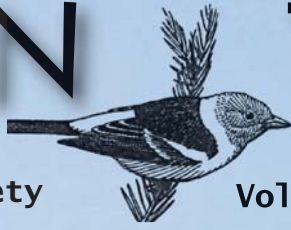


# WESTERN Tanager



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# Owl Prowl Spring 2013—Field Trip Report

By Mary and Nick Freeman



*Western Screech Owl, Photo by Alex Navarro*

On May 18, 2013, Nick and I led the first Owl Prowl of 2013 on the Angeles Crest Highway (“the Crest”) for Los Angeles Audubon. 10 very enthusiastic birders joined us, eager to experience owls in the Angeles National Forest. Nick and I have enjoyed numerous owl encounters this season and this night was looking good with clear skies! We stopped numerous times going up into the high country of the Crest in search of the Mexican Whip-poor-will, hoping to document their return to our local mountains for a fourth year. What we had not anticipated were the gusty WINDS! Unfortunately, wind makes it nearly impossible to hear owl calls. The high country was getting knocked around by the winds, so this night’s search for Flammulated Owl—typically above 6,000 feet in elevation—was not to be. So we drove down the Crest and made a few stops in appropriate habitat where the winds were not as powerful. We

were able to get a quick look at a Western Screech Owl. Then we made one more stop where Nick and I had encountered Northern Saw-whet Owl earlier this year. Sure enough we found one! It responded with its alarm call, which is a long, piercing, mournful “eEEEEeee!” scream. It remained very hidden in live oaks, as they often do. There was a half moon overhead but we never saw the owl, though it flew across the road more than once. We concluded our first Owl Prowl a little after midnight. The participants were quite happy experiencing the owls this night even if it was just listening to their call. Too bad the winds swept away any further opportunities this night.

On June 1, Nick and I led a second Owl Prowl. This was an overflow trip arranged for those who were on the wait list from the May trip. This night was completely different than the first outing. It was unseasonably warm, remaining in the mid to low 70s the whole night and no winds were encountered! What a great night to head out owling on the Crest. But there was a fire burning just north of these mountains—the Powerhouse Fire—that was raging out of control. The mountains along the Crest were covered in a smoky haze, although the smoke did not interfere with the owl prowling. We made a few stops for Northern Pygmy-Owl but to no avail. We heard, but didn’t see, a Clark’s Nutcracker on a ridge at sunset.

Beyond Buckhorn Campground, Nick exclaimed, “There’s a Bobcat crossing the road!” We stopped and looked through our binoculars. Announcing the find on our FRS radios we managed to get everyone on the cat. It then walked over the shoulder of the road. We pulled over and got out of our cars, hoping to watch the cat disappear into the forest. We managed to find it before it scampered away. He didn’t seem put-off by our presence. We stood watching as it circled around us and crossed the road again behind us, and back down the side of the saddle from which it came! One of the participants had his camera ready and shot some excellent photos of the Bobcat. What a wonderful way to start the evening!



*Bobcat, Photo by Alex Navarro*

Continued on next page.



*Flammulated Owl, Photo by Alex Navarro*

By this time of the year, sunset seems to invite mosquitos. As we began putting on long sleeves and repellent to protect ourselves against the biting mosquitos, we looked downhill and watched a Cassin's Finch singing its heart out to the mountains. We were able to view it through our spotting scope and review some ID pointers for this challenging group of finches.

So on to the high country beyond Islip Saddle. We proceeded up to the Mexican Whip-poor-will site, checking to see if it had returned to the Crest. Walking the darkening road in the cool serenity of the mountain night with a hint of ceonothus blossoms in the air, made for a very relaxing and pleasant evening. The temperature was steady at around 73 degrees, and the lack of wind made for excellent conditions to listen for squeaks, screams,

toots, the sound of an owl's talons as it lands on a branch, or the call of a nightjar. Western Tanager, Western Wood-Pewee, Western Bluebird, and American Robin were all giving their final serenades of the day. Amongst all this song, Common Poorwills were calling on the wing against the sharp and steep slopes. Occasional cars reminded us that it was almost summer, and the road to Wrightwood was open. We continued listening for the Mexican Whip-poor-will, once again without detection. With a touch of twilight in the sky, we began the search for Flammulated Owl. A perfect setting: no wind, scattered trees and high elevation. In all the years we've studied owls on the Angeles Crest, we've not found Flams below 6,000 feet. After just a couple minutes of playing a recording —BOOP! A Flammulated Owl response! Rarely have we found one so fast! I got all the participants behind me. This owl is so small it easily blends into the bark of a tree. Then Nick and I triangulated its call. Sweet! The little gnome was out in the open on a branch in plain sight, below eye-level, looking down the slope at it! We watched it for almost 30 minutes; but he seemed more interested in conversing with a fellow Flam, perhaps a competing male. We managed to get long looks as photos were taken of this tiny owl. Wow! For half the group, it was their first ever Flammulated Owl. I told them, "You will be hard-pressed to get better views than we got tonight!" Perfect!

With a Flam in our pockets —but minus the Mexican Whip— we continued down the Crest in search of the Northern Saw-whet Owl. Well, even though we successfully scouted one a couple of nights before, this owl decided not to show this night! No matter how or where we tried, the Saw-whets just decided to take the night off.

Down the road we continued; we tried one more spot where Nick and I have previously seen both Saw-whet and Western Screech-Owls. It was well past midnight but the hearty band of owlers stuck it out hoping for another owl encounter. I tried getting a Western Screech-Owl into view — success! I found two and managed to get one into full view. Again, more photos were taken of this very handsome owl! Twice the owl came into view. By then it was close to 1 a.m. I had told the group that I aimed to get them back down the hill by midnight, but with owls yet to see, and conditions so perfect, nobody was eager to head off the hill. After seeing the Screech-Owl we all decided to call it a night, and got off the hill half an hour later. It was quite the night! Our group was very fortunate to have experienced good views of some impressive owls (and a Bobcat!) on the Crest. 🦉



*Listening intently for the Mexican Whip-poor-will's call.  
Photo by Mary Freeman*

## Are We Ready For The Summertime? You Betcha!

By Cindy Hardin, Director Environmental Education Programs  
Photography by Leslie Davidson

June means the end of formal instruction for most schoolchildren in the Los Angeles region. However, in no way does this mean that those of us involved in Los Angeles Audubon's Environmental Education programs are taking a break from educating others and ourselves about the natural world. We have several things in the works that will keep us busy in spite of the fact that our regular field trip season has come to a close.

First up will be our annual "thank you events" dedicated to the docents that are so instrumental to our programs. These always take place towards the end of June, and are the opportunity to celebrate another successful year of teaching future stewards of the environment about the unique ecosystems of our area. By the time you read this we will have had a luncheon for the Ballona docents at the home of Emily Reed. This year's theme of a Mexican Fiesta will see the loyal volunteers of Ballona enjoying enchiladas, ping pong and each other in Emily's beautiful backyard. Held annually, this is a great chance for all of us to get together, trade stories of challenges and triumphs of the past year, and talk of plans for the future. Many of our staff works only on Tuesdays or Thursdays, so this occasion is a nice opportunity for the entire group to share time and fun together.

The interns and volunteers of the program at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area also convene for a year-end celebration and assessment of Los Angeles Audubon's Native Plant and Wildlife Garden Education Program, located in the Baldwin Hills. We will be touring the new Native Plant Garden at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles, and then sharing some pizza, laughs and Frisbee in Exposition Park. The staff is smaller for this program, which means that every intern and volunteer works virtually every tour that takes place. Therefore, a day when we have a chance to focus on our own education and development is especially important. The amount of schools that participated in our programs at Kenneth Hahn increased dramatically this year. All staff did an exceptional job of rising to the challenge of more students and a more complex lesson plan for the field trips. The visit to NHM's new garden and lunch afterwards gives us a chance to check out how other groups are educating people about native habitats, and to talk about new ideas and approaches for our own program, based on our experiences from this past year.

Of course, those of us involved in these programs still like to have a chance to work with students during the summer months. Summer day camp season affords plenty of chances to interact with the younger crowd, and several things are on our calendar. First up is a group from Chaminade Preparatory School, who will come to us from over the hill in the Valley. A field trip to the Ballona Wetlands kicks off their summer camp session, and the campers will be treated to view-



*The docents of Ballona celebrate the end of another busy year at the wetlands at their annual luncheon*

Continued on next page.



*Jonathan and Cindy Hardin, and Ballona docent, Jeannette Bolier*

for Los Angeles Audubon's very own Science Summer Camp, which is scheduled to take place towards the end of July and the first part of August. This is a brand new program for LAAS, and we are very excited as we plan activities to fill a week of science-based fun for students who have recently graduated from elementary school and are about to attend middle school. This transition can be a little intimidating for the children, and we plan to give them a sneak preview of sixth grade science concepts in hopes of leaving them better prepared for the next phase of their education. Most of the attendees will be alumni of Leo Politi Elementary School, which gives us an opportunity to build on what they have already learned and observed in the Native Garden (another LAAS project!) located at their school. Grunion hunting in San Pedro, a Park Ranger led tour of Franklin Canyon and a visit to the LA River are some of the things already on our agenda. The camp will be staffed by Dorsey High School graduates who have worked as Restoration Leaders through Audubon programs in the past. Many of the Dorsey grads have already done work with the Politi students, so seeing familiar faces in different nature settings should up the interest and comfort level for all involved.

Of course, educating ourselves is essential to our role as educators of others. To that end we have our very own Docent Summer Field trip, now in the planning stages. With the help of long-time LA Audubon member Dexter Kelly, a group of us will be visiting the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology in Camarillo, probably in July. The Foundation has one of the largest (if not the largest!) collections of bird nests and eggs in the country, and we will be lucky enough to receive a private tour of the facility. The "cherry on the sundae" will be a visit to Ormond Beach in Oxnard post-tour, under the guidance of Dexter himself. We hope to see some Snowy Plovers at Ormond amongst other summering shorebirds. This will give all of us a chance to see each other during the summer hiatus and learn a thing or two as well, as we look towards fall and the beginning of school tour season. However, this will not be the only opportunity for the Ballona volunteers to share some "summer time" with each other. Several of the volunteers get together regularly at Venice beach during our warm water season to swim and boogie board near the Venice Pier. This group likes to stay busy and active, and it is that same vibrant energy which they bring to our education programs that make them (both the volunteers and the field trips!) so very special.

As you can see, those involved with our Environmental Education programs have a year-round interest in learning and teaching. The summer, with its long days, luscious weather and unhurried pace is a wonderful time to rest up, refresh our skills, have a little fun and prepare for the 2013-2014 school year. Docent training for Ballona begins on September 10<sup>th</sup> and training for the Kenneth Hahn program starts on October 4<sup>th</sup>. Look for details of training schedules and the outcome of all of our summer plans in the next *Tanager!*

ing aquatic invertebrates at the microscope station, and looking for our larger avian residents with the aid of spotting scopes on Ballona Creek. An interpretive hike describing the very special coastal dune habitat will be part of the fun. We also plan to do some water sampling and comparisons of conditions between the inlet at Del Rey Lagoon Park and the tidal channels that flow through the Ecological Reserve at Ballona. A second group of day campers will visit Ballona in July. This camp is sponsored by the City of Santa Monica, and will feature the same activities enjoyed by the Chaminade crowd. The plan is to staff both events with a mix of experienced Ballona docents and interns who have graduated from Audubon's Greenhouse Program, which will give us all a chance to keep our teaching skills polished and sharp during our slower season.

These two days of working with summer camp attendees will also serve as a warm-up

# Interpreting Nature

By Stacey Vigallon, Director of Interpretation, and the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Interns

**O**n May 18, 2013 students participating in the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Internship Program presented their research to the public at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park. This year, projects addressed topics ranging from noise pollution and public safety to native plant germination rates. The information obtained through student research projects is sent to California State Parks and the Baldwin Hills Conservancy staff and is used to inform habitat restoration at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook. We are extremely proud of the work that interns did during the 2012-2013 school year, and we're looking forward to working with a new group of Greenhouse Interns and Restoration Leaders in the fall of 2013. Below we are pleased to present the 2012-2013 Greenhouse Intern project abstracts...

## Diandra Dillon

### *The Effects of Noise Pollution at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook*

Noise pollution is a harmful and irritating sound that affects birds and humans. I measured sound levels and recorded the number of birds and planes I heard at five different areas at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook (BHSO). When noise level is too high humans may impact communication between birds. As a result of the noise level, bird species may eventually decrease because they are unable to communicate properly. As I predicted, the entrance of the park was the loudest of the five sites with an average sound level of 69.4 dB, likely due to constant vehicle traffic. My second hypothesis was also supported, in that I heard more birds and planes on average per survey at quieter sites, like the area behind the parking lot (3.7 birds, 2.6 planes) and the visitor center (2.9 birds, 2 planes). It was likely quiet at these sites because cars were rarely present and they have established native vegetation. My research is important because it provides baseline information about noise level at BHSO. Future projects could focus specifically on bird nesting in high and low noise level areas of the park.



*Using a sound level meter to measure noise at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park*

## German Soto

### *Illegal trails and Pedestrian Safety: How Are They Important to BHSO?*



*Measuring the width of an illegal trail (made by park patrons and not an official part of the park trail network) at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park*

My project took place October 2012 through March 2013 and consisted of mapping and observing illegal trails around the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park and observing pedestrian behavior at the park entrance. Before the crosswalk was completed, of the 91 crossing events observed 65% crossed Jefferson Blvd in one trip, while 35% paused in the median before completing the crossing. After the crosswalk was completed, I observed 268 crossing events: 97% of those occurred at the crosswalk in accordance with the walking signal. I mapped illegal trails at the park (12 total), and focused my observations on the illegal trail to the side of the stairs. I observed a total of 226 events in which a pedestrian would step off the stairs onto the illegal side trail: 32% of these events were while pedestrians were going up the stairs and 68% were while they were going down the stairs. Based on these observations, I recommend that rails be installed along the sides of the stairs to increase safety and preserve native vegetation.

## Monica Anderson

### ***What is the Relationship Between Bird Abundance and Human Abundance at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook?***

Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park (BHSO) is largely fragmented coastal sage scrub habitat, inhabited by approximately 166 bird species (Molina 2001), and surrounded by Los Angeles. From November 2011 to April 2012 and November 2012 to April 2013, I surveyed for bird and human abundance at BHSO, twice weekly between 1:30 and 5:30pm. I targeted five waypoints with a GPS, spending 4-30 minutes surveying birds and human activity within my survey points, using a field guide and binoculars. I hypothesized that bird abundance varied with human abundance and vegetation type at BHSO, and my data supported my hypothesis, but this year, the trend has become weaker. Within BHSO, bird abundance and species diversity were higher in sites with less human abundance and more established native vegetation. This year, bird and human abundance overall was lower than last year. At BHSO, I viewed 34 different bird species over both years. I added a music component to my project that tries to teach people about and engage people in the importance of habitat sensitivity and awareness; my music component rallied participants from Dorsey's ecology club, and Leo Politi Elementary school students, and may have made the experience more memorable.



*Collaborating with a program alumnus to create a song about bird conservation in Los Angeles*

## Miguel Gonzalez

### ***When White Sage, Monkey Flower, California Buckwheat and Bush Sunflower are germinated and transplanted in the greenhouse, will they survive?***




*Counting native plant seeds for a germination project*

From December 2012 to February 2013 I measured and recorded the germination and survival rate for Bush sunflower (*Encelia californica*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), White sage (*Salvia apiana*), and Monkey flower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*) inside the greenhouse at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook. After 12 weeks of conducting my experiment the four species I planted did not have the same survival rate, which was what I predicted. I planted 300 seeds of each species and after 56 days from seeding seedlings were transplanted to their own 4" pots. I counted the number of seedlings that survived after being transplanted and measured each twice a week, ending the experiment 51 days after transplanting. Out of 300 seeds, Bush Sunflower had the highest percentage of germination (20%), while Monkey Flower had the lowest percentage of germination (5%). White sage had the lowest transplant survival (15%) and Bush Sunflower again had the highest transplant survival (89%). Good follow-up experiments might be to use a different type

of soil on the species that did not have such a great overall survival rate, like Monkey Flower, White Sage, and Buckwheat.

## EJ Siufanua

### ***The Effects of Roads and Trails on Wildlife Mortality at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park***

Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park is surrounded by a highly urbanized area, Inglewood, Culver City, and Los Angeles, California. The roads and the demand for building new trails may negatively affect wildlife at the park. November 2011 to April 2012 and November 2012 to April 2013, I surveyed roads and trails of the park for presence of roadkill from 3:30-5:00 two days a week. I surveyed a portion of the main road and two different trails. I also counted pedestrians, cars, and bikes that were also using the same road and trails. I surveyed a trail next to the Greenhouse and one by the park's Visitor's Center. Contrary to my hypothesis, there was slightly more roadkill on the trails than on the main road. The roadkill mainly consisted entirely of invertebrates rather than vertebrates such as snails, bees, a grasshopper, pill bugs, a ladybug, and beetles. There were always a high number of dead snails on the main road and both trails. 

# Often Overlooked Warbler ID Points

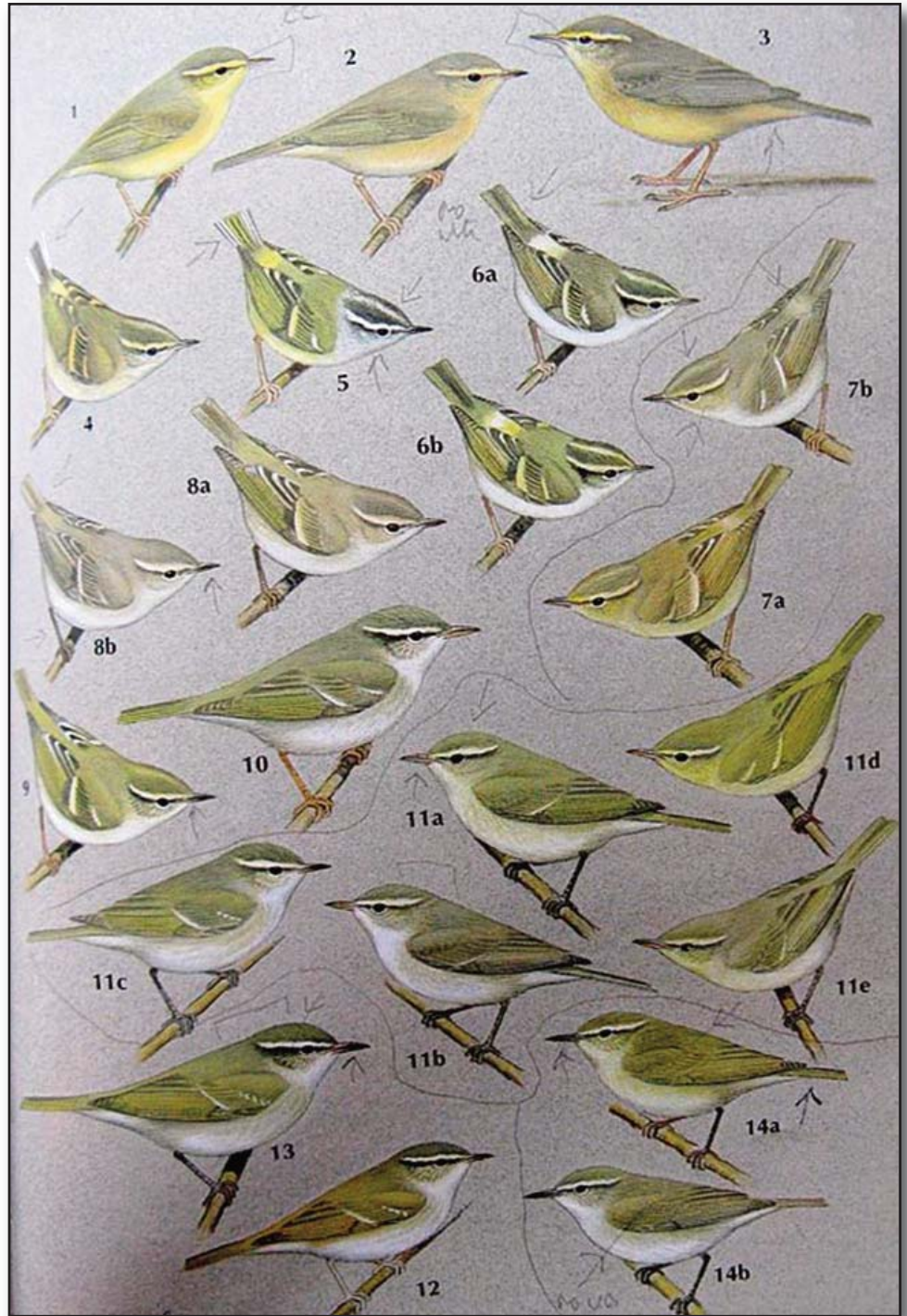
By Tom Stephenson

All photos by Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle

**W**e're very lucky here in the United States: our warblers are some of the most beautiful birds in the world. Pity the poor folks in the "Old World"! Their warblers are incredibly drab. This page actually illustrates 14 different, (and challenging to identify), old world species:

But wait... could the great beauty of our warblers actually be a liability? Could all of the colorful markings on many of our birds blind us from seeing characteristics like shape and subtle plumage features which are necessary points for "old world" birders? And thus, dependent on the most obvious or flashy ID points, are we less able to identify our warblers when we see drabber plumages or partial views?

I had an experience leading a birding group a few years ago that was one of the prime catalysts for writing *The Warbler Guide*. Two participants were looking at a bird as shown in the photo below. They were asking: "Is this a Yellow Warbler or a Wilson's? If only we could see its cap..."







More on this bird in a minute...but the important point for the moment is that many birders are dependent on just one or two very obvious ID points per species. Without these points they are at a loss when they encounter an unknown bird. And since their eye is trained to see these only these bright features, they often don't spend time looking more carefully once they know the identity of a species. In other words, they know the ID points and they've found them, so they stop looking.

A few of our legacy field guides are complicit in this problem. These books point out the important and most obvious field marks, but overlook or even "average out" a warbler's shape and some of the subtler ID points, often just showing the bird using a generic "warbler" form.

These next two plates illustrate this problem. The presence or absence of back streaking in these two species, which are known to be difficult to separate in the fall, has been presented as an important feature. But the tail lengths seem generic, with the length of the Blackpoll's tail shown as even a bit longer than the Pine's. The primary projection looks longer on the Pine and its wing bar contrast and tertial edgings are nearly as bright as the Blackpoll's. The undertail view is not shown and thus any differences for that feature are not considered.



*Blackpoll and Pine Warblers*

In fact, the Blackpoll's tail is distinctly shorter than Pine's — a very important ID point. The primary projection on Blackpoll is longer — not shorter — than Pine, since Blackpolls are much longer distance migrants and have longer wings. And finally, the Blackpoll has strongly contrasting wingbars and tertial edgings, while Pine's are much lower contrast. So while these plates do offer some useful information, they also obfuscate some other points that can very often be critical for identification.

In this article, I'll briefly cover a few of the less obvious, and often overlooked, warbler features that many times are more important than the often-cited, more obvious marks. This is an introduction to what we'll cover in greater detail in the lecture in October.

### NOT YOUR GRANDMOTHER'S WING BARS

Wing bars can be a good ID filter. This is usually a “yes or no” process: are there two white bars on the side of the bird or not?



*Blackpoll showing generic white wing bars*

But the covert feathers that form the wing bars are worth studying in greater detail as they often offer important clues beyond just the presence or absence of white tips. In fact, three of our US warbler species have diagnostic covert patterns that would not necessarily make the “cut” to the wing bar group as they are not contrastingly white.

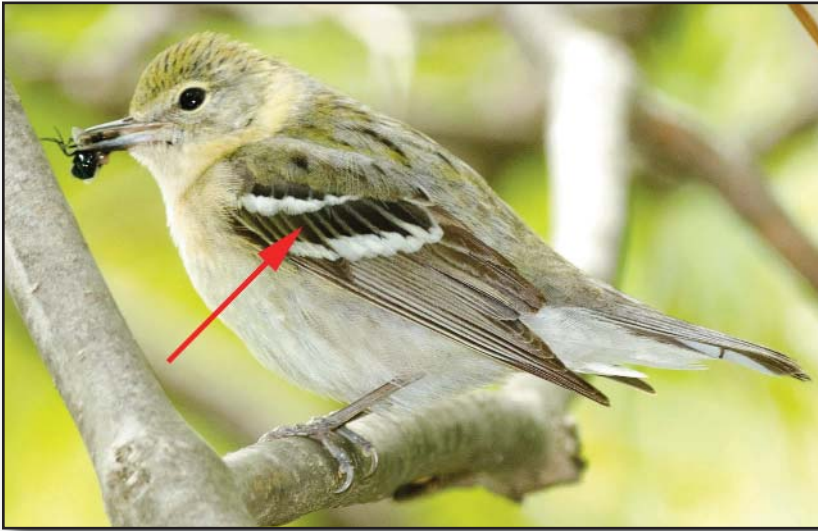


*Palm Prairie and Yellow Warblers showing diagnostic covert patterns*

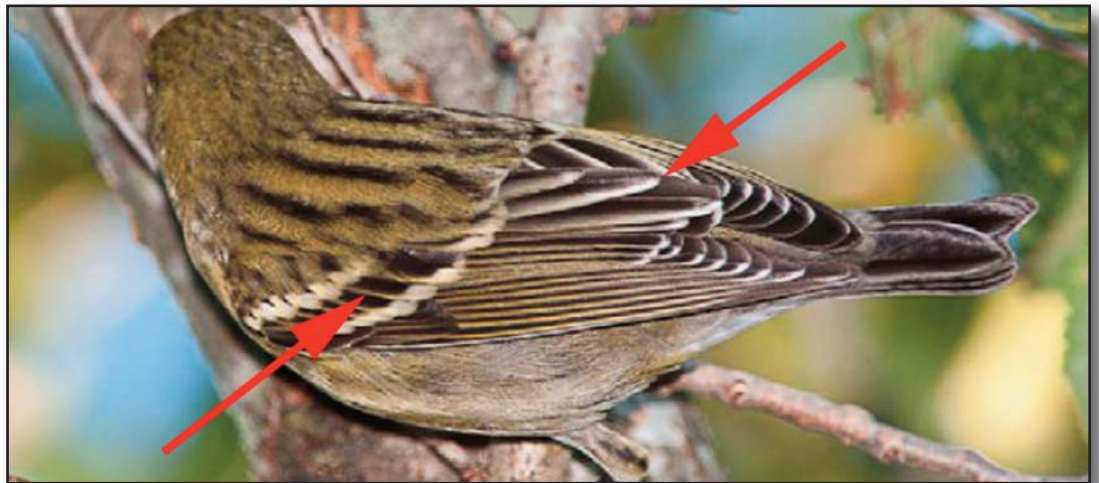


These features: the large buffy tips to the brown covert feathers of the Palm Warbler, the broad yellow tips of Prairie’s brownish covert feathers, and the bright yellow tips blending in with yellowish flight feathers and tertial edgings on the Yellow Warbler, are enough to identify each of these species.

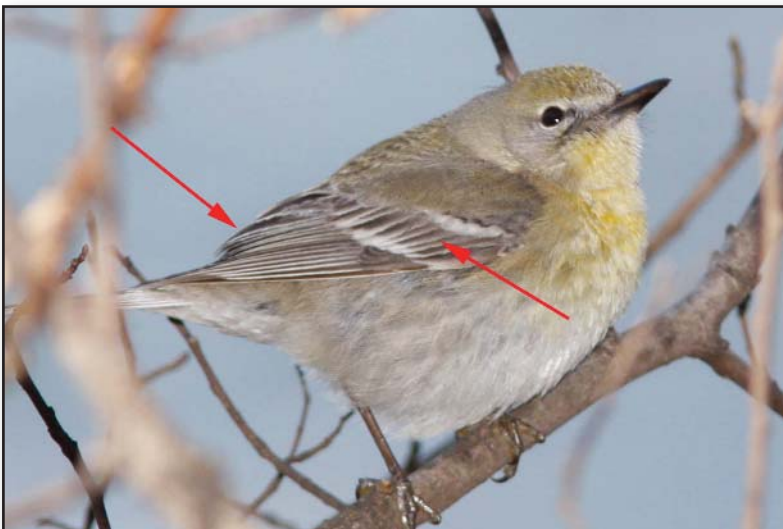
The color and contrast of the feathers “between” the wing bars also deserves attention. Following up with our Blackpoll and Pine warblers from above and adding Bay-breasted, here are photos showing the differences in the color of the base of the greater secondary coverts, the feather area above the lower wing bar. This difference in color and contrast can be a very important field mark.



*Bay-breasted showing very high contrast covert bases*



*Blackpoll, showing very dark, contrasting bases to greater coverts and contrasting white edgings to tertials and flight feather tips*



*Pine Warbler, showing very gray covert bases with little contrast, and pale, low-contrast flight feather edgings*

### THE EYELINE, SUPERCILIUM, SUPRALORAL AND LORES

Another frequently passed-over warbler feature, that often deserves more respect, is the supercilium and related areas. The eyeline and supercilium (or “eye brow”) is often used when it is very prominent, as in these two warblers.



*Northern Waterthrush with a high contrast supercilium*



*Worm-eating Warbler's prominent supercilium and crown stripe*

But the extent of the subtler differences in eyeline length, contrasting supercilium and eye arcs can be more important when separating Orange-crowned and Tennessee Warblers.



*Orange-crowned Warbler's very limited eyeline and supercilium are less contrasting than its white eye arcs, giving it a "plain-faced" look*



*Tennessee's stronger, longer eyeline and more contrasting supercilium dominate its facial features*

These marks can be even more useful when separating other confusing fall warblers. For example, Pine, Blackpoll and Bay-breasted can have subtle but—especially in the case of Pine Warbler—important differences in their eyeline and supercilium.

On the Pine Warbler the supercilium is concentrated mostly, if not completely, in a brighter, contrasting supraloral area (the part of the supercilium in front of the eye) that can sometimes be bright enough to look like head-lights. The eyeline in a fall Blackpoll is usually longer and more defined than that of the Bay-breasted, which has a more blank-faced look.

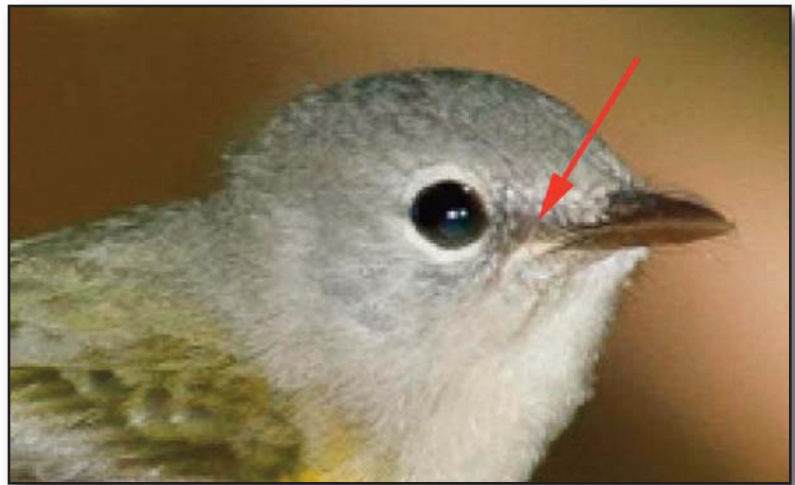




*Pine Warblers showing minimal eyelines and strongly contrasting supraloral areas*

The loreal area, the part of the eyeline that is in front of the eye, can be a useful ID mark for some species. For example, two birds with grayish heads and few striking ID points are Lucy's Warbler and American Redstart. Although not commonly found together, there are records of American Redstart in a number of locations in Arizona where Lucy's occurs.

In addition to having more contrast between the gray head and back, the American Redstart female usually has dark lores. This is a good differentiator from Lucy's pale lores, especially if you only get a brief view of the head.



*American Redstart and Lucy's showing differences in their lores*

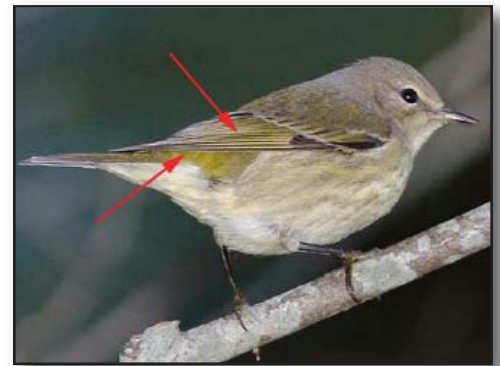


### TERTIALS AND FLIGHT FEATHER EDGING

Another group of feather features that can be very useful is the flight feather edgings. The wide, white, contrasting tertial edgings that blend into its white lower wing bar are diagnostic for Black-and-white Warbler.



Here are photos of three, possibly confusing, fall warblers:



Notice that the left warbler has strong back streaking, contrasting wing bars with very dark bases to the greater coverts, and white tips on the tertials and flight feathers. All of these marks point to Blackpoll.

The middle photo has very low contrast, thin flight feather edgings and pale bases to the greater coverts, all good ID points for Pine Warbler.

The right photo shows only limited lighter edging on the coverts (so no real wing bar), but has strong yellow-green edgings on the flight feathers. These features, along with the yellowish rump, are diagnostic for a drab Cape May Warbler.



THE UNDERTAIL

The undertail, including the vent, undertail coverts, and tail, are probably the most underused ID points for warblers (and many other species.) The first comprehensive treatment of warbler undertails is in the excellent *A Field Guide to Warblers of North America* by Dunn and Garrett. We have expanded on that concept in *The Warbler Guide*.

Along that line, let's revisit the first photo, the problem bird that some of the group thought might be either a Yellow or a Wilson's Warbler. In fact, these birds are often easier to separate from below than from eye-level. Yellow Warbler has a very short, wide and predominantly yellow tail. A Wilson's has a long, thin and dark tail, as evident in the photo.



**EASTERN UNDERTAILS**      ☑ = Diagnostic Pattern

**Yellow UnTC, Dark Tail**      **Spotted UnTC**

Wilson's   Common Yellowthroat   Orange-crowned   Black-throated Blue F   Nashville   Mourning   Connecticut   Kentucky   Black-and-white   Worm-eating

**White UnTC, Dark Tail Base**      **White UnTC, Black Edge Tail**

Yellow-throated   Northern Parula   Blackpoll   Myrtle   Cerulean   Black-throated Blue M   Pine   Tennessee   Golden-winged/Chestnut-side

**Other UnTC, Dark Tail**      **Colored and Patterned**

Swainson's   Canada   Tennessee   Louisiana Waterthrush   Northern Waterthrush   Ovenbird   American Redstart F   American Redstart M   Palm   Magnolia

**Yellow UnTC or Body, Spotted Tail**      **Yellow UnTC & Tail**

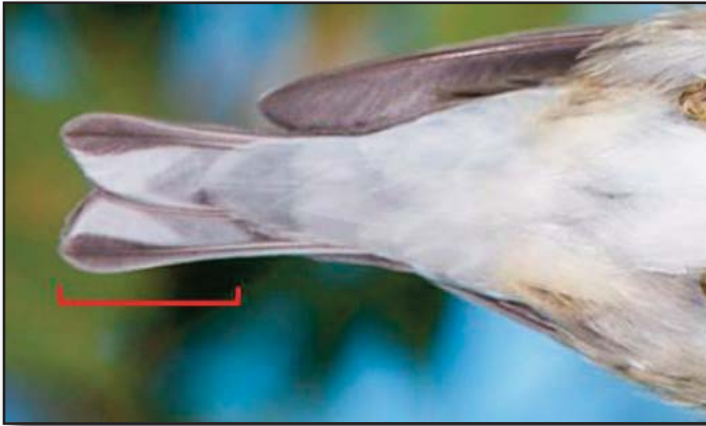
Hooded   Prairie   Blue-winged   Black-throated Green   Prothonotary   Blackburnian   Cape May   Bay-breasted   Yellow

Here is one of the undertail finders from our book, which illustrates any species that could be confused with Wilson's when seen from below.

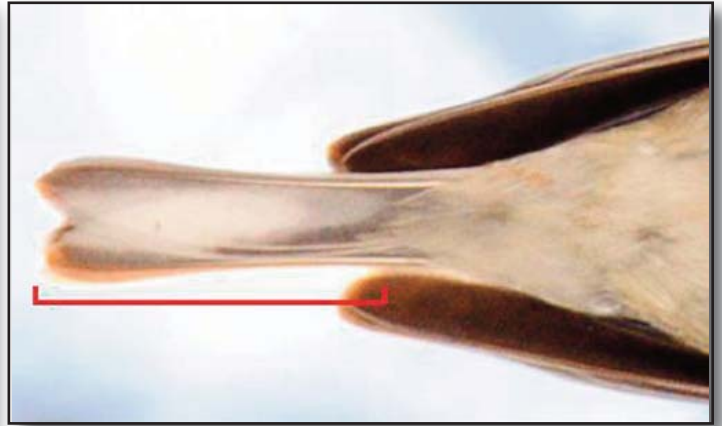
*Undertail Finder from The Warbler Guide*

The only other real candidate, with a long dark tail and yellow undertail coverts, would be Orange-crowned. However this Wilson's has a stronger, more saturated yellow body, lacks any faint streaking and has a thicker bill with a light lower mandible.

Finally, let's take a look at the shapes of Blackpoll and Pine Warblers discussed at the beginning of the article. From these photos it is easy-to-see the great difference in shape of these two species. In particular, Pine Warbler has a much longer tail extension past the undertail coverts. Especially when seen from below, these two birds have very different shapes. There is no need to look for back streaking to separate these two species, which are not as easily confused when one focuses on the right details.



*Blackpoll shows very short tail extension*



*Pine shows very long extension past the undertail coverts*



*Blackpoll Warblers showing very short tail extension and a wide, boat-shaped body*



*Pine Warbler showing its very long tail extension*

Hopefully some of the areas covered here will stimulate your study of warblers and birds in general. During the lecture we'll study many more examples from these and other plumage features as well as additional, often overlooked ID points that can help make warbler identification easier.

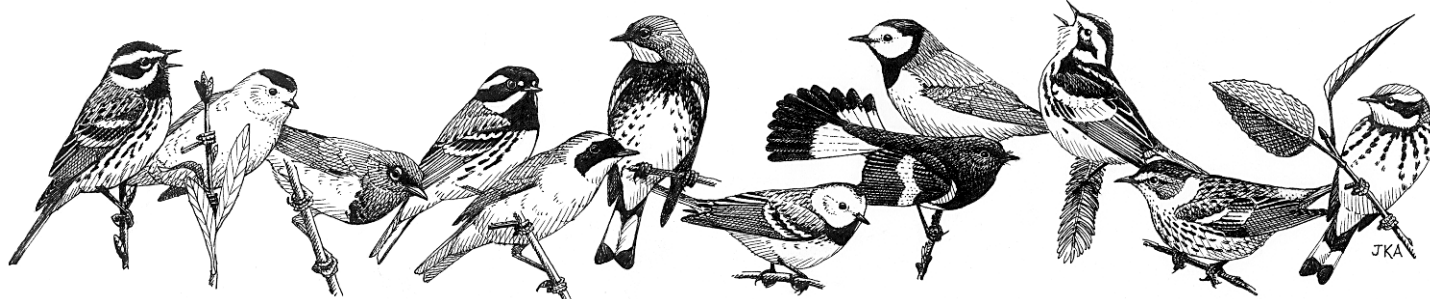
In *The Warbler Guide* we have a chapter on what to notice when looking at warblers, covering the above and other topics; and also present direct comparisons of any similar-looking species on each of the warbler's master pages. For more information on *The Warbler Guide*, check out *The Warbler Guide's* Facebook page and also [www.TheWarblerGuide.com](http://www.TheWarblerGuide.com). 🐦

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*Tom Stephenson has been birding since he was a kid under the tutelage of Dr. Arthur Allen of Cornell University. His articles and photographs are in museums and many publications including Birding, Birdwatcher's Digest, Handbook of the Birds, Handbook of the Mammals of the World, and Guide to the Birds of SE Brazil. He has lectured and guided many groups across the US as well as in Asia, where he trained guides for the government of Bhutan. He has donated many recordings of Eastern Himalayan rarities and other Asian species to Cornell's Macaulay Library of Natural sounds. He was on Zeiss's digiscoping team for the World Series of Birding and in 2011 his own team won the World Series Cape Island Cup.*

*As a musician he played concerts and did studio work for many years, working with several Grammy and Academy Award winners. His clients included the Grateful Dead, Phil Collins and the FBI. He joined Roland Corporation in 1991, managed the recorder division, and retired recently as Director of Technology. His latest book, THE WARBLER GUIDE, is published by Princeton University Press.*





## BIRDS OF THE SEASON - JUNE 2013, BY JON FISHER

**W**ith a remarkably dry winter that proved to be anything but a drought for great birds behind us, numbers of spring migrants continued to increase through late April. Even by the middle of the month, plenty of regular western songbirds were moving through. The county also delivered a decent though not impressive selection of vagrants from April through early June. While much is known about when and where vagrants occur, predicting with any precision what will turn up in any given year is largely guesswork. But as with the end of any good mystery, not knowing how it will end holds our attention and interest far more effectively.

Inaccessible to most, San Clemente Island was very productive late in the migration period and demonstrated the benefits of more regular coverage. On the deserts, the Piute Ponds offered a few good spring shorebirds and Lancaster's Apollo Park continued to prove its worth as a birding locale by serving up a handful of interesting passerines. In all, if it wasn't a great spring for rare birds, it was still a satisfying one.

Our now informal America's Birdiest County event—held this year at the peak of spring migration from April 26 through 28—ultimately tallied 265 species and highlighted as it always does the county's diverse avifauna. Though not matching our best years, this count's results were far from poor and right on the mark compared to the average of other recent efforts.

Waterfowl of note during the period included a **Cackling Goose** at Scherer Park in Long Beach on April 26 (Becky & Steve Turley) and two along Balona Creek on May 9 (Jonathan Coffin). Two **Greater Scaup** were late at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB on April 24 (Jim Moore) and one of an initial group of four **Hooded Mergansers** at Apollo Park near Lancaster was still present on June 6.

An **Arctic Loon**—the county's apparent third ever—not to mention the third this year—turned up on the lake at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on May 31. This cooperative bird was present through June 16 and virtually impossible to miss. With just a dozen records for the entire state over the last two decades, three in LA County within half a year is remarkable. Increased awareness of the potential occurrence of this species as well as its field marks are likely contributing factors, as is the proliferation of digital cameras which have helped confirm all three county records. But given that, the birds first have to be there to be found.

Though expected mainly as a rare summer and fall vagrant, a **Brown Booby** was found at San Clemente Island on April 30 (Justyn Stahl).

A possible **Black Vulture**—still unconfirmed in the county—was seen on the Palos Verdes Peninsula on May 17 (Bob Shanman). Late and very late **Ferruginous Hawks** were at Quail Lake on April 28 (Jonathan Bent) and in the west Antelope Valley on May 18 (Frank & Susan Gilliland, Mickey & Janet Long).

Of interest at Apollo Park near Lancaster was a **Common Gallinule** on June 1 (Irwin Woldman). With virtually no suitable habitat here, it's likely this late migrant would have found almost any body of water in the dry Mojave acceptable, at least temporarily.

Shorebirds included a **Lesser Yellowlegs** on the lower LA River in Long Beach on June 10 (Richard Barth) and **Solitary Sandpipers** at the Rio Hondo spreading basins in Pico Rivera on April 27 (Larry Schmahl) and on the LA River in Long Beach on April 28 (Jon Fisher).

Always scarce as migrants, two **Red Knots** were near the Ballona Creek mouth and present between May 19–22 (Louis Tucker, Irwin Woldman, Barbara Johnson). Another was at the Piute Ponds on June 1 (Irwin Woldman). Quite rare in spring was a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at the Piute Ponds on April 21 (Mark & Janet Scheel), while only slightly less rare were **Baird's Sandpipers** at the Lancaster Sewer Ponds on May 4 (Mark Scheel) and May 12 (Jim Moore).

Two **Dunlin** were on the lower LA River in Long Beach from April 27–28 (Karen Gilbert) and a rare spring **Stilt Sandpiper** was at the Piute Ponds on May 8 (Dan Maxwell). Last was a **Short-billed Dowitcher** along the LA River in Vernon from June 7–16 (Richard Barth).

A **Sabine's Gull**, rare away from offshore waters, was at the Lancaster Sewer Ponds on May 6 (David Bell). **Franklin's Gulls** were moving through the deserts in small numbers as expected, but away from there, two were at the Ballona Wetlands on May 8 (Jonathan Coffin).

After an absence of over seventy years, **Least Terns** appeared at the enclosure on Surfrider Beach adjacent to Malibu Lagoon this year, with breeding confirmed in early June when the presence of young was detected (Tom Ryan). Ultimately these birds were not successful in fledging any young, with predation being the apparent cause of the failure. In addition to that risk, any species nesting in this habitat is in a tenuous position in southern California where beach going is popular with millions of humans. Signage, fencing and continued public education may eventually allow for successful fledging of young here.

Also passing through the deserts were **Black Terns**, with the only report away from there being one at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on May 8 (Rod Higbie).

**White-winged Doves**, more typical in late summer and fall, included one just inside the

western edge of county along Kanan Road on May 11 (Dan Cooper) and another over the Sepulveda Basin in Van Nuys on May 10 (Mike Stensvold).

Rarely easy to find away from breeding areas, a migrant **Common Poorwill** turned up at Alondra Park in Lawndale on April 21 (Dinuk Magammana).

One to several **Black Swifts** were observed over Claremont Wilderness Park in Claremont, which has been a regular foraging site for the past few years, between May 10 and June 9 (Tom Miko).

Many years see few if any records of migrant **Calliope Hummingbirds**, but this spring they were detected in above average numbers. Three were above Henninger Flat on April 27 and one was near Barley Flats on April 29 (Jon Feenstra). Away from the San Gabriels, Calliope were in the Santa Monica Mountains on April 18 (Kris Ohlenkamp), in Monrovia on April 23 (Ellen Zunino), at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on April 26 (Tom Miko), near the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on April 28 (Don Sterba) and at the Rio Hondo spreading basins in Pico Rivera on May 5 (Jon Fisher). Late for the locality was a Calliope near the Chilao Visitor's Center on June 1 (Bas van Schooten).

A **Prairie Falcon**, rare away from the deserts, was at Brackett Field in La Verne on April 23 (Richard Fisher) and a very late **Merlin** was in the San Gabriel Mountains southeast of Acton on May 16 (Kris Ohlenkamp).

**Willow Flycatchers** started passing through the county earlier than usual, with several reported in early May; this species is not expected before the middle of the month. Other *Empidonax* included **Gray Flycatchers** at Santa Fe Dam on April 27 (Darren Dowell, Ron Cyger), at Henninger Flat in the San Gabriels on April 28 (David Bell) and along the San Gabriel River in El Monte on May 11 (Jim Pike) and a late **Hammond's Flycatcher** at Apollo Park near Lancaster on May 31 (David Bell).

A nice spring find was a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on May 30 (John Small). As is often the case with spring vagrants, this was a one day bird.

**Plumbeous Vireos**, scarce as spring migrants, were at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles on April 20 (Don Sterba) and at Banning Park in Wilmington on April 27 (Tracy Drake).

The only **Bank Swallow** reported away from the deserts was at Hansen Dam on April 26 (David Bell).

A **California Gnatcatcher** at Placerita Canyon on April 27 was well away from any expected areas (Bhashar Krishnamachari, Alex Coffey). Noteworthy but not too surprising was the confirmation of breeding in early May in the population recently discovered at the El Segundo Dunes.

In a year when few were detected in the county, a late **Varied Thrush** was near Lake Malibu on May 21 (Katy Delaney).

Apollo Park near Lancaster produced an **Ovenbird** present from May 30–31 (John Birsner). **Northern Waterthrushes** were at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on April 28 (Brian Biefelt) and at Apollo Park near Lancaster on May 8 (Diane Rose, Kris Ohlenkamp). The only **Black-and-white Warbler** reported was also at Apollo Park near Lancaster on June 11 (Wayne Martin).

**Tennessee Warblers** were on San Clemente Island on May 2 (Kerry Ross), at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles from May 4–7 (Don Sterba), at DeForest Park in Long Beach on May 9 (David Bell) and at La Mirada's Creek Park on May 12 (Jonathan & Libby Rowley).

Typically a rare but regular spring migrant, just one **Northern Parula** was recorded, that bird being at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan

Beach on May 5 (Mark Rubke). Far less expected was a **Grace's Warbler** at Apollo Park in Lancaster on April 24 (Jon Feenstra, Dan Maxwell), the first lowland spring migrant ever found in California.

Continuing **Palm Warblers** were at the Village Green Condos on April 20 (Don Sterba), at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh through May 4 and at Peck Road Water Conservation Park through April 20. New birds were found at the Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area in Willowbrook on April 21 (Martin Byhower), at St. Andrew's Priory on the north slope of the San Gabriels on April 22 (Dick Norton) and at Apollo Park from May 10–11 (Susan Gilliland, David Bell).

**Summer Tanagers**— both possibly continuing birds— were at Banning Park in Wilmington on April 27 (Tracy Drake) and at Ed Vincent Park in Inglewood on May 13 (Richard Barth).

Migrant **Green-tailed Towhees** recorded away from the higher mountains were at Veteran's Park in Bell Gardens on April 21 (Richard Barth) and in Rancho Palos Verdes from May 6–10 (Jim Aichele).

Scarce on the coastal slope in spring was a **Brewer's Sparrow** at Santa Fe Dam on April 27 (Darren Dowell, Ron Cyger). **Clay-colored Sparrows** were at Harbor Regional Park in Harbor City from May 4–5 (Ed Griffin), at DeForest Park in Long Beach on May 12 (Dan Maxwell), at Pt. Vicente on May 20 (Matthew Delgado) and at Apollo Park on May 31 (David Bell).

Following a winter where they occurred in well above average numbers, a **Swamp Sparrow** turned up at the Piute Ponds on April 27 (Kimball Garrett).

After a banner winter for this species in the county, still more **White-throated Sparrows** turned up. New birds were found Eaton Canyon on April 21 (Jonathan Bent) and at Placerita Canyon on April 22 (William Cullen).

A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was in Manhattan Beach on May 12 (Patricia Ware) and a few **Indigo Buntings** were found with birds at Apollo Park near Lancaster on May 4 (Mark Scheel, Kevin Gin), in the San Gabriels at Shortcut Saddle from May 8-June 15 (Dan Maxwell) at DeForest Park on May 12 (David Bell) and at the Village Green Condos on June 5 (Don Sterba).

A **Baltimore Oriole** continued at the LA Arboretum in Arcadia through April 26.

**Red Crossbills** away from the San Gabriels were a continuing story, with up to a dozen including juveniles at Apollo Park near Lancaster through June 4 and four, including two hatch year birds in Altadena on June 3 (Lance Benner). Local breeding, which occurs occasionally in the lowlands, seems likely. How many others might breed in the lowlands— though probably not annually— and simply go unnoticed?

As mentioned previously, San Clemente Island was quite good for vagrants late in the migration period. Though not a part of the usual circuit for LA County birders, it deserves special mention. Between May 31 and June 13, birds found there included four **American Redstarts**, **Northern Parula**, **Bay-breasted Warbler**, **Chestnut-sided Warbler**, **Summer Tanager**, four **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**, three **Indigo Buntings**, a **Bobolink** and a **Baltimore Oriole** (Justyn Stahl). This doesn't even include a number of species common on the mainland but rare on the island. The concentrating effects of desert oases, certain coastal localities and islands are well known and sometimes are stunningly demonstrated. The fact that almost all of these birds were found at a single locale on the island— Wilson Cove— gives some idea of what else may be out there but never seen.

With spring migration over, June could be described as the slowest month for birders, yet the San Gabriel Mountains beckon as they offer a number of resident and summering species that can't readily be found elsewhere. They also offer the potential for finding such rarities as Mexican Whip-poor-will, and in light of the recent discovery of a Red-faced Warbler in the San Bernardino Mountains, perhaps another stray from Mexico or southeast Arizona.

By July and continuing through the fall, migrating shorebirds will be concentrating along the lower LA River, at coastal spots such as the newly restored Malibu Lagoon, in the Ballona area and elsewhere suitable habitat exists. On the desert, the Piute Ponds and Lancaster Sewer Ponds should also host some good fall birds among the regulars.

In August, passerine migrants will be heading south through the mountains, preceded by *Selasphorus* hummingbirds taking advantage of food resources at these higher elevations. Though a lot of effort is concentrated on the coastal slope and deserts in August and September, birding the mountains for fall migrants at this time can be productive and rewarding. 🐦



# FIELD TRIPS CALENDAR



Photograph by Liz Muraoka

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

FIELD TRIPS OFTEN REQUIRE MORE DRIVING AND TIME IN THE FIELD THAN DO OUR BIRD WALKS. No pets. No children under 12, without permission from leader please. When you sign-up by email, we will confirm your reservation and provide any supplemental trip information by reply email. If you do not have convenient email, you may mail us your reservation request and fee; include a SASE, so we may mail back your confirmation. Provide your: Name, Address, email address (if used), day-of-event phone number (cell), and an alternate phone number in case of emergency (home, work or friend.) For carpooling purposes for reserved field trips, your information may be shared with other confirmed participants—unless you specify otherwise at sign-up. When carpooling, remember to offer compensation to your driver in these times of spiking gas prices.

Mail reservation fees, separate checks per trip to:

Los Angeles Audubon - Field Trips  
Attn: Susan Castor  
PO Box 411301  
Los Angeles CA 90041

email reservations to: [membership@laudubon.org](mailto:membership@laudubon.org)  
Phone: (323) 876-0202 (leave voice message if no answer.)

Please support LAAS field trips with your donations.

Share your photos and stories with other LAAS fans on Facebook and Twitter.

[facebook.com/LosAngelesAudubon](https://www.facebook.com/LosAngelesAudubon)  
[twitter.com/LAAudubon](https://twitter.com/LAAudubon).

## July

### July 4-7 Long Weekend Ponderosa Cabin Owling

(already **sold out** with wait-list)

SIGN-UP (6 MIN / 10 MAX), \$100 – BUDGET PRICED!  
(3 NIGHTS CABIN, 1 HOT DOG BBQ DINNER, &  
OWLS INCLUDED)

Leaders: *Mary and Nick Freeman*. Ponderosa is above Porterville in the southwest Sierra. Owling by night, bird walks by day! We usually see Flammulated, Saw-whet, and Spotted owls. Days wandering in the Giant Sequoias are delightful. We have arranged for a nice big cabin. Meet Thursday 3:00 p.m. at the cabin, finally leaving the mountains late Sunday morning. More details in flyer and last month's e-newsletter. The leaders pay too, to bring this price to you! Mark your calendar for July 4 weekend 2014!

### Saturday, July 13 Big Bear Lake Vicinity Field Trip

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

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

### Saturday, July 27 Piute Ponds

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

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

FIELD TRIPS continued next page.



## AUGUST

### Saturday, August 3 Lower LA River Shorebird Migration

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: *Larry Allen*. Larry will help us identify and age the various sandpipers and other shorebirds that use the lower Los Angeles River as a migratory stopover. Also expect various waterfowl, gulls, etc., and a few migrant and resident land birds. A great opportunity to appreciate the variety of shorebirds as they hit the migration corridors in earnest. TAKE the 710 (Long Beach) Fwy S to the Willow Street off-ramp, head E over the LA River, and take the first left on Golden Ave, the first left on 26th, and follow this past the pump station onto DeForest Ave. Park near the river access by the bridge, MEET along the river at 7:00 a.m., and bird until noon. We may caravan to at least one additional location farther upriver. Spotting scopes very helpful, although we will share.

### Sunday, August 11 Sweltering Salton Sea

\$15 FEE, SIGN-UP

Leaders: *Nick* and *Mary Freeman*. Anticipate 95-110°F. This is the gauntlet of SoCal birding. We will see Yellow-footed (only place in the U.S.) and Laughing gulls, Black Tern, Abert's Towhee, Gila Woodpecker. We should also see Wood Stork, Lesser Nighthawk, and Stilt Sandpiper. Very slim but real possibility of boobies, frigatebird, etc. Limit 8 paid cars with two or more in each. Find a friend, as singles will be bumped if we fill up the trip. To RESERVE: mail \$15 per person (include your email address & phone #'s) to: LA Audubon, PO Box 411301, Los Angeles, CA 90041. America's Best Value Inn in Westmorland - (760) 351-7100. \$70. (Leaders will be staying here). Ask for AAA discount. Continental breakfast. Also nearby and decent is the Brawley Inn \*\* - (760) 344-1199, which offers a better continental breakfast. \$80. There is a decent restaurant next door, the Aspen. Other lodging suggestions and information in emailer. MEET at Cattle Call Park at **5:30 a.m.**, and bird until 2-3 p.m. Bring lunch, FRS radios, scope, sunblock, and a big hat.

### Saturday, August 17 (Note Change of Date, was Aug. 24)

#### San Gabriel Mountains / Mt. Wilson Observatory

TOUR FEE: \$10/head (\$8 over 62) payable at Mt. Wilson, SIGN-UP MAX: 16

Leaders: *Norman Vargas* and *Mary Freeman*. We will bird the morning away up in the conifers, then end up at Mount Wilson Observatory around noon, eat there at the Cosmic Café, and take the guided 2-hour tour around the grounds and

facility, including an especially close look at the 100-inch telescope. The one-mile walking tour is unsuitable for people with respiratory and heart problems or with limited mobility. Please visit the observatory website at [www.mtwilson.edu](http://www.mtwilson.edu) for more exciting and cautionary details before the trip. A **Forest Service Adventure Pass** is required. To RESERVE with LAAS, call or email Los Angeles Audubon by **August 21** with name, phone number, and email address and await confirmation. No sign-ups without tour, please. MEET at 7:00 a.m. on the frontage road for Angeles Forest Hwy just north of the 210 Fwy in La Canada. Turn N on ACH exit, take the second right (Milmada Dr.), and a quick left (Flanders Rd.). MEET along the first 50-yard stretch, fed and gassed up, and we will carpool from here. Some of us may linger to do a bit of owling in the area. Bring snacks and a small flashlight if you plan to stick around.

### August 22-25

#### Western Field Ornithologists conference in Olympia, WA

If you like bird conservation, status and distribution, cutting-edge avian research, booths with birding hardware, etc., as well as photo I.D. and bird call I.D. panels; you should give this opportunity serious thought. Excellent field trips with excellent leaders, and many enthusiastic birders from all over the west attending. Details at:

<http://www.westernfieldornithologists.org/conference.php>

## September

### Sunday, September 8 Ventura County Game Preserve (Duck Club)

NO FEE, PLEASE SIGN-UP, NO MAX.

Leader: *Irwin Woldman*. The duck club in Ventura has a rich history of excellent bird sightings including Sora, Virginia Rail, American Bittern; Solitary, Pectoral and Baird's sandpipers, and single Lesser Sand-Plover and Wood Sandpiper. Perhaps we will have warblers streaming through the willows. GET TO THE PRESERVE by taking the 101 Fwy W to Rice Avenue S, carefully following the Rice Ave. prompts to the T-intersection, then take Hueneme Rd. west (right) to the first left turn which is Casper Road, and left through the gate at the far end, and park across from the barn on the road. MEET on the side of the road at 8:00 a.m. MEET at the gate, if it is not open. No sign-up required, but **call or email Audubon** with name and phone number. We will walk the property, so good hiking/mud shoes with energetic legs inside a prerequisite. We may have one car on the grounds, weather permitting. Scopes & FRS radios helpful, and bring a lunch if you plan to bird into the afternoon with Irwin.

FIELD TRIPS continued next page.

**Saturday, September 14****San Diego Area**

\$10 FEE, SIGN UP, NO LIMIT

Leaders: *Mary* and *Nick Freeman*. A good portion of the morning may be spent at Pt. Loma, depending on access. Some odd birds have been known to pop up here during migration. Other possible areas include Sunset Cliffs, Mission Bay, lower San Diego Bay, Tijuana River marshland nearby farm fields. Take the 5 Fwy S about three miles past Route 52 to the Clairemont Drive off-ramp and head W into the small lot adjacent to the Mission Bay Information Center. MEET E of the kiosk at 8:00 AM. Bring a lunch to bird all day.

**Sunday, September 15****Huntington Central Park and Bolsa Chica Wetlands**

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

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

**September 20-22****Mojave Desert Long Weekend**

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

Leaders: *Mary* and *Nick Freeman*. Kern County has some of the best migrant traps in the state. Western warblers and flycatchers should headline. Reptiles may be encountered! Bring lunch and sun block. Reserve a room at Motel 6 or other in Mojave, or the new Best Western in CA City. MEET at 7:00 a.m. all days. **Friday**, bird the Lancaster Sewage Ponds and Cerro Coso Community College; **Saturday**, bird California City environs; and **Sunday**, clean up remaining California City spots and hit Apollo Park and Piute Ponds on our way south. Friday, meet just east of the Avenue D off-ramp from Hwy 14, across from the sewage pond entrance. Other meeting sites will be discussed on Friday. Dine out with leaders if you wish. TO RESERVE, either call or email Audubon with name(s), phone number, and email address (for confirmation). Bring lunches, FRS radios, sun block.

**October****Saturday, October 5****Malibu to McGrath Field Trip**

NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader: *Barbara Johnson*. Late passerines and shorebirds should be moving through coastal migration spots, mixed with early wintering birds. Possibly 100 species. TAKE PCH N over the bridge in Malibu, and turn right on Cross Creek Road for

free parking along the road (and Starbucks), or turn left into the fee lot. Cross PCH, and meet at the kiosk by the lagoon at 7:30 a.m. for a full day of birding. There may be an access fee at McGrath or elsewhere. Bring lunch.

**Saturday, October 12****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.

**Saturday, October 19****WORKSHOP: Warbler Vocalization I.D.**

\$20 FEE, SIGN-UP REQUIRED

Speaker *Tom Stephenson* has just finished penning THE WARBLER GUIDE, replete with a flock of photos. For sign-up instructions and more details, refer to the write-up online, and elsewhere in this newsletter. Check out the separate Warbler I.D. Monthly Program Presentation lecture to be held on October 16th at ECNC. THE WARBLER GUIDE will be on sale at both events.

**Saturday, October 26 (tentative)****Condors at Bittercreek NWR**

DONATION SUGGESTED, SIGN-UP REQUIRED, NO LIMIT

*Joseph Brandt*, California Condor biologist, will be leading this trip to view the reintroduction program of the California Condor. We should get good looks at California Condors, possibly Golden Eagles, and a number of other species, from the adjacent hillside. Joseph will give us an overview of the program, show us how radio telemetry and GPS tracking units are helping to save the bird, and talk about the future of the species in California. We will be west of Mt. Pinos, not too far from Maricopa. All new releases of condors into the wild SoCal population occur here, and all 43 condors in our wild local population visit this area. TAKE Interstate 5 north to Frazier Park exit. At the stop sign make a left and go under I-5. MEET in the parking lot of the "Flying J" gas station at 8:30 a.m. Finish at 3 or 4:00 p.m. RESERVE your place with LAAS by phone or email, stating phone # and email address, whether you have a high clearance vehicle that can accommodate at least 4 people total (priority) or you plan to ride with someone else. Wait for confirmation, as date is probable but not firm. Firm date should be posted by September 5. Bring drinks, lunch, and FRS radio and a scope if you have them. No fee, but donations accepted to the Condor Survival Fund. ➡

## AUDUBON FILM FRIDAYS SUMMER 2013



In partnership with The Audubon Center at Debs Park and Pasadena Audubon Society, LAAS is pleased to present Audubon Film Fridays.

Pre-film entertainment at 7:00 p.m., followed by a nature movie around 8:00 p.m. Last Friday of the month: June 28, July 26 and August 30.

Audubon Center at Debs Park  
4700 N. Griffin Ave. | Los Angeles CA 90031  
For more information please call (323) 221-2255

## Monthly Program Presentations

There are no LAAS Program Presentations in July or August

### Coming September 11 (Debs Park)

David Pereksta presents:  
*“Pelagic Birding off Southern California: What You See When You Go to Sea”*

### Coming October 16 (Eaton Canyon Nature Center)

Tom Stephenson presents: *“Warblers Made Easier”*

## IDENTIFYING AND LEARNING WARBLER VOCALIZATIONS

Los Angeles Audubon and Pasadena Audubon Society are pleased to host a warbler workshop presented by Tom Stephenson, author of *“The Warbler Guide”*, by Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle

**WHEN:** Sat., Oct. 19, 2013

**TIME:** 9am-4pm

**WHERE:** Eaton Canyon Nature Center  
1750 N Altadena Dr, Pasadena, CA 91107

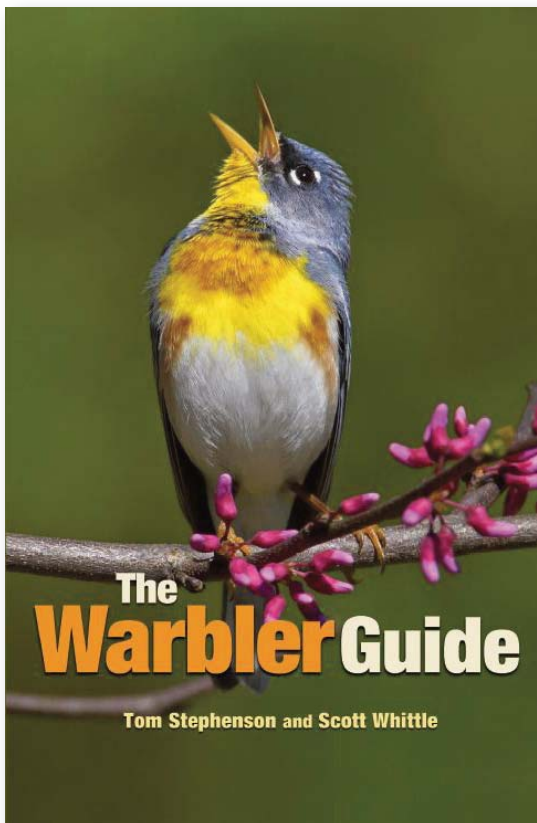
**RESERVATIONS:** Advance sign-up is required. Sorry, no drop-ins. Limit (80) To reserve your spot, mail the \$20 fee by check or money order payable to: Los Angeles Audubon —sorry, credit cards are NOT accepted. Please include email address and phone number for each participant and wait for an email confirmation.

**MAILING ADDRESS:**

Los Angeles Audubon—Field Trips  
Attn: Susan Castor  
PO Box 411301  
Los Angeles CA 90041

For more information call (323) 876-0202 or email: [membership@laaudubon.org](mailto:membership@laaudubon.org). Visit us online for complete details.

*THE WARBLER GUIDE will be available for purchase and Tom will be available for book signing!  
Purchases can be made with cash or check only.*



# BIRD WALKS CALENDAR

*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. Bird walks DO NOT require advance sign-up, just show up at the specified meeting time and place.*

*For further bird walk information contact Eleanor Osgood at [birdwalks@laaudubon.org](mailto:birdwalks@laaudubon.org) or call her at (310) 839-5420. Carpooling is encouraged, call (323) 876-0202 to provide information to join the LAAS Carpool Database. We will attempt to connect you with other birders interested in sharing a ride to our events.*

## TOPANGA STATE PARK BIRDWALK

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of every month**

**July 7 and August 4**

**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](mailto:ksafarri@aol.com)

Chris: (310) 455-1270

## UPPER FRANKLIN CANYON

### SOOKY GOLDMAN NATURE CENTER

**2600 Franklin Canyon Dr**

**Beverly Hills 90210**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month**

**July 14 and August 11**

**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 chaparral bird species such as California Quail, Spotted and California Towhees, California Thrasher and Song Sparrow. Resident birds are raising their young and hopefully we will see some fledgling chicks begging for food.

### 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

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month**

**(with the exception of December)**

**July 21 and August 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 [wbutorance@gmail.com](mailto:wbutorance@gmail.com)

## THE NEW ECHO PARK LAKE BIRDWALK

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 17, 2013, MEET NEAR THE BOATHOUSE**

**(ECHO PARK AVE. NEAR LAGUNA AVE.)**

**TIME: 8:00 A.M. TO 10:00 A.M.**

After two years of renovations, Echo Park Lake is open again. With the lotus pond in bloom and new wetlands plantings taking hold, we expect some of our old feathered friends will be around, and the new plantings will probably attract birds not seen here before. This is a fun walk and beginners are encouraged to participate. Binoculars are strongly recommended. A bird guide and a hat are suggested too. The terrain is level.

Note: Please visit us online for detailed parking information and to get the directions to Echo Park Lake.

Information: [judycalifornia@yahoo.com](mailto:judycalifornia@yahoo.com), or 323-663-6767. On walk day, 213-361-7273.

## FROM OUR READERS

### Voyeur

By Susan Miller



I have a new love...well maybe love isn't exactly the right word...I would have to call it an obsession. I don't know how this happened to me. I have always thought of myself as someone more moderate, considered, cerebral maybe... but I fell hard. Lately, I find myself always glancing around nervously when I get close to the spot where the "object of my fixation" likes to hang out. I usually fall for quiet, bookish types, but this fellow is a flashy dresser wearing a bright yellow orange hood. There is a tease of black peeking out from underneath his sleek, slender toned body. When I spot my "to die for object", I get that funny, "Oh my god, he's actually here" feeling in the pit of my stomach. The muscles in my body freeze, as I stare with longing. He seems nervous. He flits around a bit, then leaves abruptly without giving me a second glance. Does he somehow sense that I am nearby?

Last week I drove miles to purchase foods I know he likes. What male isn't tempted by a well prepared, delicious meal? Lately, this gorgeous creature has been visiting with his wife. Yes, he is married!! Rather than dampen my interest, her appearance on the scene has done nothing but increase my desires. She is much duller than he...dressed in olive grey with a little bit of yellow green. The two of them show up at my home, take a bath, eat my food and leave. I am content to watch the whole process. They are remarkably uninhibited and don't seem to mind me as long as I remain quiet. My perversion has reached such dimensions that I sometimes pull out my binoculars for a closer look. Once I even snapped a picture of the two of them together. I have been wondering about making a video. Would they agree to that? Would a video be just too kinky?

The delightful objects of my latest obsession are a pair of Hooded Orioles. I have gone to ridiculous lengths over the years to attract these birds to my backyard. I bought special orange

feeders for nectar and food because I was told that these birds were attracted to the color orange. One time on a flight back from Tucson, I was stopped by TSA for bringing a ten-pound container of nuts and dead bugs in my carryon luggage. The owner of the bird store there assured me that this gloppy mixture would be irresistible to any Oriole. It was not.

"Nuts and bugs heh???" said the security officer dubiously. "We're going to need to open that container and check it Ma'am." I envisioned the dead bug carcasses seeping out of the open container into my suitcase and infiltrating my clothes. No amount of washing would ever make them clean again. The ick factor for me was huge. It was evidently too much for the officer also. After a series of smiles, frowns, head shaking and label reading, think over 1000 dead flies per pound-that would be ten thousand dead flies, she let me on the plane with my dead bugs and nuts unopened. I guess she figured anyone who had dead flies in her luggage wouldn't be likely to be a terrorist. Most of that concoction is still sitting somewhere in my garage.

These days, I buy completely natural, organic Birdberry Jelly at a specialty store that feels a little like an avian Whole Foods. The jelly is a grape and blackberry mixture that sounds yummy. Evidently Mr. and Mrs. Oriole think so too as they are visiting the feeder often these days and flying back to their nest in the fan palms across the street where I suspect their babies have hatched.


My husband, Larry, is the real birder in our family. He goes on bird walks with his book and binoculars in hand carefully marking off where and when he has id'd a species. I have never been able to connect an eye for birdie details, with the actual name of the object, AND work the binoculars at the same time. Larry might say to me as he stares at our feeders through his scope "Ahh green back, rose crown... beautiful male Alan hummingbird" or "I see the crest...shiny black...our male Phainopepla is back Susan" Much as I love the

feel of the word Phainopepla as it rolls off my tongue, I am incapable of attaching this word to the crested shiny, black- bird the next time it crosses my path.

I am drawn instead to the beauty and elusiveness of these finely feathered creatures as they fly through the canyons behind our home. I enjoy watching their behaviors. I have learned that once orioles discover a safe food source they return year after year and teach their young to visit the same spots. Birds have no sense of smell to find their food, so food needs to be placed in their flight path and easily accessible. They are attracted to the color orange probably because their own plumage is orange and some of their favorite foods are orange. Now that they are regular visitors I think they will return.

Each morning for the past few weeks, I have slowly moved two very small dishes of bird jelly closer to my orange roofed feeder coaxing Mr. and Mrs. Oriole along each step of the way. Now I am beginning my baby step behavior modification program to hang the feeder on a bird perch outside my kitchen window. Sometimes over my morning coffee with my mind just waking to the world around me, I like to sit and consider the possibilities. "Should I just hang the feeder from the perch today?" I tell myself "No, patience has gotten me this far, I don't want to chase them away." Then,

"Whoa, just at this moment, Mrs. Oriole landed on the blueberry bush outside my study. She's eating my blueberries. I am just watching and not chasing her away like I do with the Mocking Birds. I bet her chicks have hatched and she needs to feed them. Of course you can have my blueberries that I save to put in my oatmeal."

I have that tight reverent feeling in my throat as I watch Mrs. Oriole eat my precious berries. I am even considering adding mealworms to their jelly as a special treat. Mealworms are the larva of beetles. That is how I know I have crossed over a line. I need help. "Hello everyone, my name is Susan and I am a Bird Voyeur." 

*Susan resides in the hills of Sherman Oaks. She shares her home with her husband, Larry, and her backyard with the hawks, ravens, finches and, of course, the beautiful orioles. Susan is a retired speech therapist who now enjoys hiking, gardening, writing and playing with two wonderful grandchildren.*

# Membership

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# WESTERN TANAGER

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

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