

WESTERN TANAGER



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Zuma Canyon Recoveries

By Walter Sakai

I've been banding birds in Zuma Canyon in the Santa Monica Mountains for 18+ years now. We use 12 m long x 2.8 m high with a 30 mm mesh mist nets stretched out using standard EMT poles to capture the birds. We place uniquely numbered aluminum "bracelets" or bands (or "rings" in Europe) around their leg, and take some physiological measurements. The protocol has changed somewhat over the years. At present we band every two weeks from sunrise for six hours, using 10 to 20 nets depending upon the personnel, all of which are volunteers.

One of the questions I always get is "what have you learned?"

As it relates to birding, one of the vexing problems/questions that birders have is "Is that the same bird I saw five minutes ago?" Last month? Last year? Back in 1998, I was excited to see my first Northern Waterthrush, an uncommon neotropical migrant, in the riparian area of Zuma Creek at the mouth of Zuma Canyon. Fortunately, I had mist nets up in the area, caught the bird, and banded it. In fact, I banded two waterthrushes that morning. Then, the following spring, I banded my third waterthrush, now a ho-hum bird for me.

The following fall (1999) I saw a Northern Waterthrush, and it had a band! Was it mine? Not wanting to get overly excited, I rationalized that this was a different bird banded by another bird bander. As luck would have it, I caught this bird, and it was one of the three birds I banded the year before. Then, in the fall of 2000, I caught this bird again! (Yawn now.) The National Geographic field guide shows that this bird migrates predominantly east of the Rockies, so this bird was probably making the "wrong turn" every year and migrating down the Pacific coast.

A corollary to this is that I caught the bird on 12 Sep 1998, recaptured it on 25 Sep 1998, and 30 Jan 1999. This and the other waterthrushes likely spent the winter at Zuma marsh. The next winter I captured it on 4 Mar 2000. During the third winter, I captured the bird on 23 & 30 Dec 2000 and on 1 Mar 2001. I believe I "saw" the bird at other times, but I haven't had a chance to go back to check my 15 year old field notes. So we now have some good evidence that the waterthrushes may spend the entire winter at the mouth of Zuma Canyon. Or maybe they did continue south. On their spring migration, they again stopped at the mouth of Zuma Canyon.

The icing on the cake would have been if I caught this same bird when I was banding birds in Costa Rica, but alas, no such luck.

Not counting the same bird becomes critical when one is doing point counts or the annual Christmas bird counts. To some extent, bird banding addresses these questions. Once the bird is caught and an aluminum band is placed on its leg, when the bird is caught again, we know when and where it was originally banded. Of course, one has to catch the bird again! No easy task, since we catch these birds passively with mist nets.

At Zuma Canyon (about a mile inland from the mouth of Zuma Creek), a little over 20% of the birds we capture are recaptures, birds that were banded previously. The high percentage is mostly due to the fact that we have a large number of year round resident birds (e.g. Wrentits, Bushtits, Song Sparrows, California and Spotted Towhees, and California Thrashers). Yet I also noted over the years but never analyzed was the number of migrants that seem to return to Zuma Canyon each year.



Walter Sakai, Zuma Canyon Bird Banding



Spotted Towhee, Photo by Walter Sakai

Now this is not particularly earth-shattering, as researchers have noted this for centuries, and even John J. Audubon famously tied a gold thread around the leg of a phoebe and noted its return the following spring. Raptors are known to use the same nest year after year, and colonial birds return to the same nesting grounds each year.

What I thought I'd focus on are the migrant passerines, specifically the wintering birds. Recaptures of these small passerines are on the order of fractions of a percentage, and what is interesting is that these birds breed north in Canada and Alaska, returning each year.

Let's look at Audubon's Warblers, our most common migrant wood warbler. We've banded 964 Audubon's Warblers at Zuma

Canyon from 1995-2012. We have recaptured 135 birds, but a majority of these recaptures were caught during the same winter or multiple times in a season. This leaves us with 50 birds that were banded one winter and were captured during a successive winter. Half were recaptured during the following winter and were never seen again (see table). There have been 11 birds caught two years later, 4 were caught three years later, 2 were caught four years later, 6 were caught five years later, and 2 were caught six years later. These 50 birds account for 5.2% of the birds banded.

We also capture a fair number of Hermit Thrushes and have banded 673 birds during the same period of time. There were 42 birds (or 6.2% of the birds banded) that were banded one winter and were captured during a successive winter. Unlike the Audubon's Warbler, the majority of birds were recaptured two and three years after banding. Yet the Hermit Thrushes were our longest returning birds, as there was a bird returning for the 8th year and three others for their 7th year. The 8th year bird was captured at Zuma during five different years, the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 7th and 8th after banding.

A third example is the Golden-crowned Sparrow. We banded 263 birds during the same time period. There were 78 recaptures. There are 28 birds that were banded one winter and recaptured during a successive winter. These 28 birds are 13% of the birds we have banded, a surprisingly large number. A majority of these birds were captured within two years after banding. The oldest bird was 5 years.

A fourth example is the Black-headed Grosbeak, a summer breeder at Zuma. We banded 299 birds from 1995-2012. There were 36 recaptures, with 16 birds (5.4%) that were banded one summer and were recaptured during a successive summer. With the exception of one bird captured seven summers later, the rest were recaptured within three summers.

Last, as a contrast, there is the Gambel's White-crowned Sparrows. These birds were banded at the University of California's



Hermit Thrush, Photo by Walter Sakai



Black-headed Grosbeak, Photo by Walter Sakai

Burns Pinon Ridge Reserve, a high desert site near Yucca Valley, CA. Since 1990, we banded 835 birds with 118 recaptured. Counting only those birds banded one winter and captured during a successive winter, we have 29 birds. The longest lived bird was three years after banding. At this site, banding occurred just twice a year, in the spring and late fall. At a minimum, this is just two weekends a year, although for a number of years, we banded for an entire week in the spring. So the fact that we recapture these birds during two tiny windows during the year is amazing.

What brings these birds back to the same locale? If a bird survives a winter, avoids predators, and gains enough fat for the spring migration in a particular area, at least anthropomorphically, it would seem wise to return to that area. Why try somewhere else? Why not go back to that

creek in the Eastern Sierra that you caught your limit of trout every morning! So these findings should not be particularly surprising.

For some of our larger bird examples the answer is more obvious. Raptors return to the same cliff face or large tree, as there are limited numbers of "good" nest sites. Terns return to the same nesting colonies in marshes or on sandy beaches, as these locales possess species specific resources for the birds and are increasingly rare.

On the other hand, Zuma Canyon looks like any other canyon in the Santa Monica Mountains, be it Big Sycamore Canyon, Solstice Canyon, Temescal Canyon, or . . . All are south facing canyons draining into the Pacific, and the vegetation is pretty much the same. The only obvious difference that comes to mind is the presence and amount of surface water. So why Zuma Canyon? Now, it could very well be that these birds are moving back and forth from one canyon to the next. I don't have the resources to check this. The only banding I have done outside of Zuma Canyon is seven breeding seasons in Solstice Canyon, and we have never had a bird cross from one canyon to the other.

Each finding leads to more questions, so we continue to band every two weeks. 

Walter Sakai has been teaching biology at Santa Monica College for over 35 years and banding birds for almost 20 years. For more information visit the bird banding website at http://homepage.smc.edu/sakai_walter/banding.htm

Identifying Confusing Vocalizations Using Sonograms and Song Structure

By Tom Stephenson
All Photos by Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle

Identifying singing warblers and other species is one of the most enjoyable and satisfying aspects of birding. But learning and remembering vocalizations can be tough. Most traditional field guides use transliteration to help readers learn vocalizations. While effective in some cases, using these fairly subjective translations of sound can be difficult. Here is an example of the descriptions of the songs of the same species found in several different field guides:



Identifying Singing Birds is the "Holy Grail" of Birding!

- Relatively low pitched, lazy *zrr zoooo zeedl zeeee twip*
- *Brrr zweee seezle zeeee titip*
- *Zeedl Zeedl Zeedl Zeedl zweeee tsip*
- Series of 5 buzzy lisping notes, second lower in pitch than first and last 3 higher but descending slightly
- Somewhat variable, starts w/ few twittering notes
- Series of about 4 notes, the second lowest in pitch;
- *zee, zoo, zidee zee* or *dzeee dzweeee dzezy zee.*
- Set of rising, modulated but sweet *zer* notes, with higher, thin *zuur ti!* flourish at close



Golden-cheeked Warbler, the subject of the transliterations above



OBJECTIVE CRITERIA WORK BETTER

In *The Warbler Guide* we have introduced what we believe to be a better, and more objective, system for learning vocalizations. This system makes it easier to distinguish similar-sounding songs and to visualize and then memorize vocalizations. It also provides a way of using a “Song Finder” based on broad, easy-to-hear criteria, for quickly narrowing down the identity of an unknown species.

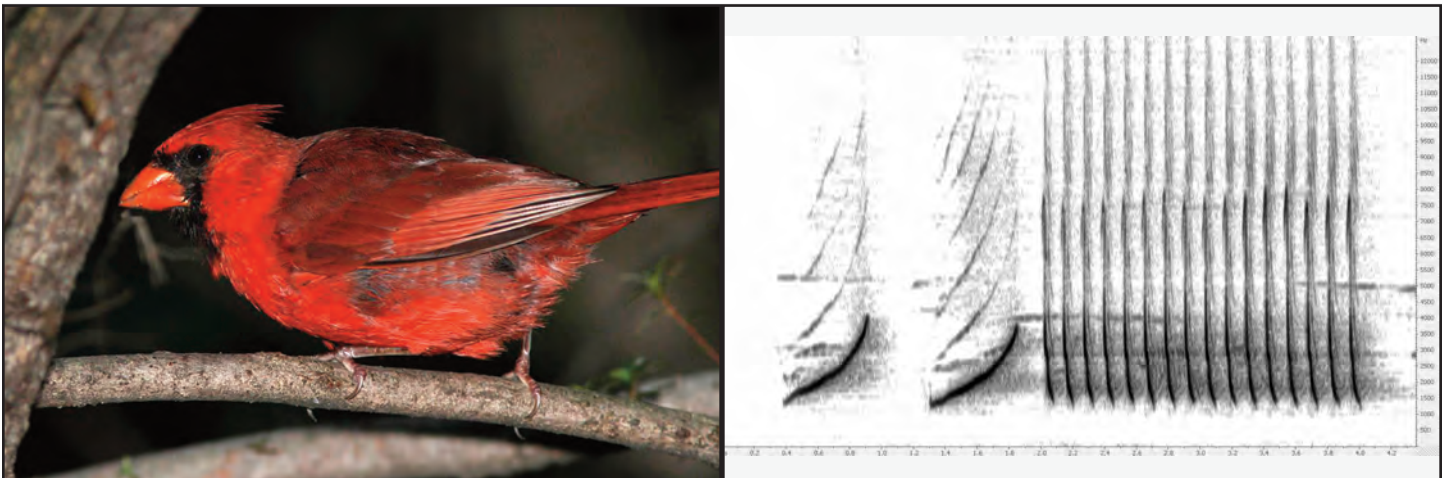
We use sonograms to illustrate the different structural characteristics of both individual Elements and the arrangement of song Sections. There isn’t space to explain sonograms in this article, but there is information on understanding sonograms in the book and on www.TheWarblerGuide.com.

ELEMENT STRUCTURE

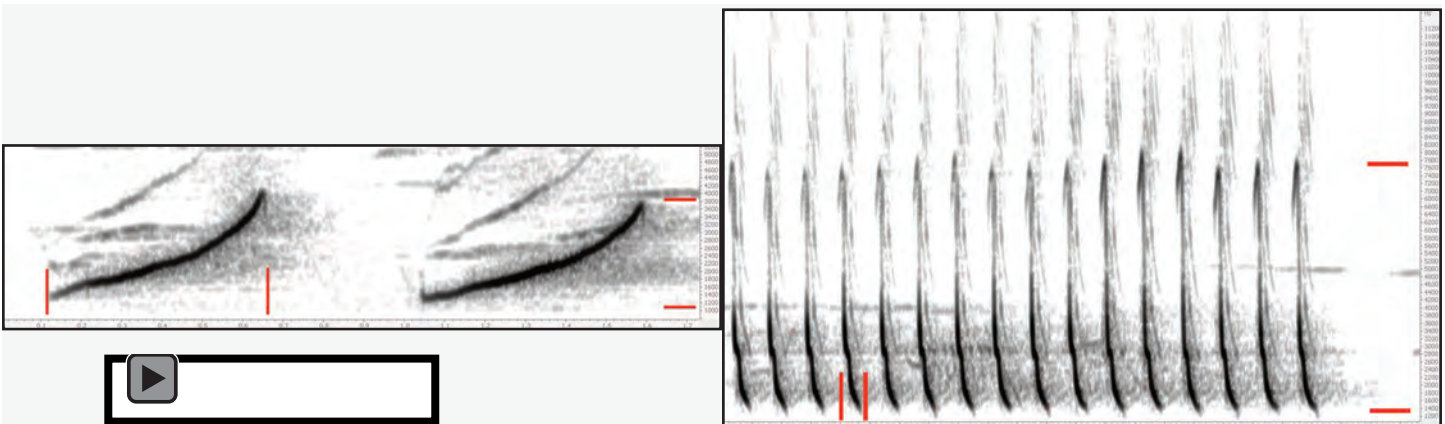
We define the smallest building block of a song, a single, continuous sound, as an “Element”. Understanding certain qualities of these Elements can greatly help in separating similar-sounding vocalizations including calls and songs. Here are a couple of examples.

COMPRESSED VS EXPANDED

One key difference between Elements can be their pitch range and how short or long they last. An Element with a large (greater than 4,000 Hz, or cycles per second) pitch range we define as “expanded” and one with a small range “compressed”. When an Element is Expanded and “long” (for bird song this could be only 100 milliseconds or longer), our ears hear all of the pitches and the sound is pleasing, or “musical”. When an Element is expanded and very short, less than 50 ms, then our ears are assaulted by all of the pitches happening so quickly, and the Element has a sharp or “attack-like” quality. The following are a couple of examples of how Element pitch range and length can be useful in separating similar-sounding species.



Northern Cardinal’s song contains both long, Compressed and short, Expanded Elements



Long, Compressed slurs; and very short, Expanded Elements with a wide pitch range

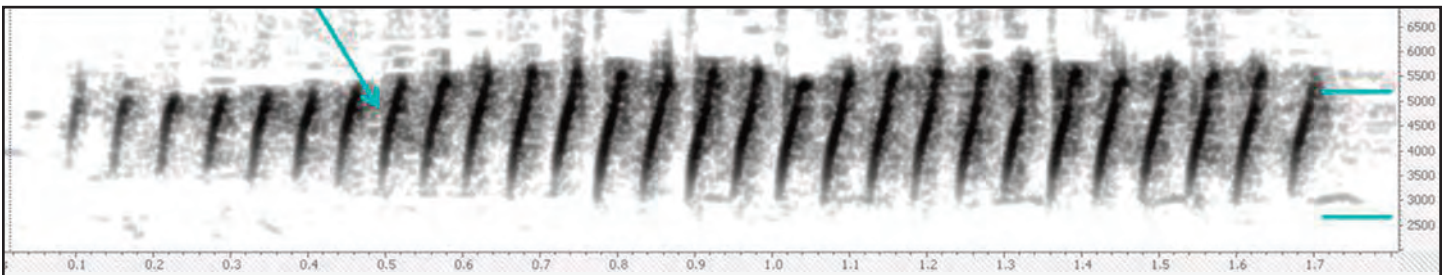
SEPARATING PINE, WORM-EATING AND CHIPPING SPARROW SONGS

Pine Warbler songs are often confused with those of Worm-eating Warbler. Many of Pine's songs can be separate as they are slower than any Worm-eating songs. Other Pine songs, however, overlap in speed. These can be fairly easily distinguished by concentrating on the pitch range and complexity of the Elements.



Pine and Worm-eating Warblers; (note Pine's very long tail extension, an easy way to separate it from Blackpoll and Bay-breasted)

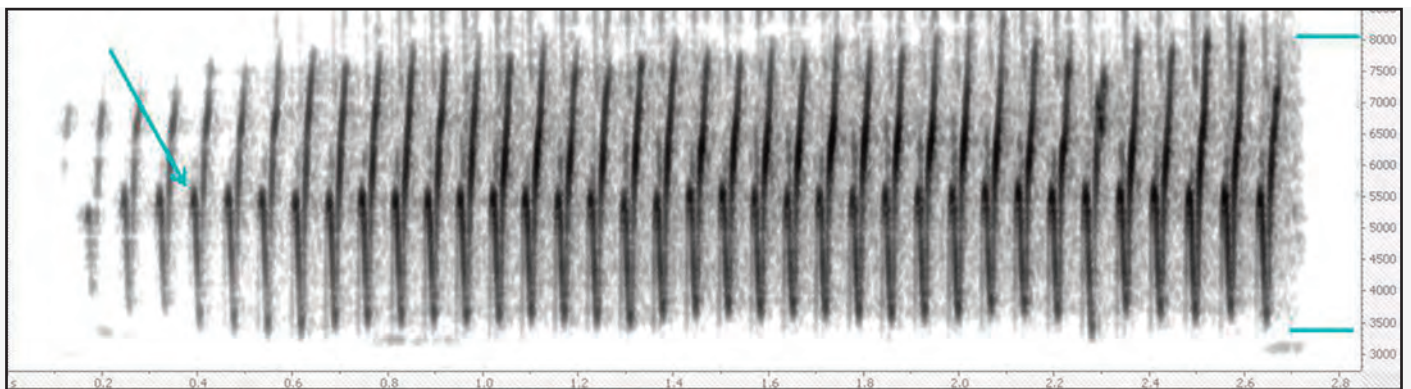
Pine's fast songs consist of very simple upslurs, as in this example. The pitch range is low and compressed, from 2500 Hz to 5500 Hz.



Pine Warbler's song has simple, Compressed Elements



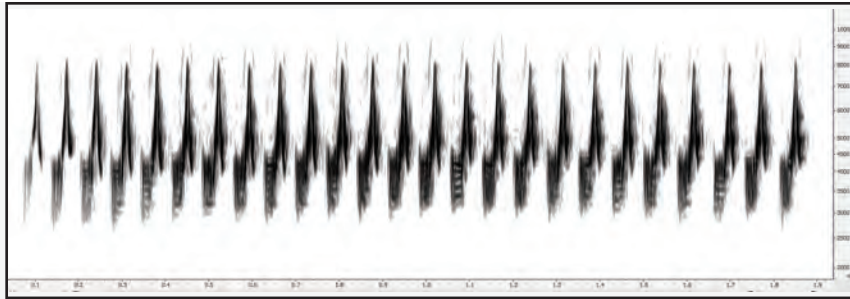
Worm-eating's song, however, is much more Expanded and the Elements are also more intricate, adding to the complexity of the sound.



Worm-eating's Elements are much more Expanded and thus sound more emphatic and brighter



Chipping Sparrow sings a very wide range of trills, many overlapping the pitch range and speed of both of the above species. Understanding the differences in Element shape and pitch content can really help separate these sometimes very difficult vocalizations. Many Chipping Sparrow songs have a unique combination of very high and very low energy content in their Elements, which is different from the Elements of either Pine or Worm-eating.

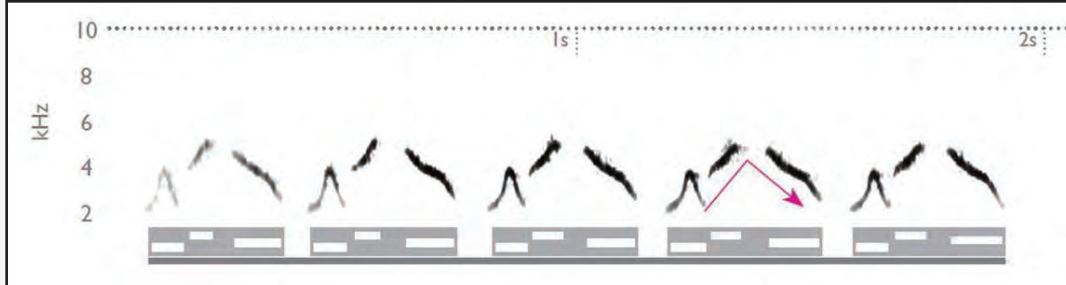


Chipping Sparrow has a wide range of songs with different, Complex Elements. This version is typical of the form that has much more low-frequency content than either Pine or Worm-eating. Notice that the Elements are also very Expanded, giving the song a combination of a very low and a high, tinkling quality.

CAROLINA WREN VS COMMON YELLOWTHROAT

In the East, Carolina Wren sings one of the possibly most misidentified songs. They are wide ranging, prodigious singers, and can be confused with Kentucky or Mourning Warblers, especially from the distance; with Northern Cardinals; and with Common Yellowthroat. Once again, Element structure is key in confidently separating these species.

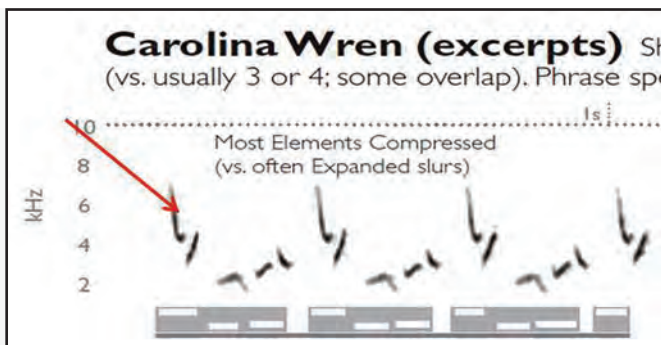
Although often sharing a similar, 3-Element Phrase structure with Common Yellowthroat, Carolina Wren has very different Elements. Common Yellowthroat Elements are all fairly Compressed and relatively long, thus sounding “musical”. The pitch profile of the Phrase is up and then down in a gentle arc.



Common Yellowthroat's song has fairly long, Compressed Elements. The overall pitch profile of the whole Phrase is up and down.



Carolina Wren, however, has one very Expanded, short Element with a sharp, attack-like quality. The other Elements proceed in one pitch direction, either up or down.

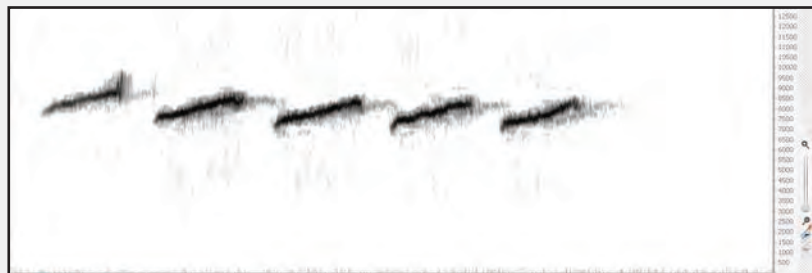
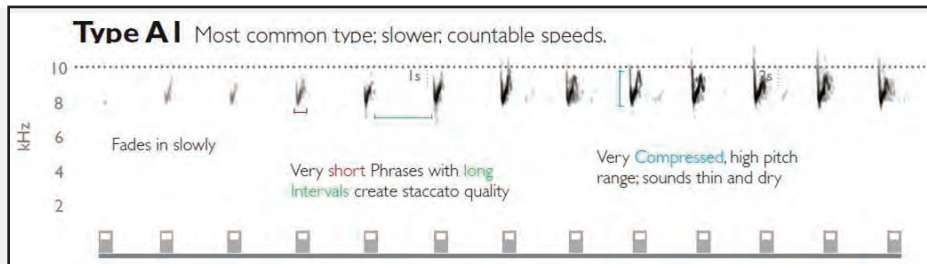


The first Element of this song is Expanded and short, giving the song a more emphatic quality. The pitch profile of the Phrases in this song is rising.

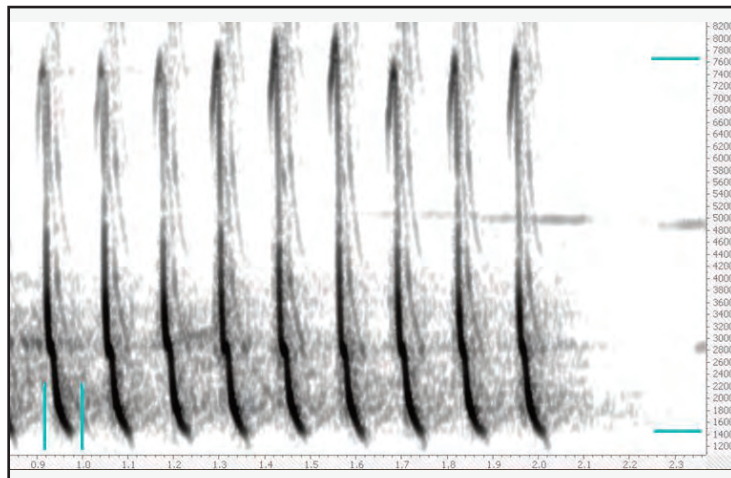


ELEMENT LENGTH AND INTERVAL

Another, often important, song characteristic is how the length of the Element compares to the interval or time from Element to Element. The songs of Blackpoll and Cape May, both very high, can be easily distinguished by their differences in Element length and interval.



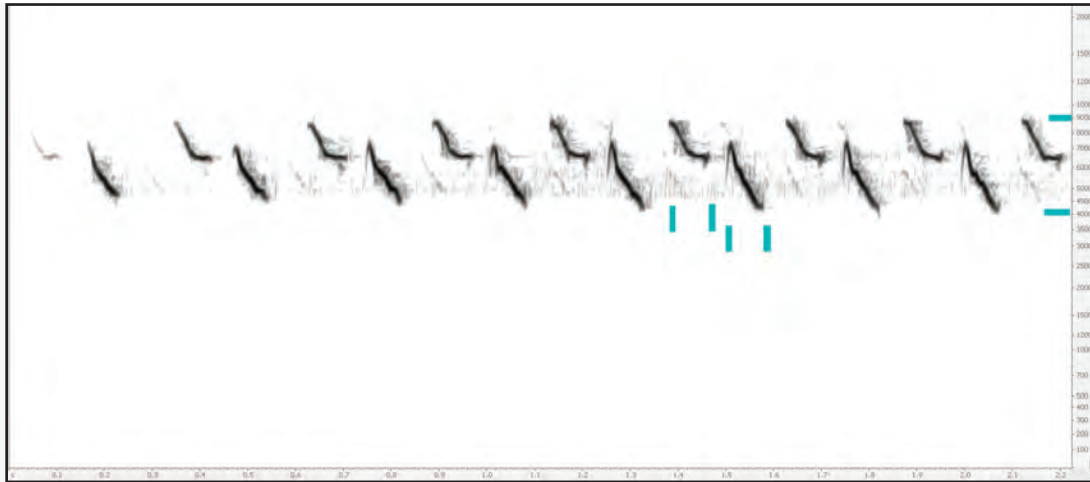
Blackpoll's Elements are very short and the intervals proportionally very long, creating a staccato quality. Cape May's song (on the right) consists of long, very Compressed Elements with short intervals.



This same distinction of Element length and interval can be used to separate Tennessee and Nashville Warbler songs, which are often confused. Tennessee has much shorter, but more expanded, Elements, giving the song a very staccato and sharp, almost accented quality.



Nashville has more intricate, longer and more compressed Elements, which provide a smoother quality to the song.



The Elements of Nashville's song are never as expanded or short as Tennessee's

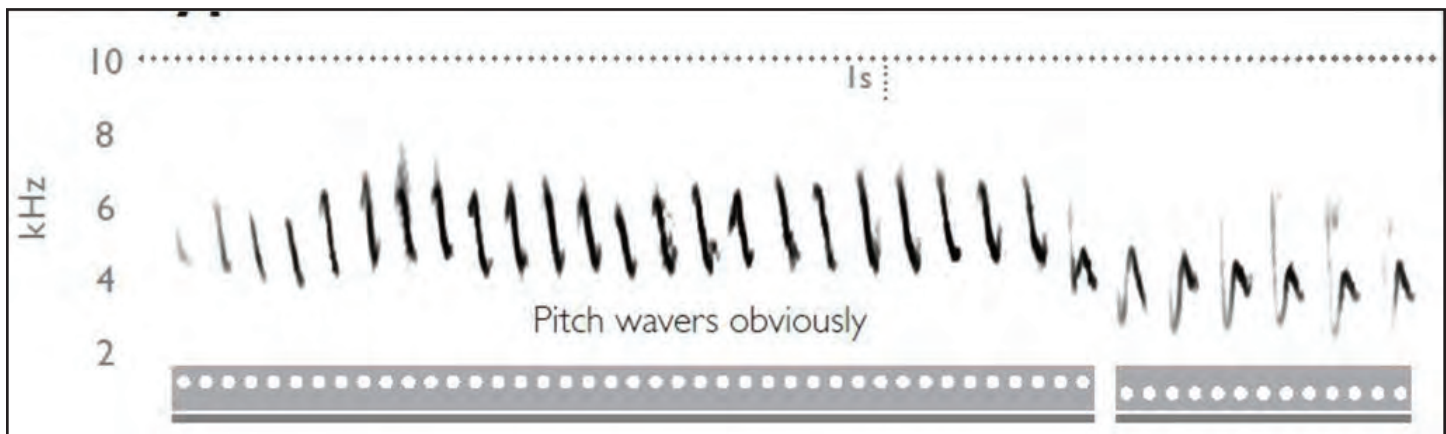


Of course you could just use the terms “smoother” and “staccato” as a description of these differences. However we feel strongly that viewing the sonograms and understanding how the differences are created provides a deeper understanding of these differences and also an image that can be very useful for memorizing the vocalizations.

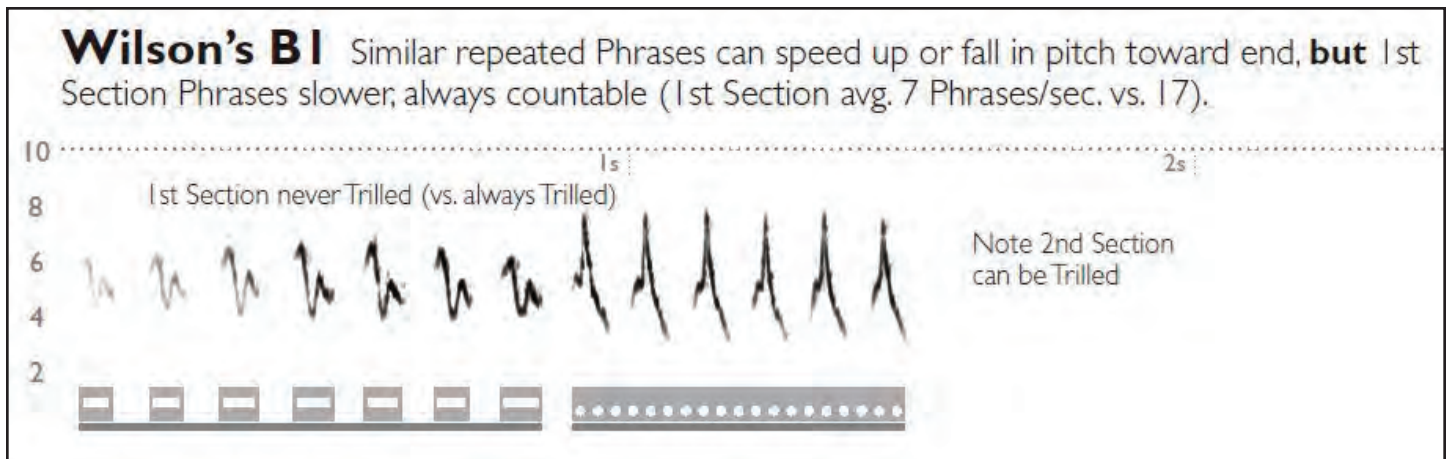
ORANGE-CROWNED VS WILSON'S

Both of these species sing 1 or 2-Section songs, with rapidly repeated Elements. However there is one very key difference. All Sections (outside of the Channel Islands) of Orange-crowned songs are at trill speed (too fast to count; greater than 10 Elements per second.) Wilson's, however (in all of our sample studies), never sings a trill in the first Section, even if it sings at trill speed in a second Section.

Wilson's Elements also tend to be shorter, more Expanded, and with a relatively longer interval, which makes the songs sound more staccato or emphatic.



All Sections of Orange-crowned songs are trill speed; note also the small pitch variations within a Section



The first Section of Wilson's song is never at trill speed; note the more emphatic, Expanded Elements in the 2nd Section; there are also usually many fewer Elements in the first Section than Orange-crowned



SONG STRUCTURE

For most warbler vocalizations, understanding the structure of a species' song can be a great aid to identifying that species. In the book we use just a few, simple structural terms to discuss song structure: Element, Phrase and Section. Phrases are single Elements or groups of repeated Elements. Section boundaries are created by significant changes in Phrases such as a large change in pitch or speed.

Here are a couple of examples of how understanding structure can aid in song identification.



THE WATERTHRUSHES AND SWAINSON'S WARBLER

Northern and Louisiana Waterthrush, and Swainson's Warbler songs are often misidentified (as above, I'm using the term "often" based on my experience with birders on trips I've led in the U.S.). However an understanding of the structure of both the songs and their Elements can be used to easily distinguish between these species' vocalizations.

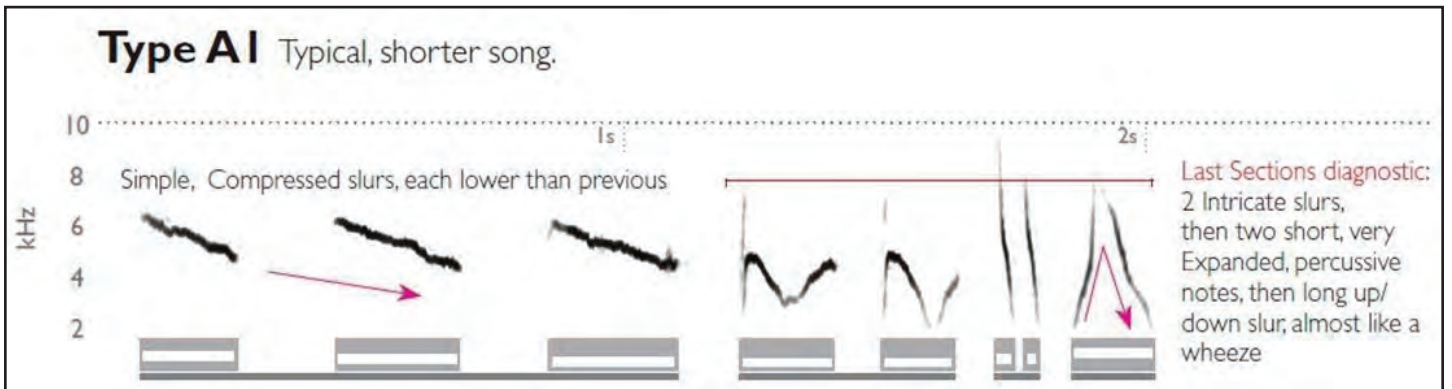
Northern Waterthrush songs start with fairly expanded Elements, usually 2-Element Phrases, with relatively long intervals. Thus they have a staccato, sharp quality. And although overall the song falls in pitch (one of the sources of confusion) the pitch of the Phrases in each Section remains the same. The pitch change is only from Section to Section.



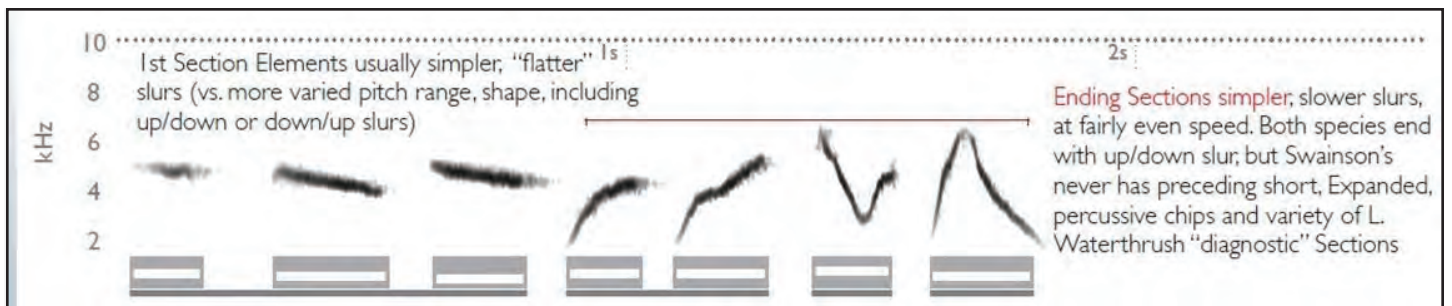
Northern Waterthrush Sections are at the same pitch; the pitch falls only from Section to Section. Note the Expanded, emphatic Elements



Louisiana Waterthrush songs, on the other hand, start with very simple, 1-Element Phrases that are compressed slurs. This gives a much different quality than the staccato, more Expanded Elements of Northern Waterthrush. The pitch very often falls during the first Section; unlike the steady pitch of each Northern Waterthrush Section. In addition, the structure of the final Sections of Louisiana's song is a diagnostic combination of very short, expanded Elements and one or two up/down slurs, unlike anything in Northern Waterthrush. These ending Sections also separate Louisiana from Swainson's, which never has these staccato Elements in their song.



The more Compressed, slurred Elements of Louisiana's song fall in pitch during the first Section. Note also the diagnostic ending Section.

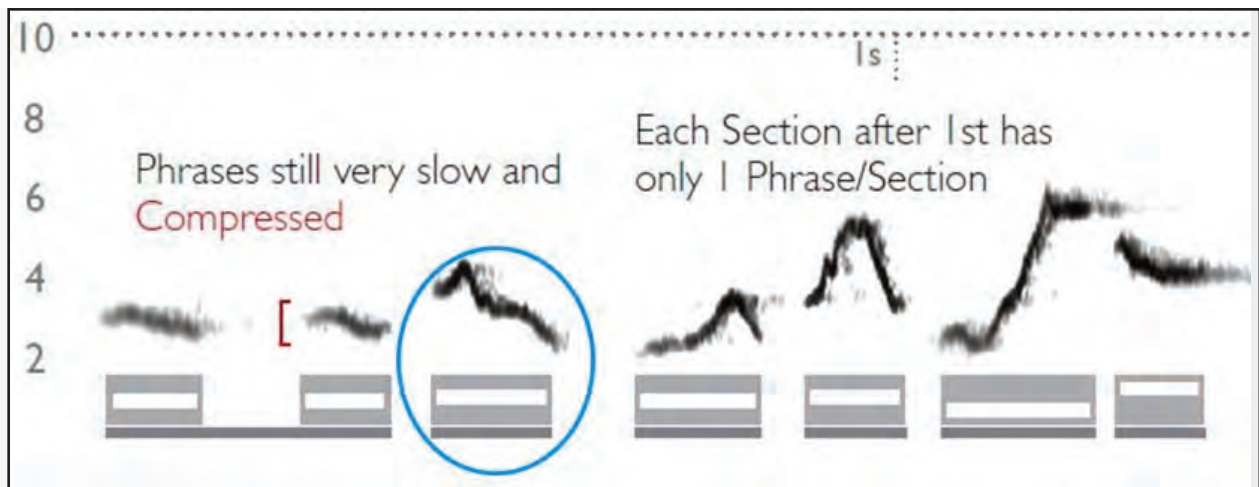


While very similar to Louisiana's song in the first Sections, Swainson's last Sections maintain the slurred, very long Elements of the first Sections, and never have the combination of slurs and Expanded, very short staccato Elements of Louisiana's diagnostic Section

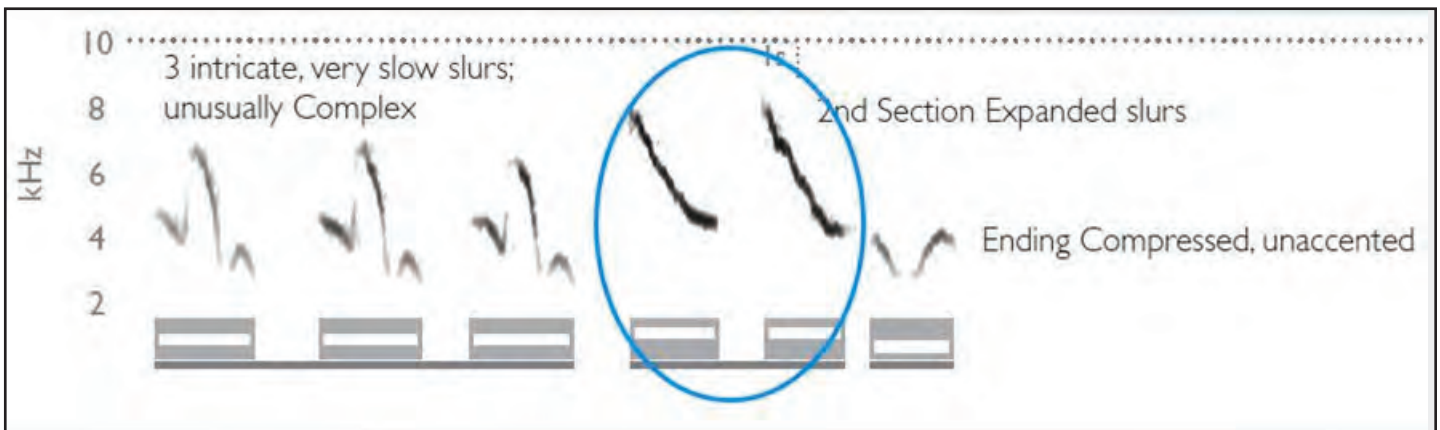


Hooded's Elements are much more compressed than those of the more expanded Yellow Warbler Elements. In addition, although the first Section of a Hooded's song usually contains 2 or 3 Phrases, all Sections after the first are always only 1 Phrase each.

The same is true for Magnolia Warbler.



Hooded Warbler's Elements are long, low and mostly Compressed. All Sections after the first have only 1 Phrase each.

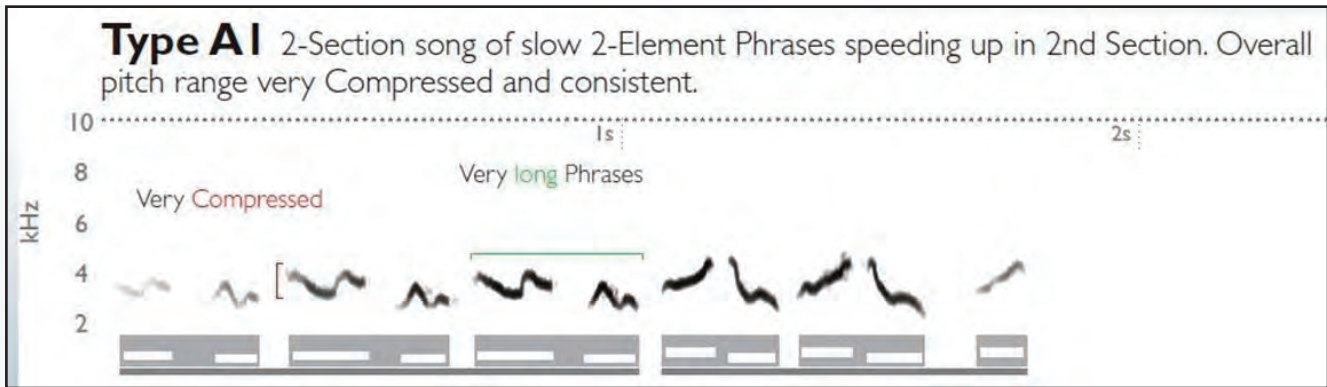


Yellow has much more emphatic, Expanded Phrases that sound brighter. The second Section always has at least 2 Phrases, even in unaccented songs.



**PAINTED REDSTART,
RED-FACED AND
YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS**

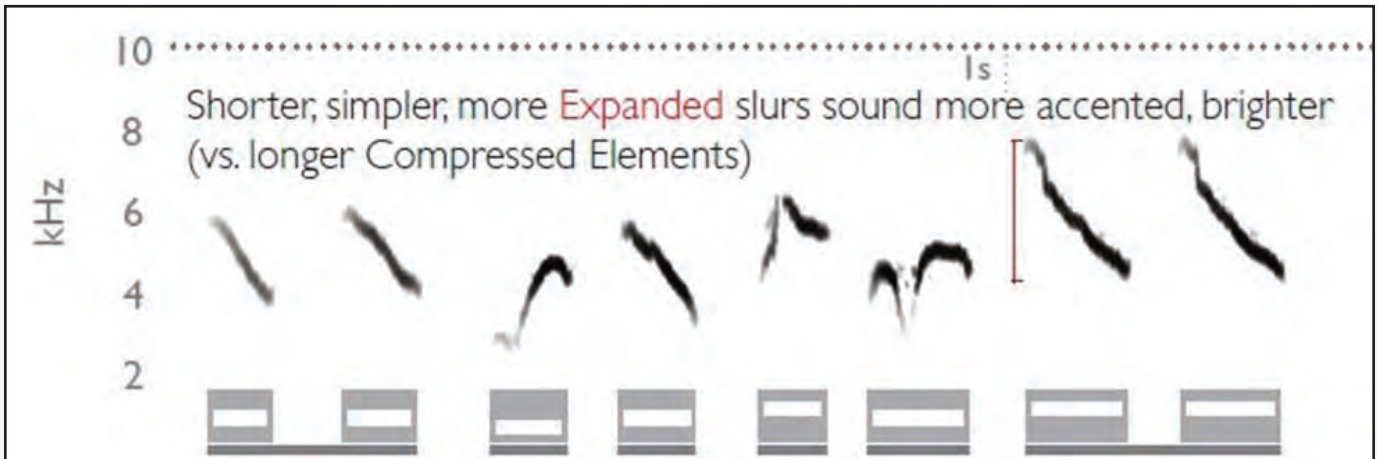
Painted Redstart's songs are variable and fairly amorphous, with often irregular rhythms and very compressed, long Elements. This makes them hard to memorize and thus separate from other similar species. Knowing their Element profiles and structure can really help.



Painted Redstart songs have very long, Compressed slurs with usually only 3 or fewer Phrases per Section



Red-faced Warbler songs are similar in that they also have a more irregular form, often with many Sections of only 1 or 2 Elements. However, most of the Elements are much more Expanded and also shorter than Painted Redstart Elements. This difference creates a brighter and more emphatic song quality than Painted Redstart's songs.

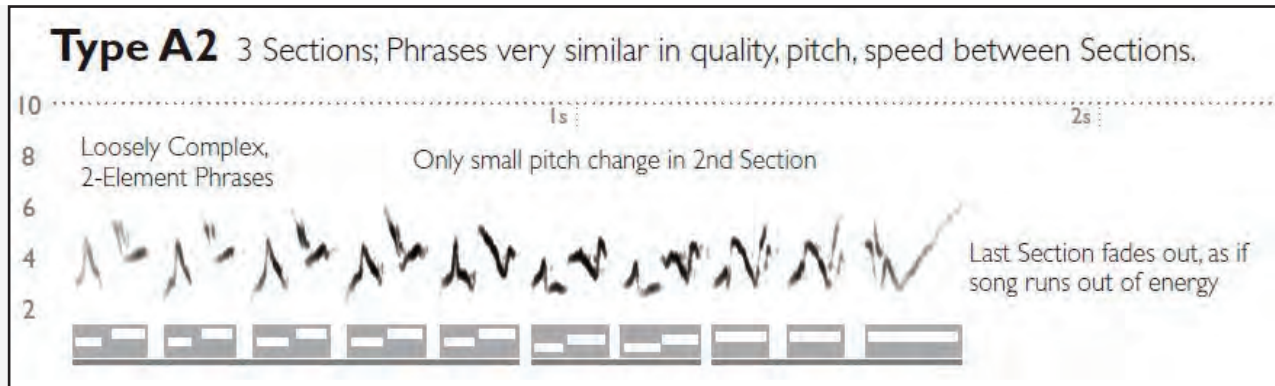


Redfaced's songs have much more Expanded, shorter Elements, giving a brighter and more emphatic quality. They also have many more Sections, often with only 1 Phrase per Section. (Similar to Canada Warbler in the East)



Yellow-rumped Warbler’s Elements are also very Compressed and often equally long. However their song structure is quite different. First, their Elements are more Complex and usually more Expanded, shorter, and with longer intervals; different than the long, slowly slurred Painted Redstart Elements.

Whereas Painted Redstart’s first Section is usually only 2 or 3 Phrases, Yellow-rumped’s first Section usually has 5 or more Phrases (avg. 6 vs Paired avg. 2.8 in our samples.) This difference can be very helpful and easy-to-use in the field.



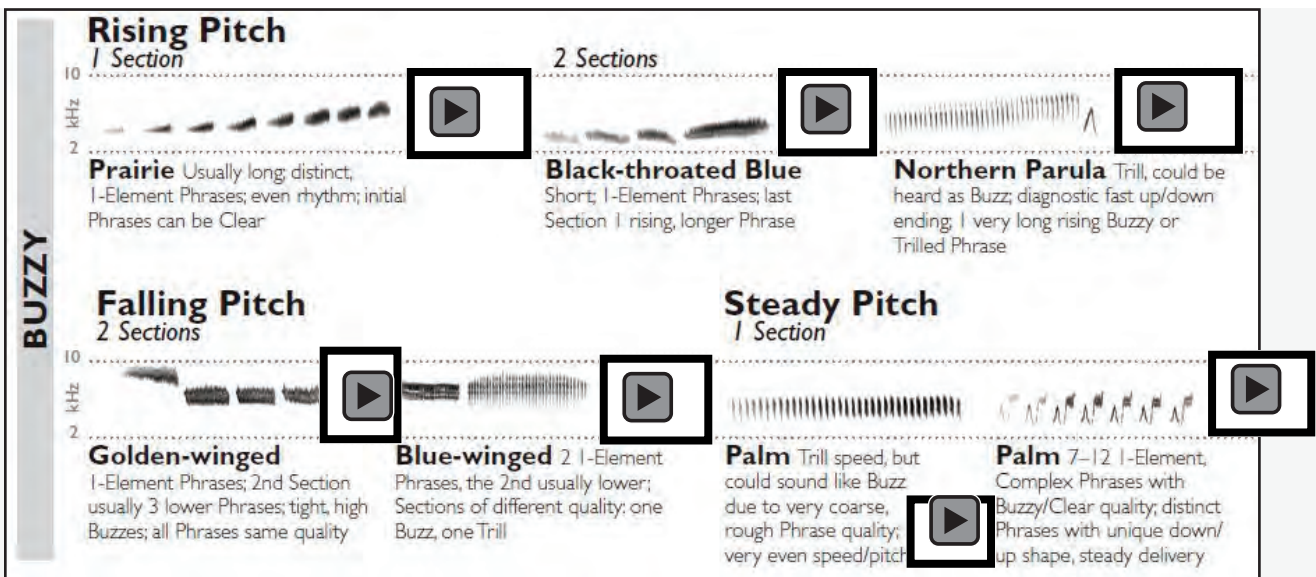
Yellow-rumped’s Phrases are more Complex and more Expanded than Painted Redstart’s. Also the first Section usually has many more Phrases.

THE SONG FINDER

Using Element and Phrase quality and song structure it is possible to create a “Finder” or decision tree that can be very useful for identifying an unknown singing warbler. The finder is very much like the kind of identification “keys” used to identify leaves or insect families.

By answering a few simple questions, it is possible to quickly eliminate most possible species, narrowing the choice down to one or two. In The Warbler Guide, we present the vocalizations of all similar-sounding species on the pages of the main species. So once the possible ID is narrowed down to one or two species, one of the master pages should provide all other similar species, so an identification can be made.


The types of questions for a warbler song finder are: “Is the song buzzy or clear?”; “Does the pitch of the song rise, fall or remain steady?”; “Is the song one Section, two Sections, or more?”



The Song Finders provide a fast way of narrowing down the identity of a singing warbler by using a few, simple questions.

SEE YOU AT THE WORKSHOP

Of course this is a very brief overview of how using structure and sonograms can help separate similar-sounding species. These topics are covered extensively in *The Warbler Guide*, and there is an inexpensive Song and Call Companion to the book available from Cornell Lab of Ornithology that contains all of the over 1,000 audio examples in the book, in page order, so that it's easy to follow and hear all of the audio example in the book. Links are on our site, www.TheWarblerGuide.com.

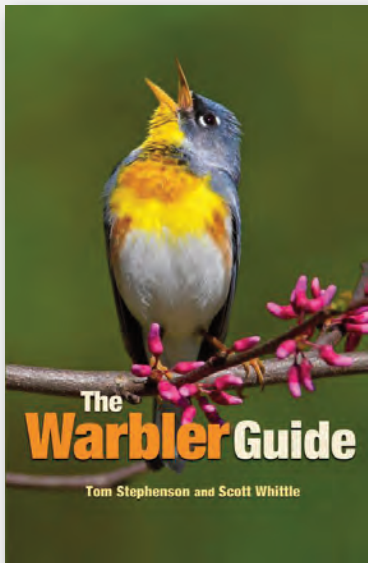
We will cover all of the above topics and many more, plus several memorization techniques, in the October workshop. 

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All Photos by Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle

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.



WHAT: Warbler Workshop "Identifying and Learning Warbler Vocalizations"

WHEN: Sat., Oct. 19th, 2013, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

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

COST: \$20 | LIMIT: 80 | Advance reservation required, NO drop-ins.

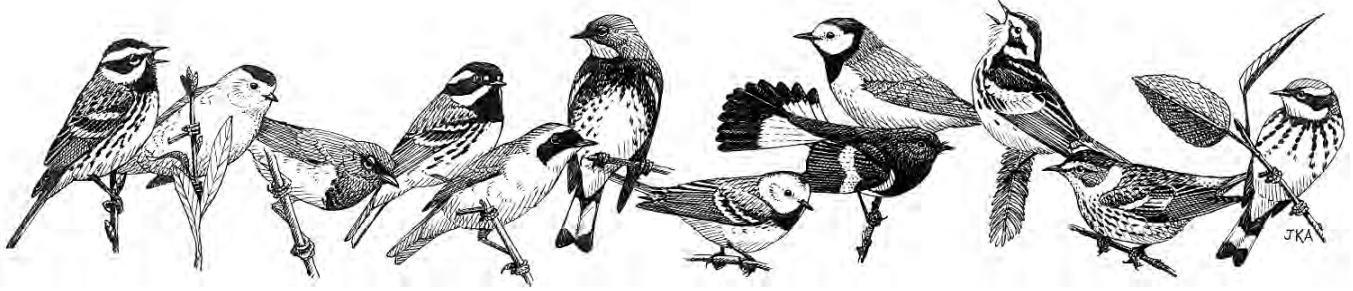
TO RESERVE: Mail check or money order payable to LAAS (Los Angeles Audubon Society)

MAIL TO: Los Angeles Audubon–Field Trips, Attn: Susan Castor, PO Box 411301, Los Angeles, CA 90041.

Include the email address and phone number for each participant and wait for an email confirmation.

This workshop by Tom Stephenson will cover many new techniques that make it easier to identify singing warblers and other species. This workshop will first cover how to understand and use sonograms to learn what makes a vocalization unique and how to differentiate similar-sounding species. Based on a new system outlined in *The Warbler Guide*, Tom will explain and demonstrate how understanding a song's structure, and the characteristics of the Elements and Phrases that make up the song, can speed up the identification process and make it easier to remember all kinds of vocalizations. There will also be a discussion of how to use a song finder to quickly identify a singing warbler using the objective, easy-to-hear qualities of a song. The author will also explain a simple 3-step memorization system that he has used many times to memorize 300 or more songs for a trip to a new country. And, if time permits, there will be a discussion of how to study and identify the vocalizations of groups of similar-sounding species, such as western thrashers, and also how to learn the very short chip and flight calls of warblers and other species.

The Warbler Guide will be available for sale at the workshop and Tom will be available for book signing. On site purchases can be made with cash or check only. For more information call (323) 876-0202 or email: membership@laudubon.org.



BIRDS OF THE SEASON — AUGUST 2013, BY JON FISHER

Los Angeles County is smaller reflection of Southern California as a whole, with many varied habitats and complex seasonal movements involving hundreds of species of birds. This variety is enough to hold the interest of even the most experienced birder and presents many others with the challenge of learning the details of status and distribution.

What is well known to veterans and quickly learned by new birders is that learning status and distribution is often a valuable aid in identification. Fall migration offers a great opportunity to learn these patterns.

The mild weather we experienced for much of the period was welcome and unexpected. What was expected was June bringing us the first fall shorebirds; this even before summer officially begins. July and August saw the numbers build dramatically and quickly.

In the mix of the many regular shorebirds were two remarkable rarities and a handful of lesser ones. As they are one of the most migratory families of birds, their propensity for vagrancy is no surprise.

While it's a gross understatement to say that shorebird habitat in the county has shrunk dramatically as the human population has grown, this at least has had one positive effect for birders; it concentrates the birds. Nowhere is this more obvious than along the lower Los Angeles River. Even though its course was transformed into a concrete channel over a half century ago, it remains a large wetland habitat. As it does each year, the river hosted many thousands of birds that lingered or stopped briefly on their way south.

Also loaded with potential and shorebird attracting properties, as well as being another man created habitat, the Piute Ponds on Edwards Air Force Base again proved their ability to produce vagrant shorebirds as well as common ones.

Not far behind shorebirds were southbound passerines, with a number of birds on the move in July. By early

August the number and variety had increased noticeably. Willow Flycatchers were evident, warblers were on the move and Lazuli Buntings congregated in weedy river channels and flood basins.

June and July also offer the opportunity to confirm breeding for both scarce and common birds. This adds yet another dimension to birding during a relatively slow period, and one which—especially when the data is entered in eBird—provides useful and easily accessible information.

While anything but quiet, the mountains produced little that wasn't expected at this time of year. No Mexican Whip-poor-will was found at its previous location and no vagrant warblers were detected there.

Waterfowl during the period included a **Ross's Goose** at the L.A. County Arboretum in Arcadia on July 5 (Kathy Degner), with a few others continuing in the San Gabriel and San Fernando Valleys. An "**Aleutian**" **Cackling Goose** was at Harbor Park in Harbor City from June 22–July 29 (Ed Griffin) and almost certainly summering, and a **Cackling Goose** was at the Sepulveda Basin in Van Nuys from July 23–31 (Kate Rogowski). A few **Brant** lingered into August at Malibu Lagoon.

Out of season were two **Ring-necked Ducks** at the Lancaster Sewer Ponds on August 10 (John Garrett, Darren Dowell) and a **Bufflehead** along the lower LA River in Vernon from June 16 to at least July 2 (Richard Barth).

Suspected as breeders, **Common Mergansers** were finally confirmed as such on the San Gabriel River near the junction of the east and west forks on July 11 (Benjamin Smith). This marked the first ever confirmed record for the county. Breeding is to be watched for on other larger lakes and reservoirs. Elsewhere a lone **Hooded Merganser**, rare in summer, lingered at Apollo Park near Lancaster through August 10.

The **Arctic Loon**, a third county record, continued to

be easy to view at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas through August 10. Given the fact that was in the process of molting its flight feathers, it had little choice but to stay put.

At least two pairs of **Clark's Grebes** were discovered breeding at the gravel pits off the 605 Freeway in Arcadia on July 13 (Ed Stonick).

Regular in Orange County just a few miles to the south of us but quite rare for L.A. County, a **Reddish Egret** was observed briefly on the LA River in Vernon on July 23 (Richard Barth).

Least Bitterns were more prevalent than usual with one at Legg Lake—where breeding is at least somewhat regular—on July 13 (Ed Stonick). Three more were along the nearby San Gabriel River on August 4 (Jon Fisher), a sign of probable breeding there, while four—likely a pair and two juveniles—were at the Sepulveda Basin wildlife lake between July 20–31 (Ron Cyger, Mark Scheel, Steve Powell). They are probably more common than records indicate, but even when present they can be difficult to detect.

Fall **Solitary Sandpipers** were at the Piute Ponds on July 9 (Jon Feenstra), on the San Gabriel River in South El Monte on July 19 (Luke Tiller), along the LA River in Cudahy on July 21 (Richard Barth), in Long Beach on August 3 (Mary Freeman) and at the Piute Ponds on August 10 (John Garrett, Darren Dowell).

The Piute Ponds also hosted an early **Lesser Yellowlegs** on June 18 (Irwin Woldman).

The fall's first **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at the Piute Ponds on August 10 (John Garrett, Darren Dowell).

A remarkable find was a **Red-necked Stint** along the lower LA River in Long Beach that was present from July 16–22 (Richard Barth). This was the fifteenth state record but only the second for the county, with the first being at the Piute Ponds in 1983. Though this highly migratory species breeds in northwest Alaska, only a very few migrate down our west coast. This bird was one of four found along there this fall.

Slightly more common in California but equally rare in the county was a spring migrant **White-rumped Sandpiper** at the Piute Ponds from June 17–18 (Jon Feenstra, Dan Maxwell). With over two

dozen records for the state, again this was just the second for the county. The only previous record was a fall bird at the Piute Ponds thirty-three years ago.

The first **Baird's Sandpiper** of the fall was at the Piute Ponds on August 10 (John Garrett, Darren Dowell) and other shorebirds of interest included two **Stilt Sandpipers** at the Piute Ponds from July 23–24 (Jon Feenstra) and a **Ruff** in Cudahy along the LA River on July 18 (Richard Barth). Early were both a **Least Sandpiper** in Long Beach on June 17 and a **Short-billed Dowitcher** in Vernon on June 16 (Richard Barth).

Four **Least Terns** at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia on July 5 were a surprise well away from the coast (John Garrett, Darren Dowell), while a single **Black Tern** at the Piute Ponds on July 21 was more expected (Nick & Mary Freeman).

The only alcids reported from shore were a **Pigeon Guillemot** and a **Scripp's Murrelet** seen off Pt. Dume on July 14 (Kimball Garrett).

A **Lesser Nighthawk** at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on July 18 was well away from regular breeding and foraging areas (Jonathan Coffin).

Black Swifts, scarce and local breeders in the county, included a bird over Eaton Canyon in Pasadena on June 23 (Mark Hunter) and a few continuing in the early evenings—and presumably breeding not far away—along Cobal Canyon Road above Claremont through July 13 (Tom Miko, et al). A **Chimney Swift**, the expected summer *Chaetura*, was along the San Gabriel River in South El Monte on August 9 (John Garrett, Darren Dowell).

A **Willow Flycatcher** in suitable breeding habitat along the LA River in the Sepulveda Basin on July 28 (Jon Fisher) was interesting but probably an early migrant as it was soon followed by others elsewhere in the county.

Rarely detected away from breeding areas, a **Bell's Vireo** was at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles on July 25 (Don Sterba). Though singing persistently, a **Red-eyed Vireo** in Claremont from July 6–8 had slim odds of finding a mate (Tom Miko).

Miscellaneous passerines of interest included a **Purple Martin** along the Angeles Crest Highway at

mile 44 on June 17 (John Luther) that offered some hope that this species might re-colonize this area at some point, and a **Sage Thrasher** at the Piute Ponds on July 21 (Wayne Martin).

Warblers of note included a **Lucy's Warbler** at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on August 4 (Lori & Mark Conrad) and an **American Redstart** along lower Big Tujunga Creek on June 22 (Kimball Garrett).

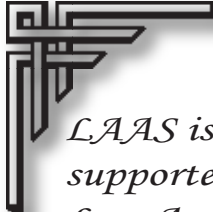
Extremely rare in the county was a **Pyrrhuloxia** found in Rolling Hills Estates on June 30. The only other county record was from the Antelope Valley in May of 1983. Both occurrences fit the Pyrrhuloxia's pattern of westward dispersal in spring and summer.

In addition to a continuing bird at Shortcut Saddle in the San Gabriels, a small number of **Indigo Buntings** turned up. One was at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena from July 3–27 (Darren Dowell) and others were at Hansen Dam on July 20 (Kimball Garrett) with what was perhaps the same bird there on July 28 (Brad Rumble), along the San Gabriel River in South El Monte on July 21 (Luke Tiller) and July 28 (David Bell, Catherine Hamilton) and near Lake Balboa on July 22 (Lynda Elkin).

As fall migration for passerines gets into full swing, September and October will almost certainly offer up some good vagrants among plenty of regular migrants. While one doesn't want to fall into the trap of ignoring all but rare birds, some stunning records have turned up at this time of year. Typically Asian passerines and "reverse" migrants heading northwest from Mexico are possible. Past records include Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher (the last one back in 1991), Arctic Warbler, Eastern Yellow Wagtail and Northern Wheatear (all relatively recent).

Both Bluethroat and Red-flanked Bluetail have been recorded on San Clemente Island in recent years. These birds missed the abrupt eastward dogleg of the southern California coast and found themselves over open water, eventually ending up on San Clemente. When they might turn up on the mainland is anyone's guess, but it would seem inevitable.

For all its faults, all created by overpopulation, Los Angeles County offers excellent opportunities throughout the year for birders of any level of skill and interest. But there's no time better to take advantage of this than during autumn migration. ➔



L.A.A.S. is grateful to all our many supporters and members of Los Angeles Audubon Society! Welcome, welcome back and thank you!—to these new members and recent supporters!

John Bassett

Jeni Blumenthal

Ann & Eric Brooks

William Caulfield

Johanna Dawes

Cynthia Dunbar

Thomas Eisenhauer

Camila Galaz

Garry George

Mary Hanson

David & Susan Haskell

Hanna Hayman

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Brad Rumble

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Louise Whitaker & Brad Shaffer, In

honor of Margot Griswold

Andrew Whitehead

Chris and Teri Wills

Jackie Worden



EDUCATION: IT'S NOT JUST FOR KIDS!

By Cindy Hardin

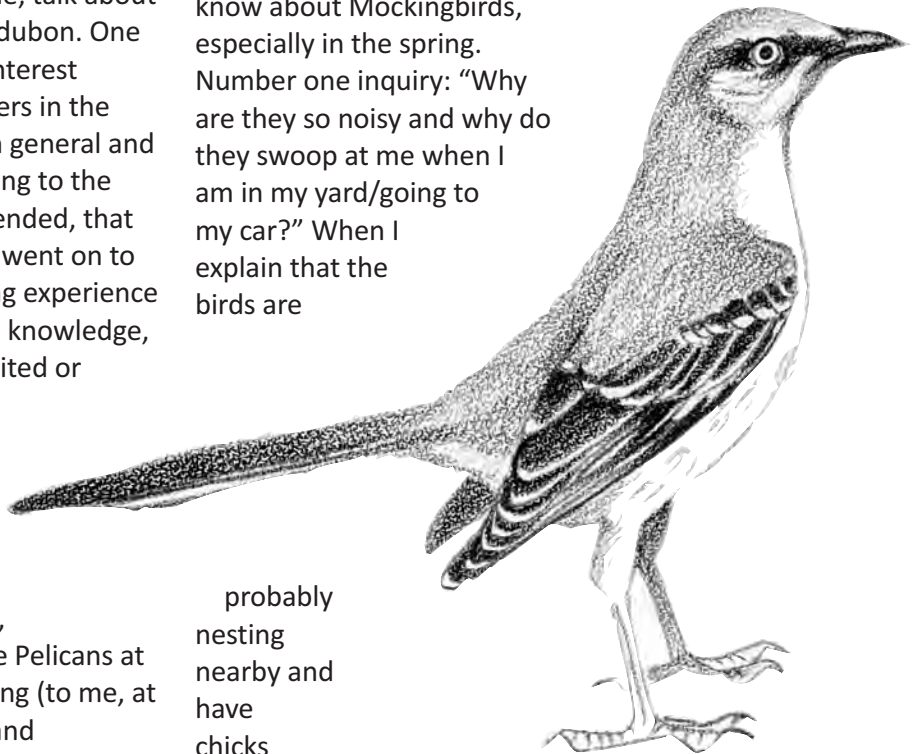
This past July I had the good fortune to attend the National Audubon Convention in Skamania, Washington. Three days were spent listening to wonderful speakers and getting to know Audubon members and staff from all around the country. As you probably know, David Yarnold was hired as CEO and President of National Audubon three years ago. He has put a lot of energy into finding ways to re-vitalize the Audubon Society, with a special emphasis on outreach to state Audubon organizations and local chapters. A major goal that was repeatedly emphasized at the gathering was that of increasing and diversifying the membership of Audubon, from local to national levels.

A most interesting session was the Sunday morning Plenary, where the entire group gathered to hear a panel, composed primarily of younger people, talk about their ideas and their personal relation to Audubon. One young man's comments were of particular interest regarding the goal of achieving more members in the organization. He talked about how birding in general and Audubon in particular can be a bit intimidating to the novice. He actually said, with no offense intended, that "you guys need to get over yourselves"! He went on to say that he felt some folks with lots of birding experience tend to be a bit dismissive of those with less knowledge, particularly when these novices become excited or ask questions about what may be a very common bird.

I have actually experienced this attitude myself, particularly early on when I started as a volunteer at Ballona. At that time I had zero experience in birding, but had recently seen some migratory White Pelicans at the Bolsa Chica Wetlands. I related my exciting (to me, at least) discovery to some long-time birders, and mentioned that I had heard that they were usually found in Freshwater habitat, to which the response was a cursory "that's right". I did not know that they sometimes stopped at saltmarshes while migrating, nor did I know that they wintered in lakes in California. A migration story like that may not seem remarkable to a long-time birder. However, most people, if they are aware of migration at all (and many are not!), have only the vaguest idea of the process. They probably know that the fall means that migratory birds and other animals

head south, and spring means that the direction reverses northward, but that is about it. When one shares facts about this amazing mass movement of animals, it piques the interest of the layman. The Arctic Tern flies 11,000 miles twice a year in its journeys! The Golden Plover flies to Hawaii without stopping! Our own Pacific Flyway (and all the other flyways) is like a freeway in the sky for birds! By encouraging and dazzling people with tidbits like these we can raise awareness about natural habitats, and by association, Audubon's efforts to create a more environmentally healthy and bird-friendly world.

Of course, we live in a highly urbanized area, and migration is not something in the forefront of the mind of the average citizen. However, people do recognize the "common" birds that they see in their yards, city parks and streets. I often wear my Audubon baseball hat when I am out and about, and have been approached more than once with questions about our local avian population. Everyone wants to know about Mockingbirds, especially in the spring. Number one inquiry: "Why are they so noisy and why do they swoop at me when I am in my yard/going to my car?" When I explain that the birds are



probably nesting nearby and have chicks to

protect, annoyance gives way to understanding. I go on to explain that the parents work together, with one as the lookout and the other as the "enforcer". Now the understanding turns to amazement. "They really work together like that? They can communicate with each other on that level?" They can and they do! The final part of the exchange is when I tell them that the harassment will stop as soon as the chicks fledge, which shouldn't be long at this point. Now my inquisitive

stranger is relieved, but also is usually thrilled to know that real live Animal Planet type stuff is going on in their midst, in the middle of the city.

Opportunities to inform and educate people about birds, the environment and Audubon's mission abound. If we take the time to talk to people about the wonders of nature, we have a chance to inspire them to be better caretakers of nature. An additional benefit is the contagious nature of the excitement experienced by one who might be new to the world of birding. It is great fun to hand a pair of binoculars to someone who has never birded before and provides them with a close-up view of a plunge-diving Pelican or a blossom probing Hummingbird. Sharing information about the observed behavior—the Pelican can hold up to three gallons of water in its pouch! The Hummingbird can fly backwards—serves to enhance their experience and can make a life-long impression on the novice, and hopefully motivate them to learn more. Another comment made by the young speaker at the convention's Sunday session was "If someone is excited about a sparrow, let them be excited about a sparrow!" With the right amount of patience, humor and enthusiasm on your part, they might even become members of Audubon!

The fact of the matter is that we have a whole new generation of potential environmentalists and birders out there, and in all of my years of educating and training docents and interns for our education programs I have yet to find someone who is unimpressed by wonders of the natural world and its denizens. Our volunteer docents pass their knowledge on to the students that visit Ballona and Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. The hoped for result is that the generation coming up will know enough about natural habitats to motivate them to protect and save wild spaces and create some animal friendly habitats in their own urban environs.

Education (ideally) can be a lifelong process, and to that end I must mention that docent training classes for the Ballona Wetlands Program begins on September 10th and for the program at Kenneth Hahn on October 4th. I would love to have you join us for either or both. Please feel free to contact me if you are interested. 🐦



TIME TO GET READY FOR THE KIDS!

Summer continues to fly by, which means docent training will soon begin. Los Angeles Audubon is looking for volunteers that are interested in becoming docents for our two environmental education programs for schoolchildren. We host over 3500 students every year at the Ballona Wetlands and at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area, and the core of the programs is our roster of valued and talented volunteers. No experience is necessary; just a love of the outdoors and a willingness to share your enthusiasm with children. Two separate training programs are offered, one for each site.

For the Ballona Wetlands:

Training begins on Tuesday, September 10th from 9am to noon and will continue every Tuesday morning for six sessions, through October 22nd. All meetings will take place at the Saltmarsh in Playa del Rey.

For Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area:

Training will commence on Friday, October 3rd from 9 am to noon and will continue every Friday for five sessions, through November 1st. All meetings will take place at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area in the Baldwin Hills.

Volunteers should be available on weekdays during the school year. We ask that you contribute two days a month of your time to educating and inspiring the environmental stewards of the future. This is fun and rewarding work, and a great chance to get outside with like-minded folk.

Please contact Cindy Hardin at cindyhardin@laudubon.org or 310-301-0050 for more information. I look forward to hearing from you!

INTERPRETING NATURE

BY STACEY VIGALLON, DIRECTOR OF INTERPRETATION

Exploring Nature in the City: Los Angeles Audubon's First Summer Program for Middle School Students

In July 2013 Los Angeles Audubon Education staff launched its first summer program for middle school students. With a focus on ecology and environmental science, our goal was to provide an educational bridge for students who had attended Politi Elementary School and were now in sixth and seventh grades at middle schools throughout Los Angeles. With binoculars in hand, we covered a lot of ground – from the ocean to the Santa Monica Mountains. Students took notes and made sketches in their field notebooks, fostering observation skills and critical thinking. Lunchtime was an adventure too, a way to explore new cultures and connections to nature. Students tried falafel and hummus for the first time, ate seaweed chips, sampled five different kinds of tomatoes, and enjoyed peaches from the local farmers market for dessert every day. Kid-structured outdoor playtime was also an important aspect of the summer program. After lunch, students chose and organized their own activities – soccer, tag, frisbee, or even just hanging out in the shade of a sycamore. Check out the exciting itinerary and the photo highlights...



Students hike along the lake trail at Franklin Canyon.



Seventh-graders enjoy lunch in Downtown LA. These students were in third grade when they helped install the native habitat at Politi Elementary.

Day 1: Meet the Grunion!

We kicked off our summer program with a pizza party and evening field trip for students and families to the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium to meet the grunion. Our group of sixty people explored the aquarium, the fish nursery, and took silly photos dressed in marine animal costumes. Highlight of the night? Getting to hatch grunion eggs in tiny jars!

Day 2: Geology, Navigation, and Crafts at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area
During a geology-themed hike, students navigated the park with compasses and learned how geology, wildlife, and urbanization intersect. They worked in teams to build solar ovens that successfully baked chocolate chip cookies, and then decorated tote bags using hand-carved potato stamps and made notebooks from recycled computer disks.

Students give the thumbs-up for their solar ovens – they successfully baked chocolate-chip cookies!



Students decorated their own tote bags with hand-carved potato stamps at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area.

Day 3: Ballona Saltwater Marsh
From Great Blue Herons to tiny marsh invertebrates, wildlife was the theme for our trip to the saltwater marsh. Students examined and sketched snails, nematode worms, and amphipods with the help of microscopes. We caught some of the beginning of fall migration along the Ballona Channel, and helped remove iceplant from a habitat restoration area. Best bird sighting of the day— White-tailed Kite!



Students study invertebrates and algae at the Ballona Saltwater Marsh.

Day 4: Exploring the Santa Monica Mountains at Franklin Canyon

During our docent-led hike at Franklin Canyon, we learned about the plant materials that native peoples use (willows, acorns, tules), saw scores of turtles at the pond, and watched a Cooper's Hawk come in for a landing at eye level just a few yards from us. At the Sooky Goldman Nature Center, each student embarked on a mini research project, using the books and displays available. Topics ranged from geodes to mountain lions to energy conservation. Much silliness ensued with the wildlife puppets.



Students conduct mini research projects at the Sooky Goldman Nature Center in Franklin Canyon.

Day 5: Nature and Culture in Downtown LA

On the final day of the summer program, we visited Downtown LA with an eye for making nature connections while we toured the music complex and the Central Library. At the Walt Disney Concert Hall we learned that Frank Gehry included references to fish and the ocean in his design of the building, and we examined the natural materials used in the other music complex buildings, such as abalone shell, marble, and oak. After lunch we completed an urban hike through Downtown to the Central Library. Students got a fantastic tour of the teen resource center, learning how to research topics in the digital database and marveling at the dazzling array of young adult books and comics available for check-out. Almost everyone left with new library cards in hand.

Many thanks to Politi Elementary Principal Brad Rumble for helping us connect with students and parents, the families of Politi alumni for letting their children participate in this new program, and staff/docents at Cabrillo Marine Aquarium, Ballona Saltwater Marsh, Franklin Canyon, Central Library, and the Walt Disney Concert Hall. And a huge thanks to the team of alumni from the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program (now in college or about to start college), who did an outstanding job of helping to lead middle-school students. 🐾

In Memoriam

On July 15, 2013, our beloved volunteer, Hanna Hayman passed away.

For nearly 10 years, Hanna volunteered weekly at Audubon House in Plummer Park, the headquarters and bookstore of the Los Angeles Audubon Society. Hanna assisted the staff and other volunteers by greeting visitors to Audubon House, proofreading submissions to the *WESTERN Tanager* and helping with mailings to our membership.

She cried when we left Audubon House, saying how much she would miss the staff and all the members who visited; she would miss being

surrounded by all the books she so loved. Since we left, Hanna continued to correspond by telephone, but it was not the same as seeing her sweet face and vibrant smile. We appreciate and admired Hanna for how much she gave of her time, talents and intellect. We will miss her often.

For those of you who never had the opportunity to meet Hanna, please read the following brief biography kindly submitted by her daughter Ann. —Susan Castor

Hanna Reich Hayman

Hanna R. Hayman was born on August 4, 1924 in Breslau, Germany, from a family with many physicians. Her father, Joseph Reich, MD was a family physician and her mother, Anneliese Kohnstamm Reich was a homemaker and social worker. Hanna had a happy and comfortable childhood in Germany until Adolf Hitler became German Chancellor in 1933 and the Nazi persecution of Jews began. With the passage of the anti-Semitic "Nuremberg Laws" in 1935 that stripped Jews of their citizenship, Dr. Reich (a decorated war hero) was no longer able to practice medicine in Germany. Despite many obstacles, Anneliese arranged for him to come to the U.S. in early 1936 to complete his American medical residency at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago, Illinois. Anneliese and Hanna followed him to Chicago in May 1937.

After graduating from Hyde Park High School, Hanna attended the University of Chicago and received a B.A. degree from Bennington College in Vermont in 1946. Anneliese and Hanna moved to Los Angeles and Hanna met her future husband, Gerald O. Hayman, on a blind date in 1947. They were married in Hills, CA on November 23, 1948. Their twins, Ann and Franklin, followed shortly thereafter, and were born in Los Angeles on October 21, 1949.

Hanna and Gerald lived in Los Angeles and were happily married for 62 years. In the 1970's and 80's they enjoyed taking annual trips to Europe or Hawaii. Gerald worked for 35 years as an electronic engineer in the aerospace industry in the Los Angeles area. In addition to raising two children, Hanna was very involved in the PTA, the League of Women Voters, and various environmental and political organizations. She was also a very active volunteer in adult literacy programs. Later, she worked for over 10 years in the Immunization Project at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. She was recognized by GLAD (Greater Los Angeles Council on Deafness, Inc.) for developing a creative Language poster on RTD buses in Los Angeles that brought awareness of the health care needs of the hearing impaired. She enjoyed her volunteer position with the Los Angeles Audubon Society for many years where she developed an appreciation for birding. Hanna was a passionate reader and gardener, and she loved to walk, exercise, and swim. She listened to classical music and opera. Hanna made every effort to prevent her severe hearing impairment from interfering with her life.

Hanna was predeceased by her beloved husband in 2010. She passed away suddenly at her home in Los Angeles on July 15, 2013. She would have celebrated her 89th birthday on August 4, 2013. Hanna is survived by her two children, three grandchildren and one great grandchild.



Hanna R. Hayman, 1924–2013

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

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September

Sunday, September 8

Ventura County Game Preserve (Duck Club)

NO FEE, SIGN-UP REQUIRED, 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 e-mail Audubon with name and contact info. We will walk the property, so good hiking / mud shoes with energetic legs inside a prerequisite. Actually, 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.

Saturday, September 14

San Diego Area Migrant Hunt

\$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 (did someone say Little Bunting and Connecticut Warbler?). Other possible areas include Sunset Cliffs for shorebirds, Mission Bay for terns and rails, lower San Diego Bay for flocks of shorebirds (usually Red Knot), Tijuana River Bottomlands (occasional good "sod birds") and nearby farm fields with tamarisk rows. We will launch into chase mode if there are known rarities about. Take the 5 Fwy S about three miles past Route 52 to the Clairemont Drive off-ramp and head W straight into the small lot adjacent to the Mission Bay Information Center. Meet S of the kiosk at 8:00 a.m. Bring a lunch to bird all day. FRS radios helpful.

Sunday, September 15

Huntington Central Park and Bolsa Chica Wetlands

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: *Irwin Woldman*. Huntington Central Park can be excellent for migrating songbirds, with large numbers and unusual species showing up annually. Also, the invasive Nutmeg Manikin and Pintailed Whydah. 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, 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 in Ridgecrest; **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). 12 Max. Bring lunches, FRS radios, sun block.

Saturday, September 28**South Bay Parks**

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader *Tracy Drake* is manager and naturalist at Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center, and knows where to find the birds here and at many other South Bay parks as well. In addition to Madrona Marsh, we will likely visit South Coast Botanic Gardens, Wilderness Park, and Alondra Park. Fall songbird migration should be in full swing. MEET AT Madrona Marsh headquarters (3201 Plaza Del Amo, Torrance, CA 90503) parking lot at 8:00 a.m., and bird until about 3:00 p.m. TO GET HERE, take the 405 Fwy to the Artesia Blvd W offramp in Torrance, turning S quickly onto Prairie Ave., which eventually becomes Madrona Ave. Take Plaza Del Amo E to the lot on the left. We will carpool here. Bring lunch.

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, 80 Max.

Speaker Tom Stephenson has just finished penning the Princeton Press, *The Warbler Guide*, replete with a flock of photos, which will be for sale at the workshop at the Eaton Canyon Nature Center. For more workshop details, refer to the write-up on page 17 in this newsletter and online; and check out the *Overlooked ID Points ... lecture* listed under the Oct. 16th Program Presentation on page 30 (a joint chapter meeting with LAAS & Pasadena Audubon Society at Eaton Canyon Nature Center.)

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.

November**Sunday, November 3****Newport Back Bay**

NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader: *Mary 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 7:30 a.m. for the 6.4' high tide (highest weekend of the season), and a full day of birding in the area. High tide at the mouth is 8:07 a.m., and may not peak in the back bay until after 8:45 a.m., but we want to be in position if birds flush to higher ground. 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 and FRS radios helpful.

Saturday, November 16

Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge

SIGN-UP REQUIRED (before Nov. 8th), NO FEE, Limit 20,

Refuge volunteer *Slader Buck*, 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 are usually sighted.

The refuge is part of the Naval Weapons Station. **By Nov. 8th**, you must provide the following for the Naval Base Access List application: First Name, Middle Name (or NMN if none), Last Name, Address, City/Zip Code, DOB, DL#, State, and Citizenship. *All personal data will be treated in a confidential manner.* In addition, LAAS needs your email address, home or cell phone numbers. Send reservation request with ALL INFORMATION to: membership@laudubon.org and wait for email confirmation. Only LAAS confirmed participants of U.S. citizenship with photo ID allowed on base. No weapons, camera OK.

MEET AT the main public lot at 800 Seal Beach Blvd. at 8:00 a.m. for a high tide of 6.1 feet around 11:00 a.m., and bird until noon. TAKE Seal Beach Blvd. S from the 405 Fwy, pass Westminster Blvd., turn left onto the base at the Forrestal Lane light, and left again into the lot. Spotting scopes and FRS radios helpful.

Sunday, November 24

San Jacinto Wildlife Area & Lake Perris

NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader: *Howard King*. Little Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gulls (2!), Short-eared Owls (2!) seen on past trips may not be back this year; but surely something will take their places, such as the Iceland Gull and Gyrfalcon seen here in recent years (but not on our trip)! 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, if we go there.

Christmas Bird Counts

Saturday, December 14

Lancaster Christmas Bird Count

Contact compilers *Nick and Mary Freeman* at 818-636-4361 or mnfreeman@earthlink.net to be placed on a team or be given an area.

Sunday, December 15

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 29

Los Angeles Basin Christmas Bird Count

Contact Dan Cooper at 323-397-3562, or dan_cooper_90042@yahoo.com. For complete details visit <http://www.cooperecological.com/LABCBC>.

January

Saturday, January 4 (tentative)

Tejon Ranch

NO FEE, SIGN-UP REQUIRED, LIMIT 12

Leader: *Louis Tucker*. Visits to Tejon Ranch are by special arrangement with escort only, as one could easily get lost on the web of dirt roads covering this huge working ranch. Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk all likely in the rolling hills of the ranch. Bring lunch, as we will be out most of the day. MEET AT the Denny's in Sylmar visible from the 5 Fwy. Take the Roxford St. turnoff, and be prepared to depart at 7:00 a.m. High clearance vehicles recommended, as we will carpool into these and ranch vehicles at the ranch. Rain cancels. Limit: 12 participants only. Please register with LA Audubon by phone 323-876-0202, and provide phone number, email, high clearance Y/N, spare passenger seats. FRS radios and scopes useful.

Friday, January 17 (tentative)

Point Mugu NAWS

\$5 DEPOSIT, BUT NO FEE,

LIMITED MAX 20, SIGN-UP REQUIRED by Dec 31

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 7:45 a.m. *The attendance list must be submitted to the base, so sign up early; deadline December 31.* 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 & email, full name with middle initial or NMN (to indicate no middle name), Address, City/Zip Code, CDL# (or other state license), and a \$5 deposit check to be refunded at the gate. Min. 10/Max. 24.

PROGRAM PRESENTATIONS

Wed., Sept. 11, 2013

**Pelagic Birding off Southern California:
What You See When You Go to Sea***South Polar Skua, Photo by David Pereksta*

The waters offshore of southern California are one of the last birding frontiers in the state. An exciting mix of local breeders, arctic nesting migrants, and austral migrants that are rarely if ever seen from land can be found at sea if you know when, where, and how to look for them. Presenter, David Pereksta, will show us what experiences southern California pelagic birding trips offer. David has spent over 100 days at sea off southern California and will describe the species that occur off our coast, where local pelagic trips go and how they operate, and how to best schedule a trip to see the birds (and marine mammals) you are looking for. Bring your soda crackers, Dramamine, and binoculars for this program that is richly illustrated with the best of the thousands of photos of birds and marine mammals David has taken at sea.

David is an Avian Biologist with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, where he studies and analyzes the effects of offshore oil and gas, and renewable energy development on birds off the Pacific coast. An avid birder for over 35 years, he has birded throughout North America and the American tropics, including leading trips to Belize, Costa Rica, and Peru. He is also a regular pelagic trip leader for the Condor Express, Buena Vista Audubon, Shearwater Journeys, and Seabirding Pelagic Trips. He has seen over 1,600 species in his travels in the Americas; photographing nearly 1,000 species along the way.

SEPT. MEETING TIME & LOCATION

**Audubon Center at Debs Park
4700 N Griffin Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90031
7:30 P.M.–9:30 P.M.**

Wed., Oct. 16, 2013

**The Overlooked ID Points that
Make Identifying Warblers Easier**

The October 2013 Los Angeles Audubon Society's (LAAS) monthly program presentation has been re-scheduled to Wednesday, October 16, 2013. Join us this night for a joint chapter meeting with Pasadena Audubon Society at Eaton Canyon Nature Center

*Note your calendars; this is a change of week & location of the regularly scheduled LAAS monthly program.

Los Angeles Audubon Society (LAAS) and Pasadena Audubon Society (PAS) will host a joint program on the overlooked ID points that make identifying warblers easier. The warblers of the US and Canada are some of the most beautiful birds of the world. But multiple plumages and often brief or obstructed views can make identification difficult.

Tom Stephenson, author of Princeton's upcoming *The Warbler Guide*, will discuss many important but often overlooked ID points such as overall contrast, subtle facial features, color impressions, feather edging, rump contrast, foraging style and location, and general behavior. Tom will also cover how viewing a warbler from below can reveal some of the most important ID points for many species. This will include information on tail and undertail covert patterns and how many combinations of these patterns are often diagnostic alone or when combined with one other ID point.

Individual species, especially the most challenging to identify, will then be discussed with outlines of the important ID points, comparisons with similar species, and illustrations of how even partial views can be used to identify many of the most challenging warbler species.

See **WARBLER WORKSHOP**, Oct 19th, page 17.

OCT. MEETING TIME & LOCATION

**Eaton Canyon Nature Center
1750 N Altadena Dr
Pasadena, CA 91107
Social Hour & Book Signing begin at 6:30 P.M.
Program over by 9:30 P.M.**

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 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

1st Sunday of every month

Sept. 1 and Oct. 6

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

Sept. 8 and Oct. 13

Time: 8:30–11:30 a.m.

Leader: *Eleanor Osgood*

Join us as we take a casual walk around the ponds and trails of this urban oak woodland nature preserve. We are likely to see the resident Wood Ducks and as well 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, 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)

Sept. 15 and Oct. 20

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

KENNETH HAHN STATE RECREATION AREA

(4100 S. LA CIENEGA BLVD, LOS ANGELES 90056)

3RD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH

SEPT. 21 AND OCT. 19,

Time: 8:00–11:30 a.m.

Leaders: *Eric & Ann Brooks, Eleanor Osgood*

This trip covers landscaped parkland, a man-made lake and natural coastal scrub habitats within the Baldwin Hills. We are likely to see many of the resident birds such as Black and Say's Phoebes, Cassin Kingbirds, California and Spotted Towhee, Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper's Hawk. We will look for southbound migrating birds such as warblers, vireos and flycatchers.

Directions:

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

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 1st of the month to be included in the following issue.

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

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

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 Mail this form, and include a check made payable to
 LAAS - Membership:

Los Angeles Audubon Society
 P.O. Box 931057
 Los Angeles, CA 90093-1057
 Attn: Membership

LAAS Membership Levels

| | |
|--|----------|
| Regular 1-yr Chapter Membership ...\$25 | \$ _____ |
| Couple 1-yr Chapter Membership\$35 | \$ _____ |
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An introductory membership to the National Audubon Society is \$20 and should be sent separately to:

National Audubon Society
 PO Box 422246
 Palm Coast, FL 32142-6714

Be sure to write "C3ZC030Z" on the NAS application to assure assignment to the Los Angeles chapter. For NAS renewals, use the form provided in the National Audubon magazine, "Audubon."

If you have any questions about membership renewals, change of address or any other membership concerns, please contact Susan Castor at (323) 876-0202 or email her at membership@laudubon.org.