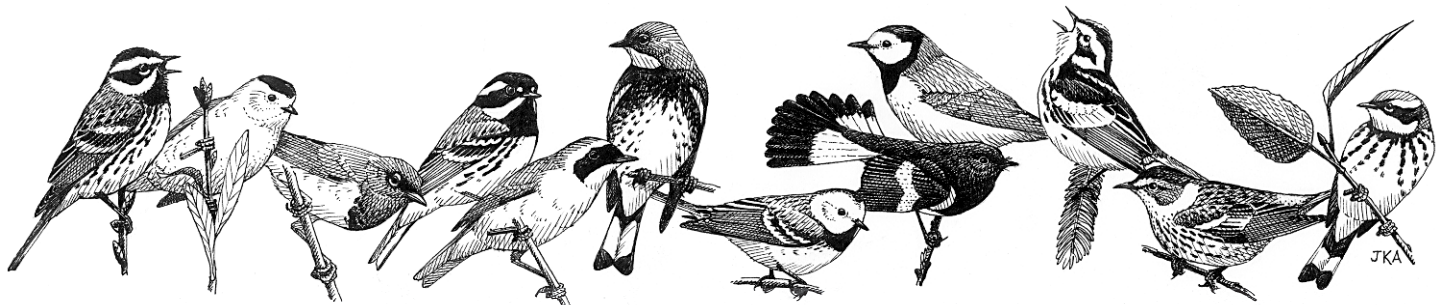
To obtain further details and application materials:

Download the materials from the website:
<http://www.laaudubon.org/>

Go to Main Menu, Education, Research Grants

Or, contact:

Walter H. Sakai, Grants Committee Chairman,
Life Sciences Department, Santa Monica College
1900 Pico Blvd
Santa Monica, CA 90405-1628
Phone: (310) 434-4702
sakai_walter@smc.edu
DanauSakai@aol.com



BIRDS OF THE SEASON

— JON FISHER

It's a great time of year for birders in southern California. The long period of autumn migration begins with- but is by no means limited to- early arriving shorebirds, followed by passerines and then waterfowl. Adding intrigue to the ordinary is the potential for both low end and extraordinary vagrants, and of course everything in between.

Amplifying fall migration is the fact that Los Angeles County boasts a remarkable range of habitats and in that regard is nearly equal to San Diego County. Thus it is no surprise that these two regions are in a virtual dead heat for the highest number of species recorded in a U.S. county.

The hot and humid weather that prevailed over much of the period didn't make for the most pleasant field conditions, but this hardly translated into a shortage of good birds. While the late spring vagrant season pretty much fizzled out, but the same could not be said for fall.

Though passerine migrants were still relatively scarce in the lowlands in August, a few good birds were already turning up on the coastal slope. Though there were no super rarities in the county- as there were elsewhere in the state- good numbers of vagrants turned up in September and early October.

It's worth noting that the period saw over twice as many vagrants found on weekdays as on weekends. Thus as the traditional 9-5 workday becomes less common, the old "weekend bias" in birding is not the phenomenon it once was.

Though there was nothing earth-shaking on the lower Los Angeles River, the usual array of common and not so common shorebirds were present. The Edwards Air Force Base's Piute Ponds, with their great rarity producing potential, were closed to access for most of the period, though the nearby Lancaster Sewer Ponds offered something of an alternative for those seeking waterbirds in the desert.

Always early fall migrants, a **Greater White-fronted Goose** was found on the LA River near Atwater Village on August 31 (Julia Ray) and eight were in Playa del Rey on September 2 (Edna Alvarez).

A **Wood Duck** at the South Coast Botanic Garden in Rolling Hills Estates on August 5 was away from expected locales (Dinuk Magamma) and another forlorn male continued to consort with Mallards at the Sepulveda Basin. Somewhat early was a **Ring-necked Duck** at the Sepulveda Basin on September 15 (Jon Fisher).

There was little news from the realm of pelagic birds, with a **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** southeast of San Clemente Island on October 6 being the only report of note (Paul Lehman).

With remarkable numbers of **Broad-winged Hawks** recorded at the great raptor funnel of the Marin County headlands this fall and also turning up elsewhere in the state in above average numbers, it shouldn't be a surprise that there were a few records in the county. One was over Westwood on September 21 (Scott Logan), another was over the Baldwin Hills on September 23 (Kimball Garrett, Jon Dunn) and one was above Rolling Hills Estates on October 7 (Dinuk Magamma).

Southbound **Swainson's Hawks** were over Claremont on August 18 (Cathy McFadden, Paul Clarke) and on September 15 (Tom Miko), a far cry from the substantial numbers that pass through in spring. What was a presumably a returning **Ferruginous Hawk** was back for another winter near Playa del Rey on the early date of September 18 (Dan Cooper, Dean Schaff).

Scarce and local as breeding birds in the county, a pair of **Common Gallinules** was confirmed as such at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on August 21 (Moro Rogers).

Away from the lower LA River where expected in fall, a **Solitary Sandpiper** was at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on September 8 (Ron Cyger). Scarce anywhere in the county, two **Red Knots** present

along Ballona Creek from September 16-25 were of note (Barbara Johnson).

The first **Semipalmated Sandpiper** of the season was along the lower LA River from July 31-August 5 (Darren Dowell), with others present there on August 18 (Mark & Janet Scheel) and August 25 (John Tomlinson). Though one of the least common of our regular fall shorebirds, the mere three recorded is a surprisingly low number. At least one or two others were found at the Lancaster Sewer Ponds during the period (Kimball Garrett).

As is typical, **Pectoral Sandpipers** and **Baird's Sandpipers** were present in small numbers along the lower LA River. The Lancaster Sewer Ponds also hosts these two species in fall and a high count of nineteen Pectorals was seen there on September 15 (Cal Yorke). Away from these areas, a **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at Malibu Lagoon on September 22 (Mary Deutsche, Carol Gee).

Far less common were single **Stilt Sandpipers** along the LA River in Long Beach from August 23-28 and again from September 4-8 (Richard Barth). Then a few weeks later, five appeared there on September 22 (Jeff Boyd). There were a few other reports- possibly involving some of the same individuals- continuing through October 1.

Gulls of interest included a **Franklin's Gull** at the Lancaster Sewer Ponds on August 4 (Darren Dowell) and two **Sabine's Gulls**- one at Lake Palmdale on September 12 (Cal Yorke) and a less expected coastal slope bird on the LA River in North Long Beach on September 18 (Richard Barth).

Common Terns were represented by one along the lower LA River in Long Beach from August 3-5 (Larry Allen) and a few at Cabrillo Beach in San Pedro between August 30 and September 19 (Ed Griffin, Bernardo Alps). Five more were at the Ballona Creek mouth on September 18 (Dan Cooper) with one present there on September 25 (Darren Dowell). Single **Black Terns** along the lower LA River in Long Beach from August 3-8 (Larry Schmahl) and on September 27 (Dany Sloan) were the only ones reported on the coastal slope.

White-winged Doves, rare but regular late summer and fall visitors, were at Pt. Dume from August 22-25 (Cynthia Schotte), in San Pedro from August 22-September 5 (David Ellsworth), in Malibu on September 9 (Cal Yorke), in Montebello on September 18 (Robb Hamilton) and in Claremont on September 19 and 30 (Tom Miko). Seven **Common Ground-Doves** along the San Gabriel River in Cerritos on September 5 (Becky & Steve Turley) was a good count for that area, with Powder Canyon in the Puente

Hills being the only other reliable location for this bird in the county.

Returning for yet another winter to the Ballona area was a **Burrowing Owl** first observed on September 25 (Darren Dowell).

Up to a half dozen **Chimney Swifts** were observed at Elysian Park and over the adjacent LA River between August 22-26 (Brad Singer, Tom Benson). By September the Chimneys had been supplanted by the much more numerous **Vaux's Swifts**, again roosting in large numbers in downtown Los Angeles near Pershing Square.

Away from regular areas was an **Acorn Woodpecker** at Forrestal Nature Preserve in Rancho Palos Verdes on September 20 (Peggy Gussman). Another **Hairy Woodpecker** report came from El Dorado Park in Long Beach on September 19 (Karen Gilbert), this likely being a returning bird that spent last winter there. A **White-headed Woodpecker**- always a rare wanderer to the lowlands- was at Hansen Dam near Lake View Terrace on September 2 (Norm Vargas, Kimball Garrett).

Quite rare in the county was a **Least Flycatcher** at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on September 29 (Martin Byhower). Other good flycatcher finds included a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** in the Sepulveda Basin present from at least August 24- September 9 (observer?) and an **Eastern Kingbird** at Hansen Dam on September 9 (Kimball Garrett). Several weeks later, a more expected **Tropical Kingbird** put in an appearance at Malibu Lagoon on October 3 (Kerry Ross).

An early **Warbling Vireo** was at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles on July 29 (Don Sterba). Obviously we can begin searching for some southbound passerines quite early.

Swallows of note included a **Bank Swallow** on the LA River in Long Beach on August 5 (Tom Miko) and a **Purple Martin** at Legacy Park in Malibu on September 9 (Cal Yorke).

A dispersal of **White-breasted Nuthatches**- hinted at in July- was clearly evident in August and September when they were reported widely on the coastal slope; all were of the Pacific coast *aculeata* subspecies. Paying attention to subspecies in this case will be of interest to birders as this species may well be split.

Also unpredictable are **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, with the first fall reports being single birds in Altadena on September 22 (Lance Benner) and in Westchester on Sep-

tember 23 (Russ & Dorothy Stone). Over the next couple of weeks a handful of others were detected on the coastal slope and are likely predictive of above average numbers this winter. Also of interest was a **Brown Creeper** at DeForest Park in Long Beach on October 1 (David Bell).

Wandering from expected areas was a **California Gnatcatcher** in the east Ballona Valley on August 5 (Jon Fisher). A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** near Dawson Saddle on September 2 (Cathy McFadden, Paul Clark) was either an early migrant or a bird that may have summered locally as they have bred in the San Gabriels in the past.

Very early was a **Hermit Thrush** at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on September 11 (Dinuk Magammana) and this bird was likely present- but not seen well enough to confirm- a few days prior to that.

September brought a variety of rare warblers which seemed to turn up on an almost daily basis. A great county bird was an **Ovenbird** near Lake Balboa in Encino from September 15-25 (Candace Byer). Far more expected were **Northern Waterthrushes** at Exposition Park in Los Angeles on September 12 (Kimball Garrett), in Big Tujunga Wash from September 19-22 (Kimball Garrett) and at Harbor Regional Park in Wilmington from September 29-30 (Steve Wolfe).

Creek Park in La Mirada produced a **Black-and-White Warbler** on October 3 (Jon Feenstra).

Much farther up the scale was a **Prothonotary Warbler** in Big Tujunga Wash from September 11-12 (Kimball Garrett).

Tennessee Warblers were in Elysian Park from September 11-12 (Kimball Garrett), in the Sepulveda Basin on September 13 (Scott Logan), in Pasadena on September 25 (Darren Dowell), at Creek Park in La Mirada on October 4 (Ryan Abe) and rounding out the half dozen reports two were at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles on October 6 (Don Sterba).

At Elizabeth Lake on the north side of the San Gabriels, a **Virginia's Warbler** was found on September 14 (Cal Yorke).

A **Hooded Warbler** in the Sepulveda Basin from August 20-September 3 long preceded the many September warbler finds (Mark Scheel).

DeForest Park in Long Beach produced an **American**

Redstart on September 14 (David Bell) and others were found near Lake Balboa in Van Nuys on September 20 (Eleanor Osgood, Gustavo Alarcon-Nieto) and at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on September 30 (Martin Byhower).

Apparently returning for its third winter at Legg Lake in South El Monte, a **Northern Parula** was reported there on September 24 (Peter Sharp). **Magnolia Warblers** turned up at Wilderness Park in Redondo Beach (Dinuk Magammana) and at La Mirada Regional Park (Jonathan Rowley) on September 26. A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was in La Mirada's Creek Park on October 4 (Ryan Abe).

The usual small number of fall **Blackpoll Warblers** were recorded at Almanson Park in Alhambra from September 14-15 (John Garrett), at El Dorado Park in Long Beach on September 19 (Karen Gilbert), at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach from September 23-24 (Mark & Janet Scheel), at Oak Park Cemetery in Claremont from September 24-25 (Michael San Miguel), near the Cabrillo Marine Museum in San Pedro on October 1 (Bernardo Alps), at Creek Park in La Mirada on October 4 (Ryan Abe) and at Del Rey Lagoon in Playa del Rey on October 7 (Don Sterba).

The only **Palm Warbler** thus far was at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on October 7 (Tracy Drake).

Rather early in the lowlands was a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** at Hansen Dam on September 2 (Kimball Garrett).

Quite rare was a **Canada Warbler** at Exposition Park in Los Angeles on October 3 (Kimball Garrett).

Turning to emberizids, Eaton Canyon in Pasadena hosted a migrant **Green-tailed Towhee** on September (Judy Bass).

A remarkably odd date for a **Clay-colored Sparrow** was a bird at Legacy Park in Malibu on August 1 (Susan Schalbe). Another half dozen were reported on the coastal slope between September 16 and October 3, a much more expected time frame for this species. As usual, small numbers of **Brewer's Sparrows** turned up on the coastal slope in September, offering a change of pace from the more plebian Chipping Sparrows.

Common as a breeder in the nearby San Gabriels, but remarkably rare as a migrant on the coastal slope

was a **Black-chinned Sparrow** at El Dorado Park in Long Beach on September 17 (Karen Gilbert).

The Eaton Canyon Flood Basin in Pasadena produced a **Vesper Sparrow** on September 15 (Jon Fisher) as did Santa Fe Dam on September 19 (David Bell). Others turned up along Ballona Creek on September 20 (Martin Byhower) and at Paramount Ranch in the Santa Monica Mountains on September 23 (James Bailey).

Black-throated Sparrows, rare but regular on the coastal slope in fall, were at the Sepulveda Basin on September 9 (John Garrett, Ximena Gil), at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on September 19 (David Bell) and in Big Tujunga Wash from September 22-October 5 (Julia Ray).

Much more unusual was a **Lark Bunting** at Zuma Creek Mouth in Malibu from September 13-14 (Dan Cooper).

Fall **Summer Tanagers** included a bird at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on September 11 (Dinuk Magamma), two in Big Tujunga Wash on September 13 (Ron Holland)- with one present though September 28- and one at Oak Park Cemetery in Claremont on October 3 (Tom Miko).

One **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was in the Sepulveda Basin from August 19-September 23 (Jon Fisher) and no doubt presented some unwitting confusion among birders until it was realized that there were in fact two individuals in the area.

Eight **Indigo Buntings** reported on the coastal slope between August 24 and September 22 was a decent count, but far less expected were two female **Painted Buntings**. Both were yard birds with one in San Pedro on August 17 (Tom Yuri) and the other in Rancho Palos Verdes from September 9-13 (Peggy Gussman).

Bobolinks were scarce this fall with the only reports being from the Eaton Canyon Flood Basin in Pasadena on September 15, at the Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia on September 22 (Jon Fisher) with a probable one at Santa Fe Dam on September 19 (David Bell).

The only unusual oriole was a nice-to-find adult male **Orchard Oriole** at Los Angeles National Cemetery in Westwood on September 25 (Tom Miko). On the coastal slope, single **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were on the LA River in the Sepulveda Basin September 6 (Scott Logan) and on September 11 (David Bell) and at Peck Pit in Arcadia on October 6 (Jon Fisher).


Wrapping things up was a **Pine Siskin** at a feeder in La Canada on August 15 which was early for the lowlands (Karen Johnson).

Passerine migration winds down as October comes to an end, but unusual late or lingering songbirds are always discovered well into winter. November and early December allow time to seek out good birds for local Christmas Bird Counts.

Many waterfowl are later arrivals and numbers will continue to build through late fall. This is an excellent time to check any body of water for something unusual. As we head into November, the Antelope Valley offers a number of opportunities to find all the usual specialties- including Ferruginous Hawks, Mountain Plovers and Mountain Bluebirds- and perhaps a surprise or two.

Each season draws birders to familiar “hot spots”, and indeed these locales produce many good birds. Understandably, we also enjoy birding places where we know we’ll see lots of birds. Yet there are more than a few worthwhile areas in the county that get scant attention at any time of the year or at least for a portion of the year.

How many of us bird the San Gabriel Mountains during the winter months? Or check our foothill canyons for fall migrants? How much coverage does the northwest county receive at any time? Not only are these areas capable of producing interesting birds, but birding them throughout the year increases our knowledge of bird distribution.

That being said, no matter where we go, entering our lists into eBird has become an essential part of birding for many of us. Admittedly I wasn’t the first on board, but its value soon became all too apparent. As this database continues to grow, it is creating a picture of birdlife in the county, in California and beyond was never before conceivable. 

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips often require more driving and time in the field than do our bird walks. No pets or children under 12 please. When you sign-up by email, we will confirm your reservation and provide any supplemental trip information by email. If you do not have convenient email, you may always US Mail your reservation request and fee; include a SASE, we will mail back your confirmation. Please provide complete contact information with your day-of-event phone number and an alternate phone number (I.C.E.) Contact information will be released to others inquiring about carpooling unless requested otherwise. Please support LAAS field trips with your donations. And be sure to share your photos and stories with other LAAS fans on Facebook and Twitter. [facebook.com / LosAngelesAudubon](https://www.facebook.com/LosAngelesAudubon) or [twitter.com / LAAudubon](https://twitter.com/LAAudubon).

Mail reservation fees to: Los Angeles Audubon, PO Box 931057, Los Angeles CA 90093-1057.

eMail reservations to: membership@laaudubon.org

Phone reservations to: (323) 876-0202, leave voice message if no answer.

Saturday, October 27

Oxnard Plain

NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader: Mary and Nick Freeman. Meet at the Hueneme sod fields at 8:00 a.m. to look for Red-throated Pipit, Golden-Plovers and longspurs. Later, we'll try to shake a few migrating passerines out of nearby windbreaks. There may be eastern vagrants to chase in other local spots. From the 101 N, drive S on Rice Avenue, following the Rice Avenue prompts to the end, then turn Rt. on Hueneme Rd. Meet on the N (Rt) side of Hueneme Rd. a couple of blocks west of this turn, just after the first building and just before Casper Rd.

Sunday, November 11 (NEW DATE)

Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge

SIGN-UP REQUIRED, NO FEE

Refuge volunteer John Nieto, and Nick Freeman will drive up to 20 lucky participants around this prime limited-access wetlands / agricultural site where throngs of wintering shorebirds and numerous raptors are seen. Nelson's (Sharp-tailed) Sparrow and Pacific Golden-Plover may be sighted. The refuge is part of the Naval Weapons Station and requires the following from each visitor: LAST NAME, FIRST NAME, MIDDLE NAME, ADDRESS, CITY/ZIP CODE, DOB, HOME PHONE, DL#, STATE, CITIZENSHIP. Please provide LAAS with all the information and phone numbers (phone # required) by November 5. Only LAAS-confirmed individuals of U.S. citizenship with photo ID allowed on base. No weapons, cameras for birds now O.K. Meet at the main public lot at 800 Seal Beach Blvd. at 8:00 a.m. after a high tide of 6.1' around 7:30 a.m., and bird until noon. We'll try to get to Hog "Sharp-tail" Island early. 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 and FRS radios helpful.

Saturday, November 17

Piute Ponds

SIGN-UP REQUIRED, NO FEE

Leader: Nick and Mary Freeman. A mix of late shorebirds, waterfowl, and raptors with a decent chance at LeConte's Thrasher. Come out and see the recently re-worked Ducks Unlimited Ponds. Some great birds here over the years! Possible extension to Lancaster Sewage Ponds or Apollo Park afterwards. Carpool at Denny's, off the I-5 at Roxford, between the 405 and 210 Fwy intersections with the I-5 Fwy. Leave here at 7:00 a.m., or meet at the Avenue C gate at 7:45 a.m. To get here, take Hwy 14 N to Avenue D, head E to Sierra Hwy, head N to Avenue C, and go a block E to the gate at the end. Bring lunch, water and sunblock. Likely pleasant weather, possible afternoon wind. Sign up with LAAS. To reserve with LAAS, call by November 13 with name, phone number, and e-mail address. Limited sign-up of 20. No drop-ins. High clearance vehicles may be a plus. FRS radios helpful. No cameras on Edwards Airforce Base!

Sunday, November 25

Lake Perris & San Jacinto Wildlife Area

NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader: Howard King. The Little Gulls, Lesser Black-backed Gulls (2!), Short-eared Owls (2!) and Gyrfalcon of the past few years may not be back, but surely something will take their places! Take the 10 or 60 Fwy E to the 215 Fwy S, exit E at Ramona Expressway, continue E just past Perris Blvd., and meet at the Farmer Boys Restaurant on the S side of the road. Leave from here at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch, warm clothing and footwear for possible mud. We will try to carpool to defray the \$10 entrance fee for Lake Perris.

FIELD TRIPS



Photograph by Liz Muraoka

Mary Freeman, LAAS Field Trip Leader &
Nick Freeman, LAAS Field Trip Chairperson.

Saturday, December 15

Lancaster Christmas Bird Count

Contact compilers Nick and Mary Freeman at: (818) 247-6172 or mnfreeman@earthlink.net to be placed on a team or be given an area.

Sunday, December 16

Malibu Christmas Bird Count

Contact compiler Dick Norton at: (310) 455-1138 or richardjnorton@dslextreme.com to be matched up with a team or a survey area. Historically, our best-attended count!

Sunday, December 30, 2012

Los Angeles Christmas Bird Count

Contact Dan Cooper dan_cooper_90042@yahoo.com to be given an assignment or to join an existing team. Beginners welcome!

Friday, January 4

Point Mugu NAWS

\$5 DEPOSIT BUT NO FEE, SIGN-UP REQUIRED BY DEC 19

Leader Matthew Page and base biologist Martin Ruane should find plenty of waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, gulls, scoters and other wintering birds to remark upon in this limited access tidal wetland area. During one visit we found a Masked Booby! Exit 101 fwy N onto Las Posas Road S in Ventura, to Hueneme Road west, to Wood Road south, across PCH, and meet in the main (#1) gate lot at 8:00 a.m. The attendance list must be submitted to the base, so sign up early; deadline December 19. Must be 16 years old, U.S. citizen, and no cameras or video recorders, please. Include in your reservation request letter, your citizenship status (U.S. only), phone number & e-mail, full name with middle initial or NMN (to indicate no middle name), address with zip, CDL# (or other state license), and a \$5 deposit to be refunded at the gate.

Saturday, January 5

West Antelope Valley Raptors and Less Consequential Birds

NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP (10 LAAS / 10 Conejo VAS)
Louis Tucker will lead us from Quail Lake east, 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. Trip leaves at 7:00 a.m. Rain cancels. 'Scopes and FRS radios helpful. Joint LAAS / Conejo Valley AS trip – sign up with LAAS.

Saturday, January 12

Newport Back Bay

NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader: Mary and Nick Freeman. Meet on the boardwalk along the NW bay at the "Sharp-tailed Sparrow Spot" accessible from the end of University Drive (small street) at 8:00 a.m. for the 6.7' high tide (highest weekend of the season), and a full day of birding in the area. High tide at the mouth is 8:53 a.m., but may not peak in the back bay until after 9:30 a.m. Three rails, American Bittern; Nelson's Sparrow and Short-eared Owl (both rare) will be target birds. Eurasian Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal, California Gnatcatcher, and American Bittern expected. Take the 405 Fwy S to the 73 Toll Road (free this far) to the Campus Dr. exit, which becomes Bristol St. Turn right on Irvine Ave., drive 1.4 miles, then turn left on a small street called University Drive. Park at the end, walk down the hill, over the bridge, and to the end of the boardwalk. Bring lunch. 'Scopes helpful.

Saturday, January 19

East Antelope Valley

NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader Stan Gray. We will be birding beyond 50th Street East for much of the day, in areas sometimes neglected by birders. However, Stan knows some spots where Mountain Plover, raptors, LeConte's Thrasher and other AV specialties can be easier to find than in the west valley. Take Hwy 14 N to Avenue H, proceed east to 110th Street East, and meet Stan at this corner at 8:30 a.m.; or carpool at the west end of the Park-and-Ride just to the east of the Avenue S offramp (next to Lake Palmdale), and leave here about 7:45 a.m. to meet Stan and the others at 8:30 a.m. Bring lunch and a full tank of gas for a full day of splendor in the alfalfa. No fee, no reservation. 'Scopes and FRS radios on 11-22 helpful.

FIELD TRIPS

Gull Study Workshop 2012

Jan. 25 - Lecture, Jan. 27 Field Trip

LIMITED SIGN-UP, 20 MAX.

\$20 WORKSHOP FEE

Lecture and Field trip NOT offered separately

RESERVATIONS: Mail \$20 fee to PO Box 931057, Los Angeles, 90093-1057. Please provide day-of-event and I.C.E. phone numbers. And provide the email address LAAS is to use to send confirmation and provide the directions.

Friday, January 25

Gull Study Workshop - Lecture

Speaker Larry Allen will discuss most gulls that have appeared in North America – most 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 kind 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 identification to age and species. Slides, study skins and handouts will be used. As of Oct. 15th, the time and place not yet firm, but likely at Plummer Park, 7-10 p.m., with one break. 20 maximum. This is a *Ralph Schreiber Grant* fund raiser.

Sunday, January 27

Gull Study Workshop - Field Trip

Leader: Larry Allen. Put your new knowledge to use in the field, perhaps even identifying California & Ring-billed gulls as they fly overhead! Meet in the field at 7:45 a.m. and ogle the gulls until we're all gull identification experts! Location will be determined and communicated during the lecture. We will likely go to Doheny State Beach in Orange County, but perhaps elsewhere, depending on scouting. If we go to Doheny, it is a drive, but we have had large numbers of gulls on our workshops here, including Glaucous twice and a Lesser Black-backed! Maximum of 20 participants, field trip and lecture NOT offered separately. See above to reserve lecture & field trip. Doheny Beach parking fee usually starts at 8:00 a.m. Bring a lunch.

February 2 & 3 Weekend

Carrizo Plain

FEE: \$20, LIMIT: 16

Leaders: Mary and Nick Freeman and Matthew Page. Meet at 8 a.m. in Maricopa. Spectacular scenery. We will see Ferruginous Hawks, Prairie Falcons, Golden Eagles (maybe 20?), LeConte's Thrasher, Merlin and pronghorn; with likely Rough-legged Hawk, Mountain Plover and possible Sandhill Crane. We will meet in Maricopa, 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. Mail name, phone number, \$20 per person, and e-mail address for exact directions and further information. 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. Joint LAAS / CVAS trip. Limit: 16.

February 9 & 10 Weekend

Salton Sea

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 with phone, and send e-mail for more details. Meet at 7:00 a.m. Saturday at Cattle Call Park south of Brawley. We may visit Fig Lagoon near El Centro on Saturday. Calipatria Inn 800/830-1113, Brawley Inn 760/344-1199, and Americas Best Value Inn in Westmorland 760/351-7100 are recommended. Arrive fed, bring lunches. Those who wish will eat together Saturday night. Mail request to LAAS with name, e-mail, \$10 fee, and cell phone # if possible. FRS radios & 'scopes helpful.

Sunday, February 17

Ventura County Game Preserve

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

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 Sora and Virginia rails, American Bittern, Eurasian Wigeon, dark morph Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, and one Lesser Sand-Plover. Emphasis on raptors and waterfowl for this date. Get to the preserve by taking the 101 Fwy W to Rice Avenue S,

FIELD TRIPS

following the Rice Ave. prompts to the T-intersection, then take Hueneme Rd. west just past the buildings on the right. Meet on the side of the road at 7:30 a.m. 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.

Saturday, February 23 **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. Peregrine Falcon seen about half of the time. 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, March 2 **Bonelli Regional Park** **NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP**

Leader: Rod Higbie. Bonelli Regional Park is a remarkable island of habitat. It contains extensive coastal sage habitat, along with a large lake surrounded by parkland. Birds regularly seen in the past include California Gnatcatcher, Cactus Wren, dancing grebes, and occasionally Golden Eagle. 200 other species throughout the year. From LA, take the 10 or 210 Fwy east towards San Dimas to the top stretch of the 57 Fwy. Proceed N from the 10, or S from the 210 on the 57 Fwy to the Via Verde exit just N of the 10/57 interchange (at the bottom of Kellogg Hill). If coming from the N, turn left onto Via Verde, and left into the "Park and Ride" lot. If coming from the S, take the Via Verde offramp and proceed Rt. to the "Park and Ride" lot on the Rt. We will meet here at 7:30 a.m. to carpool since there is a \$10.00/car park entrance fee. Rod will continue after lunch if there is interest. There are picnic tables and facilities. Bring lunch, if you plan to bird past noon.

Sunday, March 17 (TENTATIVE – please check TANAGER in February) **Ventura County Game Preserve** **NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP**

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 Sora and Virginia rails, American Bittern, Eurasian Wigeon, dark morph Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, and one Lesser Sand-Plover. Emphasis on shorebirds for this date. Get to the preserve by taking the

101 Fwy W to Rice Avenue S, following the Rice Ave. prompts to the T-intersection, then take Hueneme Rd. west just past the buildings on the right. Meet on the side of the road at 7:30 a.m. 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.

Anza Borrego Birds, Wildflowers, Insects, and More **March 23-24, 2013 weekend** **\$20 LAAS FEE / \$40 FOR NON-LAAS, LIMITED SIGN-UP**

Leader Kurt Leuschner is a Professor of Natural Resources at College of the Desert. He specializes in field ornithology, entomology, and desert natural history. On Saturday and Sunday we will car-caravan in and around Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. This is a peak time for both wildflowers and the annual migration of Swainson's Hawks! High points over the years include: hundreds of Swainson's Hawks in migration, LeConte's Thrasher, Bald Eagles nesting, Wild Turkeys, Peninsular Bighorn Sheep, Desert Lilies, Long-eared Owl, Chuckwalla, Baja Collared Lizard, Great Purple Hairstreak and Silvery Blue. Every year is different due to rainfall but there is always something interesting and exciting to see and it's a beautiful time of year to be in the Lower Colorado Desert and Julian. The sunrises and overall scenery are spectacular! Suggested accommodations in Borrego Springs: Borrego Palm Canyon Campground in the State Park (reserve through www.reserveamerica.com), Hacienda del Sol motel (760) 767-5442 is quite near our meeting point, Stanlund Motel (760) 767-5501 and Palm Canyon Resort (800) 242-0044 are just down the road. Anticipate a busy weekend and make your reservations months ahead of time. We will meet at 6:45 a.m. both days in the parking lot of the Borrego Desert Nature Center (address: 652 Palm Canyon Drive), just west of Christmas Circle in downtown Borrego Springs and next to Carlees. This is NOT the same as the State Park Visitor Center. We will finish up around lunchtime on Sunday. Net profits go to the *Ralph Schreiber Grant Fund*. Limit 20 people. **Reserve by mail** with \$20 fee for LAAS members / \$40 fee for non-LAAS members; cell #, and email address to LAAS. Email attachments with more details will be sent later. Expect pleasant to hot days, cool to cold nights (40-100 degree range).

Upcoming Trip Ticklers (don't reserve yet! Details TBA in Jan. 2012)
April 20 & 21

Owens Valley Grouse Trip with Mary & Nick Freeman
July 4-7

Southern Sierra Owl Trip with Mary & Nick Freeman

Los Angeles Audubon's evening program presentations are held the 2nd Wednesday of the month. Meetings start at 7:30 p.m. and are over at 9:30 p.m. All are welcome! Meeting location: AUDUBON CENTER AT DEB'S PARK 4700 N Griffin Ave., Los Angeles CA 90031 (323) 221-2255

November 14, 2012 — Program Presentation

BJ Stacey presents: “FINDING BIRDS IN THE DIGITAL AGE:
FROM eBIRD TO LISTSERVS TO SMARTPHONES TO FACEBOOK”

Finding information on birds, both expected and rare, has never been easier. Birders now have a variety of digital tools to consult from their desktop computer at home, their laptop on the road, and their smart device in the field. BJ will show you how he prepares for out-of-town birding adventures, gets notified of local list needs, and receives information on rarities.

BJ Stacey is a local San Diego birder who birds everywhere he travels, even from the windows at airport gates. Though still new to the listing game compared to many local birders, he has ticked over 100 birds in 13 California counties, has over 100 species in 6 states while only birding in 16 states to date. Being a technology geek and striving to keep up with new technologies serves his birding passion, by helping him make the most of his too-limited birding time and maximize his chances of finding those desired species.

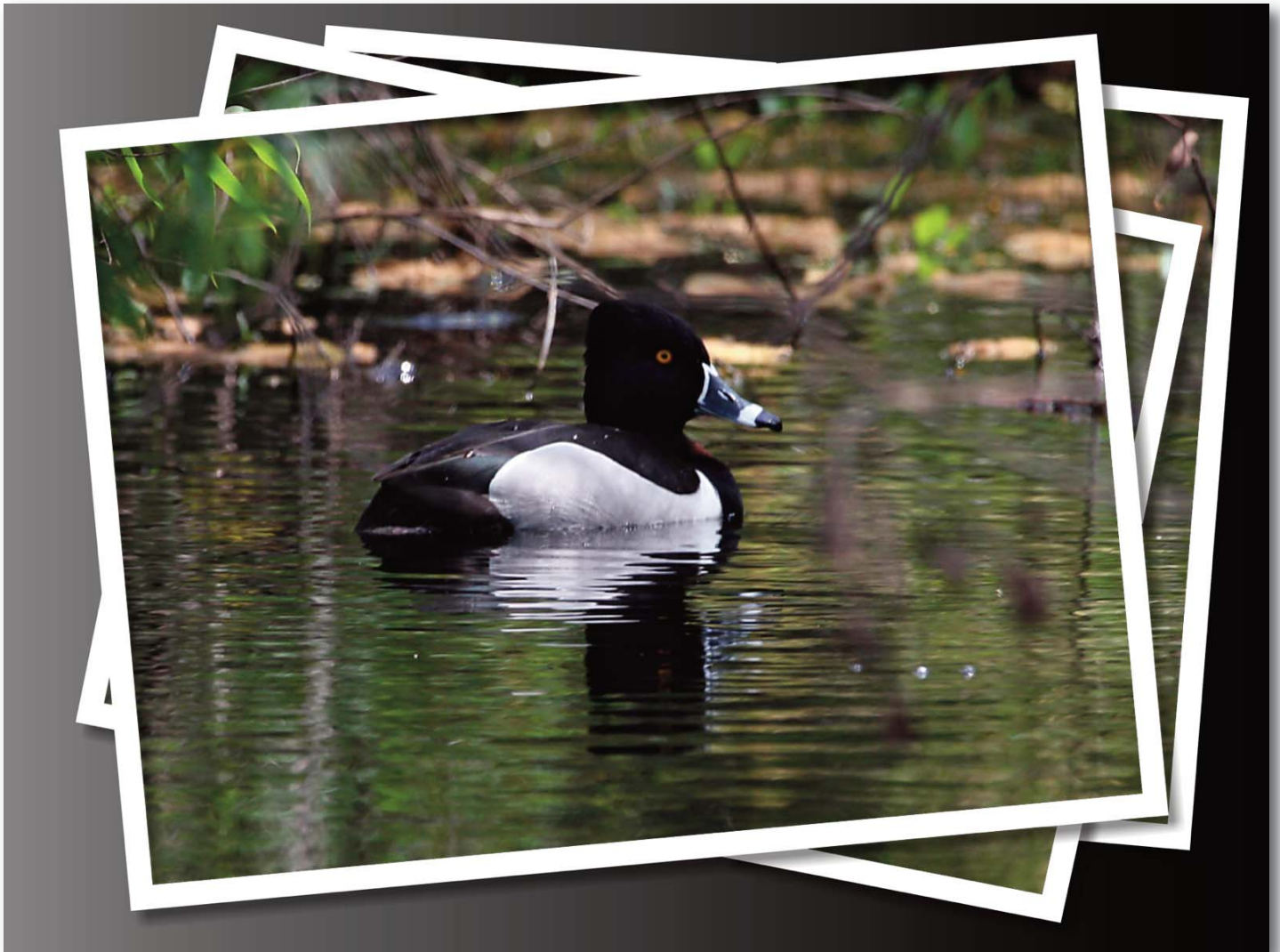


December 12, 2012 — Program Presentation

Tracy Drake presents: “MADRONA MARSH PRESERVE, A SUCCESS STORY”

The Madrona Marsh Preserve is one of the City of Torrance’s finest achievements in the context of natural resource conservation. The Preserve is a remnant natural vernal wetland complex including ancient dunes, vernal pools and seasonal wetlands that was sustained by historic drainage from the San Gabriel Mountains. Between 17 and 20 acres of Preserve is vernal/seasonal wetland that fills in the winter and spring and is completely dry by late summer or early fall. The balance of the Preserve is sandy upland back-dune habitat with many vernal pools that fill with rainwater and dry completely in about one-to-four weeks. This seasonal regime produces a unique ecosystem and its significance is evidenced by the diversity of life that resides there. Within the approximately 42.5 acres, over 250 species of plants, over 65 families of insects, two amphibians, three reptiles, about 260 species of native birds use the Preserve mostly during spring and fall migration. Also, at least three mammal species reside. The land that is now the Preserve was dedicated to the City of Torrance in 1986.

The Madrona Marsh presentation is about the story of the Marsh – but with more detail, interesting anecdotes and dozens of photographs that document the species that now make the Preserve their home or stopover spot during fall and spring migrations.



BIRD WALKS

LAAS Bird walks are geared for the beginner/intermediate birders looking for an introduction to local birds and are interested in reducing their carbon footprint by birding relatively close to home. All are welcome, but no pets or small children, please. Appropriate for young bird watchers age 6 years and older. Binoculars are provided on some walks as noted.

For further bird walk information contact Eleanor Osgood at birdwalks@laaudubon.org or call her at (310) 839-5420.

Bird walks DO NOT require advance sign-up, just show up at the specified meeting time and place. Carpooling is encouraged, call (323) 876-0202 to provide your contact information. We will share with other birders interested in the same walk.

TOPANGA STATE PARK BIRDWALK

1st Sunday of every month

November 4 and December 2

Time: 8:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Leaders: *Ken Wheeland and Chris Tosdevin*

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

Directions:

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

Contacts:

Ken: (310) 455-1401,

ksafarri@aol.com

Chris: (310) 455-1270

UPPER FRANKLIN CANYON

SOOKY GOLDMAN NATURE CENTER

2600 Franklin Canyon Dr

Beverly Hills 90210

2nd Sunday of the month

November 11 and December 9

Time: 8:30-11:30

Leader: *Eleanor Osgood*

Join us as we take a casual walk around the ponds and trails of this urban oak woodland nature preserve. We are likely to see the resident Wood Ducks and as well chaparral bird species such as California Quail, Spotted and California Towhees and California Thrasher. We will also look for south bound migrants such as warblers, vireos, and flycatchers.

Directions:

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

FROM SUNSET BLVD: go north on N. Beverly Drive to Coldwater Canyon Dr to Mulholland Dr. Veer left on Mulholland Drive. At the next traffic signal, make a left turn onto Franklin Canyon Dr. continue to first parking lot on the left. Meet in the main parking lot for the Sooky Goldman Nature Center.

If lost the morning of the walk, call (424) 298-1376 between 8-9:00 a.m. **Binoculars provided.**

BALLONA WETLANDS BIRD WALK

3rd Sunday of the month (with the exception of December)
November 18

Time: 8:00 a.m.-noon

Leaders: *Bob Shanman and Friends*

Join us for a walk through L.A.'s only remaining saltwater marsh and the adjacent rocky jetty. Meet at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot. 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

KENNETH HAHN STATE RECREATION AREA

4100 S. La Cienega Blvd, Los Angeles 90056

In the Baldwin Hills

3rd Saturday of the month

November 17 and December 15

Time: 8:00 a.m.-noon

Leaders: *Eric and Ann Brooks or Eleanor Osgood*

This trip covers landscaped parkland, a man-made lake and natural coastal scrub habitats within the Baldwin Hills. We are likely to see many of the resident birds such as Black and Say's Phoebes, Cassin Kingbirds, California and Spotted Towhee, Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper's Hawk. We will also look for wintering birds such as Merlin, Rufous-crowned, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows. Binoculars provided.

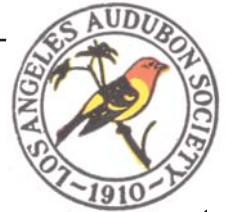
THE PARK ENTRANCE is off of La Cienega Blvd. between Rodeo Rd. and Stocker St. After passing the entrance kiosk (\$6.00 parking fee) turn left (leading to the "Olympic Forest") and park in the first available spaces.

**LAAS wishes to acknowledge these recent volunteers, supporters and members.
We are most grateful for your time, membership dues and generous donations!**

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As 2012 draws to a close, we realize that supporters may wish to give end-of-year donations.

Los Angeles Audubon Society is a separate 501 (c) (3) non-profit and a certified chapter of the National Audubon Society, one of a nationwide network of chapters. We work together as ONE AUDUBON to promote the enjoyment and conservation of birds around the world. To support this work in the Los Angeles area and to help promote our cutting-edge urban education and citizen science programs, please send a year end donation today!

With your help and support, Los Angeles Audubon can continue to grow as a leader for education and conservation, restoration and birding in Los Angeles and the greater region.

No matter where you live, or how much you can give, please join in our work by becoming a LAAS supporter. Choose your level of annual membership, and/or donate to a specific program, by filling out the form below and mailing it back with your check or credit card information. Or, save postage and paper by visiting our website and clicking to use PayPal to make donations or pay annual LAAS membership dues. Call (323) 876-0202 for a voice telephone transaction.

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