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WESTERN Tanager

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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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Let's Not Forget About the Little Things!

By Cindy Hardin, Director of Outdoor Education

Docent training has commenced for Los Angeles Audubon's Environmental Education programs at the Ballona Wetlands and at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. It's always a great time of year, as returning docents prepare for another rewarding year of teaching children about the natural environment on-site, and new volunteers learn about the unique ecosystems found at these locations. Of course, both veterans and new recruits experience much excitement when we catch a view of a Red-tailed Hawk soaring on the air currents above, or a Snowy Egret, wiggling its feet in the mudflats in hopes of stirring up a meal. This "charismatic fauna" is easy to see, and (to me at least!) breathtaking in their appearance. However, as we get carried away with awe in seeing these species right here in the midst of this big city, we may overlook the "little creatures", whose presence is essential to the very existence of the larger animals.

These two species are linked by the food chain and geographically. Both photos were taken at the Ballona Wetlands within 50 feet of each other.



Western Fence Lizard | Photo by Leslie Davidson



Harvester Ant Hill and Harvester Ants | Photo by Cindy Hardin

Let's Not Forget About the Little Things! Cont'd.

I spend a lot of time emphasizing these humble members of the lower levels of the food chain, in hopes of establishing the connectivity of both non-living and living components in any ecosystem. A simple example that is often described to visiting students would be the indigenous Harvester Ant, busily gathering the seeds of our native Buckwheat to bring back to its colony. An encounter with a Western Fence Lizard will not end happily for the ant, but will result in a tasty lunch for the lizard. The lizard's enjoyment of his repast might be cut short by the predatory King Snake, who in turn will provide a great meal for the soaring Red-tailed Hawk. Take away the Buckwheat, and this chain will be broken, and our chances of sighting the Hawk will diminish. Thanks to the presence of natural habitat and native plantings that were installed and are maintained by LAAS at Kenneth Hahn, students and docents have a chance to witness parts of these segments of the food chain during field trips at the park.



*The California Horn Snail —just a stop along the way in the life cycle of the trematode worm.
Photo by Cindy Harding*

A more complex relationship between prey, parasites, and predators is regularly on display at Ballona. The California Horn Snail is easy to see, and in great abundance at the Saltmarsh. Less apparent are the trematodes, a type of flatworm or fluke. The gut of the horn snail is the host for the larvae of the trematode. The Horn Snail ingests the trematode eggs when it consumes the feces of the snowy egret (remember, the Horn Snail is the clean-up crew of the estuary!). The eggs hatch in the Horn Snail and emerge as larvae. On warm days we can actually see the larvae emerging from the Horn Snail while instructing children at the Microscope Station! Those larvae go on to burrow into the sides of small fish present in the waters. The larvae do not kill the fish, but they do slow them down a bit, making them an easy catch for the Snowy Egret, whose gut is the next stop in the parasites' life cycle. The larvae mature in the gut of the Egret and lay their eggs, which are then ejected through the digestive system in the feces of the bird. The Horn Snail ingests the eggs, and the cycle continues. Although the larvae do not kill the Horn Snail, they do sterilize the gastropod, which helps to keep their population in check. Horn Snails also eat algae, an important habitat and food source for invertebrates that dwell in the tidal channels. Too many Horn Snails mean a decimation of algae, which would create a negative impact on the invertebrates living in the saltmarsh. Slow-moving fish that have been penetrated by the trematode larvae mean easy pickings for the Snowy Egret, that charismatic bird that everyone enjoys seeing! This system of mutualism is essential in enriching the biodiversity of a saltmarsh. Up to twenty different species of trematodes have been sighted in Southern California saltmarshes, and scientists have shown that the greater variety of trematodes present is directly linked to the number of bird species at the site.

One of the most diverse and abundant ecosystems around can be found right off the coastline here in Southern California. That would be the Giant Kelp Forests. This year, on the first day of training at Ballona, I brought in a Kelp holdfast attached to a rock. The holdfast is the foundation and beginnings of a Kelp forest. The first point I wanted to make was about the rock itself. Kelp is dependent upon the rocky substrate upon which it attaches. Many of the rocks found on the ocean floor did not originate in the sea. Instead, they were part of the mountain topography found upstream from the ocean. If we dam and channelize our natural streams and rivers, large boulders become trapped upstream, and are unable to reach the sea.



Remnant of a thriving ecosystem or teaching tool? Both! This kelp holdfast, found on the beach after monster swells generated by Hurricane Norbert, was a point of discussion during Ballona docent training. Photo by Cindy Harding

Giant Kelp can live up to seven years, but its survivorship during heavy storms correlates with the hardness of the substrate to which they are attached. The smaller the rock, the less hardy the substrate; and the modern system of channelizing and damming rivers and streams prevent these larger boulders from descending into the sea, forming a strong substrate.

If a large boulder is present, the Kelp will form its holdfast around that chunk of geological history. A healthy large holdfast is home to thousands of invertebrates. A study that examined five Giant Kelp holdfasts in Monterey Bay found 23,000 individuals from nine different invertebrate phyla. This included polychaete worms, amphipods, decapods, gastropods and ophiuroids. These invertebrates are food for the next level of the food chain found in the Kelp forest. Jellyfish, crustaceans and fish larvae are all found in the water column around the Giant Kelp. These creatures attract larger fish, like rockfish and surfperch, which browse on the crustaceans associated with the fronds and canopies. These smaller fish are in turn a banquet for Harbor Seals, Tuna and Porpoises. The topsmelt and anchovies that

lurk near the top of the forest bring in foraging seabirds, like cormorants, Least Terns and Brown Pelicans. A healthy Kelp Forests can also shelter our largest sea mammals. Gray Whales have been observed entering Kelp forests to escape predation from Killer Whales. The whales have also been known to feed on midwater crustacean swarms present in the forest. The growth rate of Kelp in peak season can be up to two feet per day, creating huge amounts of habitat for all of these creatures. Peak season in our local waters is winter time, when water temperatures drop and upwelling of nutrients from colder waters below is more common. Winter winds and storms drive this essential upwelling.

The kelp's utility and productivity does not end in the water. When the substrate is dislodged from the bottom due to large swells and/or storm activity, parts of the forest wind up on our shores in the form of wrack. Initially, invertebrates trapped in the holdfast are consumed by foraging shorebirds. Then, the kelp flies attracted by the decomposing kelp provide a food source for the Snowy Plover and other insect eating birds, like swallows. Finally, as the kelps completely dries out and crumbles, it is blown or washed back into the sea, bringing nutrients back to its point of origin.

Knowledge and fascination about this incredible ecosystem is not new. Witness Charles Darwin's thoughts on Kelp, recorded in 1834 as he visited Tierra de Fuego, in Chile:

"I can only compare these great aquatic forests . . . with the terrestrial ones in the intertropical regions. Yet if in any country a forest was destroyed, I do not believe nearly so many species of animals would perish as would here, from the destruction of the Kelp. Amidst the leaves of this plant numerous species of fish live, which nowhere else could find food or shelter; with their destruction the many cormorants and other fishing birds, the otter, seals and porpoise, would soon perish also; and lastly, the Fuegians ... would ... decrease in numbers and perhaps cease to exist."

The rock that started it all for the Kelp Forest is inanimate, and to the casual observer may have little significance. The "little things" are difficult to see, and hardly charismatic to most. But, in all three of the examples above, their presence is essential to the larger creatures that thrill us. The next time you are treated to the sight of a diving Brown Pelican or a soaring Red-tailed Hawk, perhaps you will be reminded that it's the unseen players that helped to create the spectacle. 🐟

115th Christmas Bird Count—Why Do A Count?

By Nick Freeman

Bird watching is what you make of it. Certainly there are many that would prefer to just take in the marvel of nature, on a canyon trail or at their feeders. Others are artistic photographers at heart, and may not even know their subjects that well. Ornithologists, not surprisingly, watch and survey birds — sometimes for different reasons than the rest of us. Many, though, exhibit a drive that engenders the thrill of the hunt. These are the tickers, and competitive birders amongst us. The Hard Core.

So who do Christmas Bird Counts (aka CBCs) appeal to? Oddly, CBCs are an excellent common ground where beginners, fanatics, and academics can meet to do what they love, and all make a real contribution to the present and future understanding of ornithology and other branches of science.

If you are “count material”, you have probably already heard about Christmas Bird Counts, and are only trying to decide whether you have time during the busy holiday season to sneak in one, two, three, or maybe even four counts this year. I doubt the following will make this decision any easier, but it may at least make you feel that what you are doing is important as well as fun.

The 2014/15 Christmas Bird Count will be the 115th survey, and is the longest-running citizen science survey in the world. It has provided critical data for over 200 peer-reviewed journal articles fueling the cutting edge of ornithology. When combined with Breeding Bird Surveys and the eBird database, ornithologists today have unprecedented riches of data to mine when addressing myriad questions of changing status and distribution. Here is a short sample:

Increase in numbers or range, regionally or as a species:

- *Population trends and status of the Olivaceous Cormorant* (Morrison, M.L. et al. 1977)
- *The Hooded Merganser: A Preliminary Look at Growth in Numbers in the United States* (Davis, S et al. 2006)
- *Decrease in numbers or range, regionally or as a species:*

- *Population trends of the Loggerhead Shrike in the United States* (Morrison, M.L. 1981)
 - *Changes in the winter distribution of the Rough-legged Hawk in North America* (Pandolfino, E.R., et al. 2009)
 - *Population changes due to disease or competition: Lack of recovery of Yellow-billed Magpie from West Nile virus in California's Central Valley* (Pandolfino, E.R., et al. 2013)
 - *Correlation between House Finch increase and House Sparrow decline* (Kricher, J.C. 1983)
- Tangential (sometimes unexpected?) conclusions:
- *Northward expansion of the wintering range of Richardson's Merlin* (James, P.C., et al. 1987)
 - *Disparities between observed and predicted impacts of climate change on winter bird assemblages* (La Sorte, F.A., et al. 2009)
 - *Poleward shifts in winter ranges of North American birds* (La Sorte, F.A., et al 2007)



Compilers for the Lancaster CBC, Mary and Nick Freeman at Piute Ponds, 2013.

Why Do a CBC Count? Cont'd.

For complete bibliographical listings of these articles and the hundreds of others, search:

<http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count-bibliography-scientific-articles>. National Audubon compiles the CBC information, and maintains the database. Their website is also the source of many of the details in this article, and much more information about Christmas Bird Counts.

CBC data can support removal of species from the Endangered Species list, such as the Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon; or show marked declines and need for protection of other species. A recent CBC data analysis of population trends since 1967, undertaken by the National Audubon Society, showed many species — some that we consider to be fairly common — to actually be in sharp decline. Greater Sage Grouse, Rusty Blackbird, Evening Grosbeak (down 78%), Northern Pintail (78%), Eastern Meadowlark (71%), Loggerhead Shrike, Snow Bunting, American Bittern, Whip-poor-will (57%), Rufous Hummingbird (58%), Boreal Chickadee, and another 9 species were all down by at least 54%. Many others are down to a lesser degree. Getting help for these species is hard enough when we know what's going on. We will always need data on birds that are quietly slipping out of existence, and you never know when data from your CBC circle will be needed 20-30 years from now to protect the Forster's Tern, LeConte's Thrasher, or Purple Finch that was never that hard to find back in 2014.

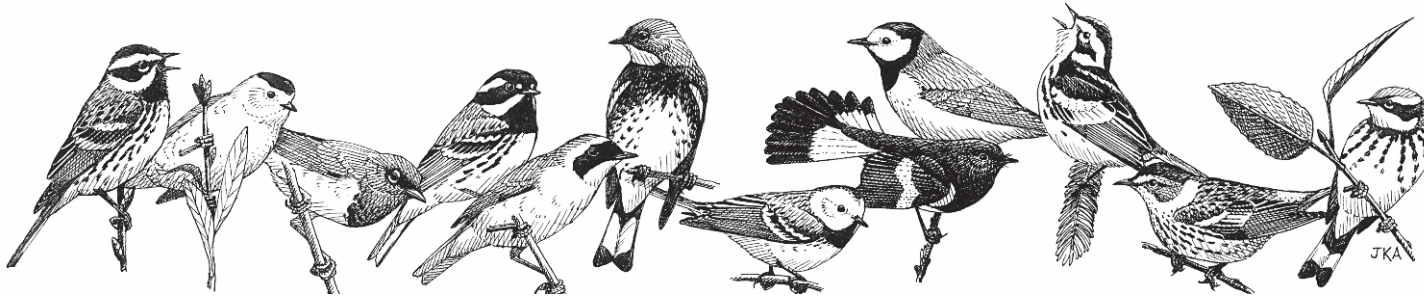
Audubon suggests doing what we can to save habitat on the local and national stage by protecting the habitat and resources that we have, and supporting sustainable agricultural and land management practices. Invasive species and global warming will also need our continuing attention. While these are tough fights, and don't make getting out of bed in the morning any easier, who needs an excuse to get up and count birds?

You don't need to know about the paper in 2065 showing the explosion of Gray Thrashers from Baja over the last 50 years to go out and find the very first one! And you don't need to be the one counting young California vs. Ring-billed Gulls. Leave that to your teammate! You can fill the role of scribe or head duck-counter, if it suits you. So call up some birding pals, or ask a compiler to hook you up, and get out there with some like-minded birders and have a good time — all in the name of science, of course!

As good fortune has it, LA Audubon sponsors three Christmas Bird Counts in LA County. The Los Angeles, Lancaster and Malibu counts are centered near those localities. Check field trip listings for information on dates and how to participate. Most (all?) other Audubon chapters sponsor additional CBCs, and welcome participants. 🐦



*The great snow storm of 2008, LeConte's Thrasher at the Lancaster CBC
Photo by Mary Freeman*



Birds of the Season — October 2014, By Jon Fisher

Birders are understandably concerned about the welfare of avian populations. As much as we love a good rare bird, we know it's good if that species is common somewhere. But being common anywhere is becoming increasingly difficult for many species. It's clear that habitat loss is the most significant cause of declining populations, yet there are many lesser ones that in aggregate have considerable impact.

Window collisions, various pollutants and toxic substances, shooting, automobiles, wind turbines, and domestic cats constitute only a partial list. These of course are all above and beyond the natural hazards that birds confront: unfavorable climate and weather, predators and arduous migrations.

How much attrition from all these sources can birds sustain? As would be expected, most species are experiencing at least slow declines in numbers, though in some the changes have been dramatic.

A recent study by the World Wildlife Federation, Zoological Society of London and others has concluded that since 1970 the earth has

lost fully one half of its wildlife. This is a stunning and sobering figure, difficult to even comprehend.

North America has suffered its share of historic losses, but today we worry about many songbirds in decline. Most at risk are those species that cross borders to winter to the south of us, as these birds are often losing both breeding and wintering habitat. The losses are hardly limited to songbirds, but this group is perhaps the most emblematic.

California is geographically situated in such a way that many of these population changes are evident to birders here, even though these may not be "our" birds. Cerulean Warblers, Dickcissels, Bobolinks and Rusty Blackbirds all have shrinking populations, and in recent decades the state has seen fewer occurrences of these species. While we can celebrate that some conservation progress is being made, it's hardly enough to halt these declines, let alone reverse them.

While it may simply be pragmatic to be pessimistic about the future, there are still a lot of birds. In southern California, it was no

surprise that September brought us plenty of hot days. There's a good reason many passerines are nocturnal migrants—avoiding the stresses of heat and dehydration are worth the risks.

By the middle of September most of our wintering passerines had begun to show up along with early arriving waterfowl. Thus far there's been little evidence of any irruptive species, though given the dry conditions in the west we might expect such dispersals to be more marked.

A **Snow Goose** was in Pico Rivera on the San Gabriel River on October 12 (Larry Schmah).

The waters southwest of San Clemente Island produced a **Red-billed Tropicbird** on September 4 (Jon Feenstra). Good numbers of Brown Boobies appeared in southern and central California waters this summer and fall, but just two were recorded during the period in LA County. One **Brown Booby** was found southwest of San Clemente Island on September 4 (Jon Feenstra) and another was at the Long Beach Harbor entrance on October 5 (Mark & Janet Scheel).

An **American Bittern** was observed briefly on the San Gabriel River in Pico Rivera on October 12 (Larry Schmahl).

Rare as fall transients, single **Broad-winged Hawks** were in Agoura on October 3 (Cynthia Schotte) and in Claremont on October 5 (Tom Miko).

Scarce in the Antelope Valley was a **Ruddy Turnstone** at Lake Palmdale on September 16 (Cal Yorke).

Eight **Red Knots** were along the lower LA River from September 10 (Tom Miko, Amy Williamson) and single birds were at the Ballona Creek Mouth from September 12–15 (Mike Stensvold) and at Piute Ponds on September 21 (Mark & Janet Scheel).

Four **Stilt Sandpipers** were discovered on the LA River in Long Beach on September 9 (Richard Barth), with another found close by (Jeff Boyd). A total of up to six were present through September 15. The last one reported was at the Piute Ponds on September 21 (Mark & Janet Scheel).

Dunlins began arriving earlier than expected and in greater numbers, though this species is never common in the county.

Semipalmated Sandpipers were rather scarce again this fall, with birds on the LA River in Long Beach on August 23 (Andrew Lee), at the Piute Ponds on August 24 (Kimball Garrett), on lower LA River from August 30–September 1 (Mark & Janet Scheel, Jared Knickmeyer) and again at

Piute Ponds on September 6 (Frank & Susan Gilliland, Janet Scheel).

Expected offshore but rare inland were single **Red Phalaropes** at the Piute Ponds on September 17 (Al Guarente) and on October 3 (Jim Moore).

Present since May 10, the **Laughing Gull** on the LA River in Long Beach remained through September 17. **Sabine's Gulls** were at Lake Palmdale on September 16 (Cal Yorke) and at the Piute Ponds from September 21–26 (Mark & Janet Scheel). The first fall **Herring Gull** recorded was on the LA River in South Gate on September 17 (Richard Barth).

A handful of **Common Terns** were recorded from September 7–23 both along the coast and in the Antelope Valley, but less expected was an interior coastal slope record at Legg Lake in South El Monte on September 23 (John Garrett).

A **Chimney Swift** was over the LA River by the Harbor Freeway on September 1 (Curtis Marantz), with up to ten continuing through September 11. Always of interest in the county, but also somewhat late was a **Black Swift** over Claremont on October 9 (Tom Miko).

White-winged Doves, expected in small numbers in late summer and fall, were along the LA River in Long Beach on August 23 (Amy Williamson), at Hahamongna Watershed Park on September 5, at Cabrillo Beach on September 14 (David Ellsworth)

and at Creek Park in La Mirada on September 19 (Jonathan Rowley).

Portending another good year for this species were **Lewis's Woodpeckers** at Grassy Hollow in the San Gabriels on September 14, over Pasadena on September 21 (Darren Dowell, John Garrett) and over San Marino on September 23 (John Garrett). After a three week gap in sightings, another was found at Evey Canyon in Claremont on October 12 (Cathy McFadden & Paul Clarke)

We see plenty of intergrade flickers showing yellow underwings along with some intermediate features, but relatively few pure eastern birds. Thus **Northern "Yellow-shafted" Flickers** at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on October 7 (Darren Dowell) and Veteran's Park in Sylmar on October 11 (Jeffrey Fenwick) were of note.

A **Crested Caracara** that turned up earlier on several of the Channel Islands appeared content to remain on Santa Catalina Island through September 26.

Least Flycatchers were found at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on September 18 (Jon Feenstra) and in Avalon on Santa Catalina Island on September 26 (Kimball Garrett, Sherman Suter). Expected on the deserts but quite rare on the coastal slope was a **Dusky Flycatcher** at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on September 1 (David Moody).

Bird of the Season Cont'd.

At least one **Vermilion Flycatcher** continued at Oakdale Memorial Park in Glendora through September 21 and another was discovered at Lake Balboa on October 2 (Daniel Tinoco).

Returning for another winter was a **Tropical Kingbird** at Legg Lake in South El Monte and first observed on September 23 (John Garrett), while another possibly returning bird was at El Dorado Park in Long Beach on October 3 (John Willis).

Plumbeous Vireos were at Brackett Field in La Verne on September 22 (Tom Miko) and at Hermit Gulch Campground on Catalina Island on September 26 (Rick Taylor). A continuing **Red-eyed Vireo** was at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles through August 23 (Don Sterba).

Coastal slope **Bank Swallows** included birds on the LA River in Long Beach on August 29 (Dick Barth) and in the Sepulveda Basin on September 21 (Mike Stensvold).

A **Sage Thrasher** at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena from October 7–8 was the only report from the coastal slope (Darren Dowell).

Cedar Waxwings were already present in modest numbers by the third week of August, as indicated by a handful of reports from the San Gabriel Valley.

It was far from a disappointing fall for vagrant warblers, and they often lingered long enough to be seen by many birders. DeForest

Park in Long Beach was noteworthy as a warbler hotspot from late September into October. Recall this was also the spot of LA County's only Arctic Warbler back in autumn 2007. Clearly it's a good spot to check in September and October.

Banning Park in Wilmington hosted an **Ovenbird** from October 10–11 (Richard Barth) and a **Northern Waterthrush** was in Big Tujunga Wash from September 28–October 5 (Kimball Garrett).

Black-and-white Warblers were at Creek Park in La Mirada from September 10–11 (Jonathan Rowley), at DeForest Park in Long Beach from September 23–October 12 (Jeff Boyd), at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on October 5 (Tony Strangarity) and at Banning Park in Wilmington on October 13 (Bob Schallman).

A summering **Tennessee Warbler** continued at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena through August 19. In addition to that bird, new ones turned up with regularity with at least nine found on the coastal slope between August 24 and September 23.

At least a half dozen **Virginia's Warblers** were found between August 22 and September 21, with all but one on the coastal slope.

American Redstarts were at Peck Road WCP from August 18–19 (John Garrett) and at the West San Gabriel River Parkway Nature Trail in Lawndale on October 12 (Mark Scheel, Steve & Becky Turley, Nancy Strang).

Northern Parulas were at Oak Park Cemetery in Claremont on September 18 (Mike San

Miguel) and at the West San Gabriel River Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood on October 11 (Andrew Lee). Always a nice find was a **Bay-breasted Warbler** at DeForest Park in Long Beach from September 20–28. A **Blackburnian Warbler** was there from September 20–October 3 (both Andrew Lee) and another Blackburnian was on San Clemente Island on October 13 (Nicole Desnoyers).

A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was at Apollo Park on September 19 (Bart Scott) and five **Blackpoll Warblers** were recorded between September 21 and October 4. Reliably productive in fall, Wilson Cove on San Clemente Island produced a **Black-throated Blue Warbler** on October 9 (Nicole Desnoyers).

Palm Warblers included one in Agoura Hills on October 5 (Dan Cooper), two at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia from October 12–14 (Jon Fisher), and one at Malibu Lagoon (Scott Logan) on October 12.

No fewer than three **Prairie Warblers** were found during the period and included birds at Lake Palmdale on August 26 (Cal Yorke), at Madrona Marsh on Torrance from September 7–20 (Tracy Drake) and along the San Gabriel River in Lakewood from October 2–4 (Andrew Lee).

Turning to emberizids, a **Green-tailed Towhee** on the Palos Verdes Peninsula on September 15 was the only one reported on the coastal slope (Jim Aichele).

Clay-colored Sparrows were at the Ballona Wetlands on September 13 (Jonathan Coffin) and at Peck Road WCP in Arcadia on September 30 (Mickey Long, Kevin Long). Scarce fall migrants on the coastal slope were **Vesper Sparrows** at Hahamongna Park in Pasadena from September 19–24 (Darren Dowell) and at the Sepulveda Basin in Van Nuys on September 24 (Daniel Tinoco) and October 14 (Rose Liebowitz). From one to four were at Santa Fe Dam from September 24–October 12 (Steve & Becky Turley).

The only coastal slope **Black-throated Sparrow** of the fall was one at Pt. Dume on August 17 (Kimball Garrett) and a less expected **Lark Bunting** was on San Clemente Island on September 3 (Justyn Stahl).

Summer Tanagers were at Veteran's Park in Bell Gardens on September 22 and at South Gate Park in South Gate on September 29 (both Richard Barth).

Indigo Buntings were at Peck Road Water Cons Park on August 17 (Jon Fisher) and at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on August 18 (Darren Dowell). **Dickcissels** were on the Palos Verdes Peninsula on September 26 (Jim Aichele, Cathy Nichols) and at Madrona Marsh in Torrance from October 2–3 (Tracy Drake).

Orchard Orioles were at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on August 26 (Tom Wurster), at Loyola Marymount University in Westchester on September 6 (Russell Stone) and in Cheviot Hills from

September 27–28 (Bob Pann). **Baltimore Orioles** turned up at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on September 25 (Tracy Drake) and at DeForest Park in Long Beach from October 2–5 (Lynda Elkin).

Though fall migration and the calendar year are coming to an end, birders will still have much to occupy their time. Late migrants and lingering vagrants as well as newly arriving wintering birds will be present. The Antelope Valley offers a number of regular specialties and perhaps a longspur or two. A Northern Wheatear or White Wagtail could appear along the coast and possible Barrow's Goldeneyes are to be looked for on our interior lakes. These are just a few of the many possibilities...

Christmas Bird Counts will begin in mid-December and are always an entertaining way to spend time in the field. They also contribute to scientific record. It should be noted that almost all of these counts could benefit from greater participation, particularly by more experienced observers.

As wintering waterfowl are still arriving in November, our first spring migrants will appear in a couple of months and the birding year will be renewed. Change in southern California is nearly constant and this means every day has the potential to turn up something different and unusual. 🐦



Clay-colored Sparrow, © Christopher L. Wood



Orchard Oriole, © Christopher L. Wood

Interpreting Nature

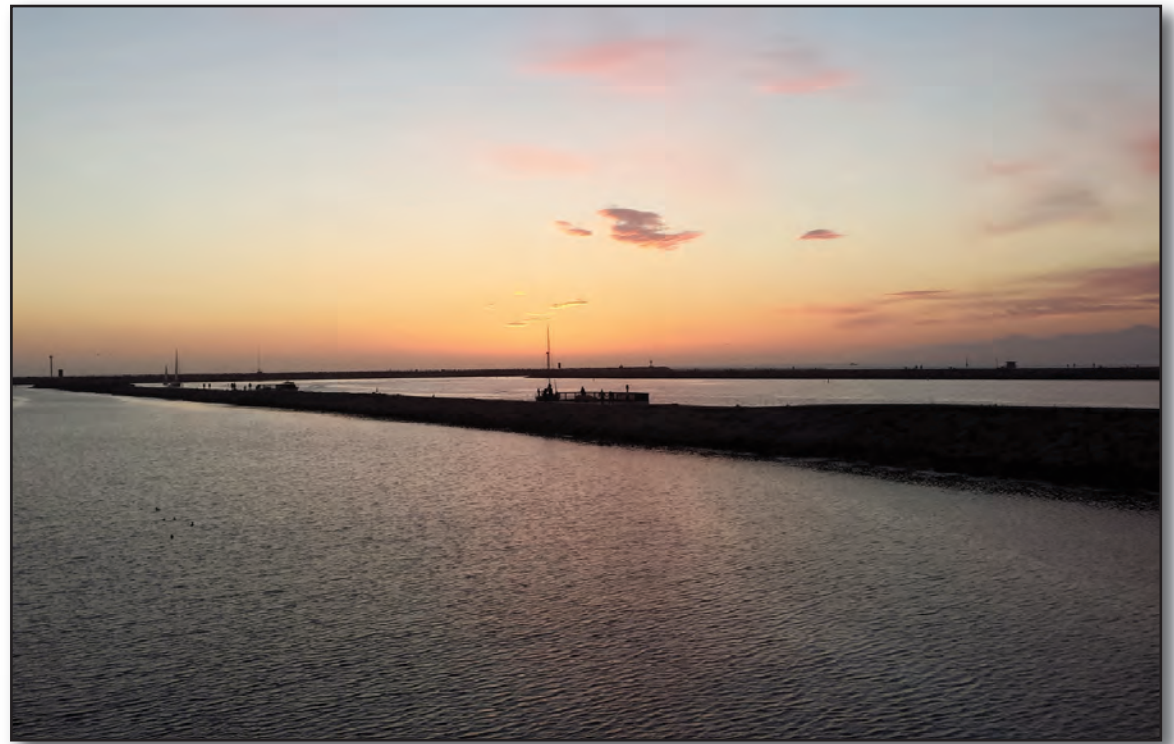
By Stacey Vigallon, Director of Interpretation, and Carlos Jauregui, Restoration Coordinator

In the early spring of 2014, Los Angeles Audubon partnered with Environment for the Americas to host two interns as part of the multi-state Celebrate Shorebirds Internship Program. Interns participating with us had the opportunity to not only collect data on shorebirds, but also work on bilingual outreach projects. We'd like to thank our interns, Sally Garcia and Carlos Jauregui, for their hard work during their internship days this spring and summer! Carlos, now a Restoration Coordinator for Los Angeles Audubon, describes the work he completed during his internship. His experience underscores the important role that the Audubon network can play in connecting young professionals to conservation opportunities.

I first heard of the opportunity to intern at Environment for the Americas from Jeff Chapman, director of the Audubon Center in Debs Park. I had interned at Debs Park the previous summer and helped with their summer camp. He emailed me and told me that he thought I fitted the job description and requirements well. I am grateful that he let me know about the internship because it has been a great experience with a variety of objectives.

The internship started with a week in San Diego for training. We stayed at a hostel in the Gas Lamp district of San Diego. We spent a lot of the time learning to identify shorebirds and what to look for when we are trying to identify the birds. Shorebirds can be a bit tricky to identify because many of them look pretty similar and they change plumage throughout the year. A couple of birds that I had trouble distinguishing from each other were the Western and Least Sandpipers. Least Sandpipers have yellow legs, but it can be difficult to see the color clearly if the light is not coming from the right direction or if the bird's legs are covered in mud. Later in the season, when the birds develop their breeding plumage, it can be a bit easier to distinguish between them.

I enjoyed the internship because it touched on many different objectives and goals. Early in the internship I would walk on the bike path by Ballona Creek and survey shorebirds. It was very calming to walk the path and focus on the birds. We had to survey at low tide, so the time I would survey would change. I got to survey later in the day and got to enjoy a few sunsets as I finished my surveys. The purpose of surveying is to monitor the migration



A sunset after completing a shorebird survey
Photo Credit: Carlos Jauregui

pattern of the shorebirds. There are other interns that are located north from here, all the way to Alaska. The numbers changed dramatically in the ten weeks that I surveyed Ballona Creek. The greatest amount of birds in the 1.5 mile stretch that I would survey was over 300, and the least amount was under 20. It was eye-opening to see the difference in numbers that a few weeks can have.

Another part of the internship has to do with outreach and informing people about the migration of birds. I had a couple of tabling events, where I would set up a table with information about migratory birds and an activity that would help people understand the difficulties of migrating. I also visited a few classrooms and had an activity for the children. We played the Migration Game. The Migration Game is a game where the students learn about the difficulties the birds experience while migrating and we talk about how we can help the birds in their long journeys. The children enjoyed it and it was great to see them very enthused to participate.

I have also been able to assist in a summer camp for children in 6th and 7th grade and I have also worked on habitat restoration. Working with children is always very fun and we got to take field trips to places I had not visited before. A couple of the places we visited were the tide pools in Palos Verdes and Franklin Canyon. It was great getting to know all the campers and learn about the sites we visited. I have also been working on habitat restoration at Kenneth Hahn, Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook, and Leo Politi Elementary. It is tough work, but the work that has already been put in by the Los Angeles Audubon interns and Greenhouse interns from Dorsey High School has made these parks look a lot better and have helped the wildlife a great deal.

After the internship I was hired as the Restoration Coordinator for Los Angeles Audubon. I was very happy when they offered me the position and a bit concerned with the new responsibilities I would have. Luckily, there are a couple of people that have worked on restoration for a while and they helped me when I had questions. It didn't take a long time for me to get comfortable with my new role and the job is very rewarding. The position allows me to continue working with Snowy Plovers and Least Terns and also working with students ranging from elementary to college. Restoration allows me to spend the day outdoors and keep an eye out for birds, insects, and reptiles while working. I have already learned a lot about the plants, weeds, and the restoration process. I am looking forward to seeing more changes to the parks as we continue to work on removing weeds and planting native plants. 🐾



Assisting with tern banding in San Diego
Photo Credit: Carlos Jauregui



Carlos Jauregui leads Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program students on a hike at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area
Photo Credit: Robert Jeffers

Condors at Hopper Mountain, Sep. 13, 2014 Field Trip Report

By Dessi Sieburth

Nick Freeman organized the Sept. field trip to Hopper Mountain which provides roosting, breeding and foraging habitat for the endangered California Condor. Dan Tappe, a biologist from the Refuge led us to the hotspots of the Refuge. He pointed out to us that micro trash is a big threat to Condors as the Condor parents feed trash to their chicks which leads to injury and death. At the observation point we met Leah, an intern biologist, who used her radio tracker to find the Condors. It did not take long before we spotted a big bird soaring in the sky! Everybody was excited when not only one —but five—free condors soared in the sky. After this amazing sighting Dan led us to the condor cages, which are used for weighting, measuring, and replacing the wing transmitter on the condor. I wanted to know more about condors and prepared some questions for the biologist. Here is my interview with Leah:

Q: The California Condor is still endangered. Is there anything we can do to help?

A: Don't throw small pieces of trash, and use non-lead ammunition when hunting.

Q: Have you seen an increase or decrease in the condor numbers at Hopper Mountain?

A: Their populations are steady at Hopper Mountain.

Q: Overall, are the condors increasing and expanding their range? Why?

A: They are increasing and expanding their range overall, mostly because of habitat creation, captivity programs, and the ban of lead ammunition.

Q: How do you think the condor's future looks?

A: It looks OK. If lead ammunition is stopped completely soon, it looks pretty bright. AB 711 which prohibits lead ammunition will take full effect in 2016.

This trip was very special to me as I got to see California Condors in the wild. Thanks to Nick Freeman for organizing this amazing field trip and thanks to the Biologists of Hopper Mountain for teaching as about condors!



Interview with Leah | Photo by Beatrix Schwarz



Radio tracker and Leah
Photo by Dessi Sieburth



Condor Cages | Photo by Dessi Sieburth

Ralph W. Schreiber Ornithology Research Awards

Dear *Western Tanager* Readers,

My name is Ryan Harrigan and starting in 2015, I will be overseeing the Schreiber Grant application and award process, taking the reigns from my esteemed colleague Walter Sakai. I am familiar with the projects that have been funded through this award and take on this new position with great responsibility, so as to ensure the continuation of excellent scientific work that has resulted from this generous grant provided by Los Angeles Audubon.

I am a lifelong animal lover, particularly birds, and have studied them as a profession for my entire career. I received my PhD in 2006 studying the systematics of waterfowl (primarily that green-headed monster know as the mallard!) at Boston University. Since beginning a postdoctoral research position at UCLA, I have focused on understanding how infectious diseases such as West Nile virus affect both bird and human populations, and the environmental and social predictors that might help us to prevent and mitigate their effects in the future under climate change.

I look forward to this new and exciting position, and feel truly honored to assist in promoting exemplary scientific work with the help of the Los Angeles Audubon. Should you have any questions or suggestions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Ryan Harrigan



Schreiber Grant Call for Applications for 2015

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

One or more awards will be given out in 2015, with the maximum amount of an award to be \$1500. The application deadline for the 2015 Research Award is December 1, 2014, and it is anticipated that grants will be awarded in April 2015. In the last few years, grants were awarded for projects ranging from studies of urban parrots in Los Angeles to Emperor penguins in Antarctica.

To obtain further details and application materials, download the materials from the Society's website: www.laaudubon.org.

Go to MAIN MENU > ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION > SCHREIBER RESEARCH GRANT

Contact: Ryan Harrigan, Grants Committee Chairman at:

Institute of the Environment and Sustainability | University of California
Los Angeles | La Kretz Hall | Suite 300 | Box 951496 | Los Angeles, CA
90095-1496

Email: ryanharrigan@laaudubon.org or iluvsa@ucla.edu

Volunteer Opportunities

Do you want to help preserve nature in Los Angeles? Here are a few ways that you can help.

Business, Community & Alumni Groups Ongoing Restoration Work Scheduled Monthly

Los Angeles Audubon is seeking volunteers to assist with ongoing habitat restoration located at two of the last great open spaces surrounded by urban LA, Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park & Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area.

The restoration work is scheduled monthly with support from community volunteers, students and local business and alumni groups. Work includes the planting of native Coastal Sage Scrub, which has been reduced to only a fraction of its original distribution, largely due to urbanization.

The Baldwin Hills area represents one of the largest remaining open spaces in the Los Angeles Basin, the largest intact portion of Coastal Sage Scrub in the Los Angeles Basin, and the only remaining natural habitat in the middle portion of the Ballona Creek Watershed.

Habitat restoration in the uplands of Baldwin Hills will have a positive affect on species here and at the watershed level. The scrublands habitat at Baldwin Hills is vital to several rare and threatened species including the California Gnatcatcher. As the coastal sage scrub habitat is restored, we hope to see the return of the Cactus Wren, once a resident here, but not seen in decades.

Contact: carolbabeli@laaudubon.org

Endangered California Least Tern Project Volunteer Training Begins in March 2015

Los Angeles Audubon is seeking dedicated volunteers to help monitor the California Least Tern (an endangered migratory bird) at Venice Beach.

In Los Angeles County, this species returns to only two breeding colonies, one at Venice Beach and one at the Port of Los Angeles.

Los Angeles Audubon works with project biologists and the California Department of Fish & Wildlife studying the Tern colony in Venice by coordinating a community-based science monitoring program during the nesting season.

Volunteers receive training and then help monitor the colony for one hour each week from mid-April to mid-August.

This is a great opportunity for families looking for a way to learn about nature together, for students looking to gain some field experience in environmental science, or anyone who'd like to know more about urban wildlife.

Contact Stacey Vigallon: tern@laaudubon.org

Donate Your Business Skills

If you'd like to help support our conservation and restoration efforts in other ways — web development, marketing, fundraising, business administration, we'd love to hear from you!

Please contact: carolbabeli@laaudubon.org

Threatened Western Snowy Plover Project Volunteer Training Begins in January 2015

Threatened Western Snowy Plover Project Volunteer Training begins in January 2015

Los Angeles Audubon will conduct a training session for volunteers interested in helping to monitor the Snowy Plover, a small bird that lives on Los Angeles County beaches.

Volunteers have been surveying Los Angeles County beaches since 2007, gathering data on wintering plovers and that might attempt to breed in the spring. Once volunteers are trained, they can help observe birds during four survey windows throughout the year.

Volunteers help monitor from Malibu to Long Beach.

This is a great opportunity to learn about our beaches from a conservation point of view. If you are unable to attend the January training session but would still like to participate in monitoring, other training options may be available in the coming months. Once you've registered with us, the volunteer coordinator will provide you with details about where exactly we'll meet and what to bring.

Contact Stacey Vigallon: tern@laaudubon.org



How You Are Helping!

By Carol Babeli, Director of Communications and Development

Los Angeles Audubon Receives Disney Conservation Grant

Los Angeles, CA, October 21, 2014

Los Angeles Audubon

Society has been awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund (DWCF). The conservation grant recognizes Los Angeles Audubon's efforts in Least Tern and shorebird conservation.

Los Angeles Audubon is grateful for the generous support from The Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund, which will be utilized to protect and preserve habitat for the federally listed California Least Tern and Western Snowy Plover and to educate the public about these species.

The Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund focuses on protecting wildlife and connecting kids and families with nature. Since its founding in 1995, DWCF has provided more than \$25 million to support conservation programs in 114 countries. Projects were selected to receive awards based upon their efforts to study wildlife, protect habitats and develop community conservation and education programs in critical ecosystems.

For information on Disney's commitment to conserve nature and a complete list of 2014 grant recipients, visit:

www.disney.com/conservation



Do you shop on Amazon?

Be sure to log in at smile.amazon.com and select **Los Angeles Audubon** as your **charitable organization of choice**.

AmazonSmile is a website operated by Amazon that lets customers enjoy the same wide selection of products, low prices, and convenient shopping features as on Amazon.com. The difference is that when customers shop on **AmazonSmile** (smile.amazon.com), the **AmazonSmile Foundation** will donate **0.5%** of the price of eligible purchases to the charitable organizations selected by customers.

How does AmazonSmile work?

When first visiting **AmazonSmile**, customers are prompted to select a charitable organization from almost one million eligible organizations. In order to browse or shop at **AmazonSmile**, customers must first select a charitable organization. For eligible purchases at **AmazonSmile**, the **AmazonSmile Foundation** will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to the customer's selected charitable organization.



Got a great handyman?
It may benefit LA Audubon — here's how:

neighbor2neighbor, a family-owned directory of outstanding Los Angeles services, now features LA Audubon as one of their handpicked nonprofits.

In addition to free promotion, **neighbor2neighbor** will donate \$10 to LA Audubon every time you recommend one of your favorite local services.

To submit your referrals, please e-mail mara@neighbor2neighbor.com, or call their office at (310) 857-7768.

neighbor2neighbor features home, garden, finance, & technology, and is looking for recommendations in the following categories:

appliance repair, architecture, carpet cleaning, design & build, elder care, energy upgrades, estate attorney, garage doors, general contractor, handyman, hardwood floors, heating&air, interior design, landscape maintenance, mover, organizer, painting contractor, solar panels, tile & stone, tree service, window washing, and others.



Nick Freeman, Field Trip Chairperson
and Mary Freeman, Field Trip Leader

Los Angeles Audubon's field trips often require driving to more distant destinations and more time spent in the field than do LAAS's local bird walks. No pets. No children under 12, without permission from leader please. *We do not sell, trade, or re-use contact information; cell and email simply improve our chances of contacting you at home and in the field.*

When you sign-up please provide complete contact information as stated in the write-up. Name, Address, City/Zip Code, Email address, Day-of-Event/Cell number, and an *optional*/alternate phone number—I.C.E., In Case of Emergency (home, work or friend.)

We confirm reservations and provide supplemental trip information by email reply. If you do not have convenient email, you may mail the reservation request (and fee if applicable); include a SASE; we will mail your confirmation.

CARPPOOLING

For ride sharing purposes, your contact 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.

"FEE REQUIRED" RESERVATIONS

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

Mail to:

Susan Castor—LAAS Field Trips
PO Box 411301
Los Angeles CA 90041

'NO FEE' RESERVATIONS / MORE INFORMATION

Email: membership@laaudubon.org
Phone: (323) 550-8533

Please leave voice message if no answer.

Field Trip Listings

Sunday, November 23

Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge

SIGN-UP REQUIRED, NO FEE

A refuge manager, volunteer *John Fitch* and your own *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. Must reserve with first, middle-initial & last names, DOB if no middle name, e-mail and home phone number, alternate ph# optional; by November 8. Only LAAS-confirmed individuals of U.S. citizenship with photo ID allowed on base. No weapons, camera OK. Meet at the main public lot at 800 Seal Beach Blvd. at 8:00 a.m. for a high tide of about 6.3 feet around 8:45 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, December 7 (Note: Change of Date!)

Newport Back Bay

NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader: *Mary and Nick Freeman*. Meet on the boardwalk along the NW bay at the "Sharp-tailed Sparrow Spot" accessible from the end of University Drive (small street) at 7:30 a.m. for the 6.2' high tide (highest weekend of the season), and a full day of birding in the area. High tide at the mouth is 8:50 a.m., and may not peak in the back bay until after 9:30 a.m., but we want to be in position when birds flush to higher ground. Ridgway's Rail (previously some of the Clapper Rails), Sora, American Bittern, Eurasian Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal and California Gnat-catcher are expected. Nelson's Sparrow and Short-eared Owl (both rare) will also be target birds. 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 on the trail down the hill, over the bridge, and to the end of the boardwalk. Bring lunch. 'Scopes and FRS radios helpful.

Sunday, December 14

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!

Saturday, December 20

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 28

Los Angeles Christmas Bird Count

Contact compiler Dan Cooper at: (323) 397-3562 (cell) or dan_cooper_90042@yahoo.com to be assigned a count area; or meet at Trails Cafe, Fern Dell, Griffith Park at 7:30 a.m.; or at Del Rey Lagoon, Playa del Rey by old boathouse on western shore at 7:00 a.m. *This is one of the oldest CBC's in the U.S., having been run nearly continuously since the 1930s. Its boundaries extend from Playa del Rey and Ballona Wetlands on the SE coast, north to Griffith Park, and take in large areas of the eastern Santa Monica Mtns. including Franklin Canyon Park.*
Fee: None! Lunch meeting: 1:00 PM Viva Fresh Mexican Grill, 6515 S. Sepulveda Blvd Los Angeles, CA 90045, just west of the 405 Fwy. and Centinela.

Field Trip Listings, cont'd

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

Saturday, January 3

Tejon Ranch

NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP REQUIRED

Leader: *Louis Tucker*. Visits to the 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, e-mail, high clearance Y/N, spare passenger seats. FRS radios and scopes useful.

Same location as meeting point sat/Sunday mornings....

There is a small lecture fee at the door.

January 10 & 11 Weekend

Salton Sea

FEE: \$10, SIGN-UP REQUIRED

Leaders Nick and Mary Freeman. Large to huge flocks of Snow & Ross' geese, White-faced Ibis and Sandhill Cranes. Stilt Sandpiper, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Inca Dove and Gila Woodpecker all possible to certain. The only place in the U.S. to see the impressive Yellow-footed Gull (likely)! No Limit, but sign up with phone, and send e-mail for more details. Meet at 7:00 a.m. Saturday at Cattle Call Park south of Brawley. Brawley Inn 760/344-1199 (leaders here – try Expedia), Calipatria Inn 800/830-1113, and Americas Best Value Inn in Westmorland 760/351-7100 are recommended. Arrive fed, bring lunches. Those who wish will eat to-

gether Saturday night. Mail request to LAAS with name, e-mail, \$10 fee, and cell phone # if possible. FRS radios & 'scopes helpful.

Saturday, January 17

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

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

January 24 & 25 Weekend

Carrizo Plain

FEE: \$20, LIMIT: 16

Leaders: Mary and Nick Freeman. Meet at 8 a.m. in Maricopa. Spectacular scenery. We will see Ferruginous Hawks, Prairie Falcons, Golden Eagles (maybe 20?), LeConte's Thrasher, Merlin and pronghorn; with likely Rough-legged Hawk, Mountain Plover and possible Sandhill Crane. We will meet in Maricopa, drive around the Plain all weekend, then leave the Plain heading north via Bitterwater Road on Sunday before we away to LA. If possible, please carpool or avail your vehicle to others when you reserve. Your phone number will be released for carpooling unless you request otherwise. Mail name, phone number, \$20 per person, and e-mail address for exact directions and further information. Net profits go to the Schreiber Grant Fund. Reserve your own room in Buttonwillow for Saturday night. Motel 6 is one option here. FRS radios & 'scopes helpful. Limit: 16.

GULL STUDY WORKSHOP 2014

*\$20 FULL WORKSHOP FEE

Lecture—Fri. Jan. 30 | Field Trip—Sun. Feb. 1

Lecture and field trip are NOT offered separately.

20 LIMITED SIGN-UP

Gull Study—LECTURE

Friday, January 30 | 7:30–10:30 p.m.

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

Gull Study—FIELD TRIP

Sunday, February 1 | Meet time: 8 a.m.

Leader: *Larry Allen*. Put your new knowledge to use in the field, perhaps even identifying California & Ring-billed Gulls as they fly overhead! Meet in the field at 8:00 a.m. and ogle the gulls until we're all gull identification experts! Location will be determined and communicated during the lecture. We will likely go to Doheny State Beach in Orange County, but perhaps elsewhere, depending on scouting. If we go to Doheny, it is a drive, but we have had large numbers of gulls on our workshops here, including Glaucous twice and a Lesser Black-backed! Doheny Beach parking fee. Bring a lunch.

RESERVATION INSTRUCTIONS GULL WORKSHOP

Mail \$20 check or money order, payable to Los Angeles Audubon. Please provide your phone number and email address. When the fee is received, we will send a confirmation e-mail with directions to the lecture location—a private residence in Altadena—and any further details. Lecture is planned from 7:30–10:00 p.m., with one refreshment break.

Mail to: LA Audubon—Field Trips, Attn: Susan Castor, PO Box 411301, Los Angeles CA 90041,

*This is a *Ralph Schreiber Grant* fund-raiser. Fees or donations greater than \$25, also provide LAAS Chapter Only membership.

Field Trip Listings, cont'd

Saturday, February 14

Sandhill Cranes at Pixley NWR & Kern NWR

NO FEE, SIGN-UP

Leader: *Jim Moore*. Snow Geese, Burrowing Owls, raptors, Common Gallinules, up to 15 duck species, and up to 1,000 Sandhill Cranes in the alfalfa fields surrounding Pixley NWR. This long day trip into the San Joaquin Valley visits Pixley, Allensworth State Historic Park, and Kern NWR. The turkey farm nearby should have 1,000 Tricolored Blackbirds and a few Yellow-headed. Kern NWR has an auto tour route around shallow ponds and marshes that attract waterfowl, shorebirds and passerines. Meet at 5:30 a.m. at the McDonald's on Lake Hughes Road, off Interstate 5; or meet the group at 7:00 a.m. at the USA gas station on West Sierra Ave (J22), on the west side of Hwy 99. This is the second Earlimart exit when driving northbound. There are several motels in Bakersfield area. Contact Jim Moore at jimmoore@socal.rr.com if you need more information. Free, but please sign up with LAAS, with e-mail & phone.

Sunday, February 22

Ventura County Game Preserve

NO FEE, NO LIMIT

Leader: *Irwin Woldman*. The private duck hunting club in Ventura has a long history of producing the kinds of birds that most rich, well-birded and disappearing habitats can lay claim to, including Sora and Virginia rails, American Bittern, Eurasian Wigeon, dark morph Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, and one Lesser Sand-Plover. Emphasis on raptors and waterfowl for this date, with perhaps some early shorebirds. Get to the preserve by taking the 101 Fwy W to Rice Avenue S, following the Rice Ave.

prompts to the T-intersection terminus, then take Hueneme Rd. west (Rt.), take the first left turn, Casper, to the gate at the end. Meet here at 8:00 a.m. We will walk the property, so good hiking/mud shoes with energetic legs inside a plus. We may have one car. Scopes & FRS radios helpful. There is a slight chance of cancellation, so please check the LAAS website for trip status one or two weeks before. Bring lunch if you want to bird with Irwin afterwards.

March 21 & 22 Weekend

Anza-Borrego State Park

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

Leader: *Kurt Leuschner*. Peak time for both wildflowers and Swainson's Hawk migration! Reserve your accommodations at Hacienda del Sol, Stanlund Motel or others in Borrego Springs months early! Special Birds of Anza-Borrego lecture by Kurt will be 7-8:30 p.m. near meeting spot that Friday night. Reserve the trip by mail with \$20 LAAS / \$40 non-LAAS fee; cell #, and E-mail address to LAAS. More details later.

April 18 & 19 Weekend

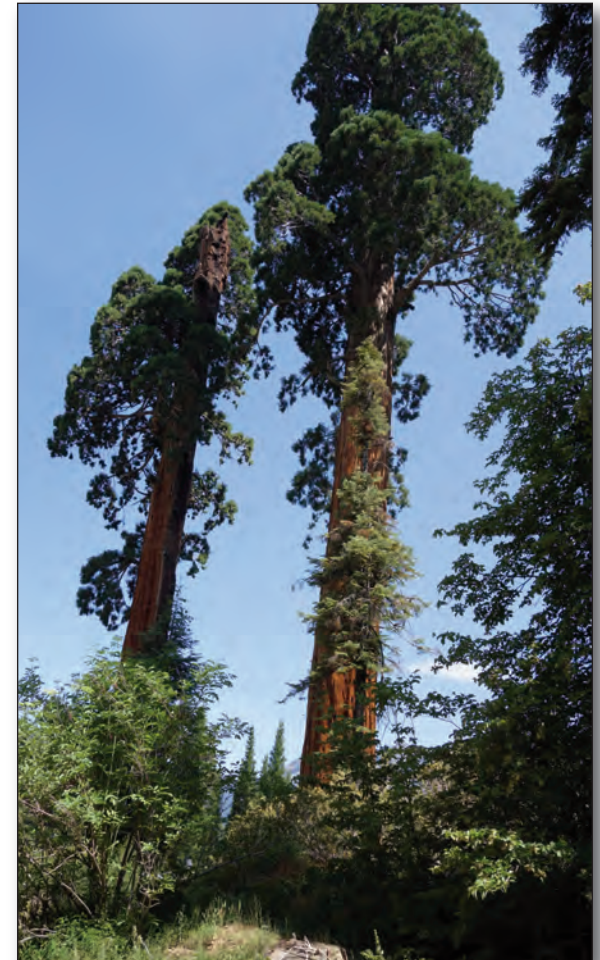
Owens Valley Grouse Trip

\$55 FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP of 20

Mary and Nick Freeman lead. We will meet on the second morning in the very early A.M. for better Sage Grouse viewing! Sooty Grouse also. Meet in Bishop both mornings. More details later.

Please support LAAS with your donations.

Donate online at www.laaudubon.org using PayPal and your credit card.



Birding Under the Giant Sequoia's
Southern Sierra Owl Trip July 2013
Photo by Mary Freeman

July 3 thru 6 Long Weekend

Southern Sierra Owl Trip—2015

Leaders: *Mary and Nick Freeman*. Mark your calendars — 4th of July Long Weekend **Giant Sequoia National Monument**, Tulare County Owling Trip. More details online soon!

Dockweiler Youth Center Nature Walks

with Los Angeles Audubon

Fall 2014/Winter 2015 Walk Schedule



Sunday, Nov 16th
Sunday, Dec 7th
Sunday, Jan 11th

9am to 1030am

- Group sizes no larger than 15 people are ideal, and as few as two people are just fine
- The nature walk focuses on general beach ecology, with an emphasis on the federally threatened Snowy Plover
- Binoculars for the duration of the walk are provided
- Families are welcome, but children may need help from parents with using binoculars
- Nature walk participants meet at and return to the lobby of the youth center
- Walks typically last between 45-90 minutes depending on the interest level of the group, the amount of wildlife available for viewing at the site, and the weather



Dockweiler Youth Center
12505 Vista del Mar, Los Angeles, CA 90245
(Just south of the end of Imperial Highway at Dockweiler Beach)

For more information please call
(323) 481-4037 or email tern@laaudubon.org

Nature walks are FREE. If you drive, please enter the Dockweiler Youth Center facility to pay a reduced parking fee. The youth center is also easily accessed by bike from the Marvin Braude Bike Trail.



Bird Walk Listings

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON's bird walks are for those interested in reducing their carbon footprint by birding relatively close to home. Perfect for the birder looking for an introduction to local birds and habitat.

All are welcome, but no pets or small children please. These walks are appropriate for young bird watchers age 6 years and older. Binoculars are provided on some walks as noted. Bird walks DO NOT require advance sign-up, just show up at the specified meeting time and place. Read our FIELD TRIPS LISTINGS section for birding destinations a bit further afield.

Topanga State Park Birdwalk

1st Sunday of every month

Nov. 2 and Dec. 7

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

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area

4100 S. La Cienega Blvd, Los Angeles 90056

3rd Saturday of the month (Except for July and August)

Nov. 15 and Dec. 20

Time: 8:00–noon

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 and Cooper's Hawk.

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.

KHSRA, 4100 S LA CIENEGA BLVD, LOS ANGELES 90056 **Binoculars provided.**

CARPPOOLING IS ENCOURAGED!

To provide your information to join the LAAS CARPOOL DATABASE membership@laaudubon.org or call (323) 550-8533 leave a message. We will attempt to connect you with other birders interested in sharing a ride to our events.

More information on birdwalks contact Eleanor Osgood at birdwalks@laaudubon.org or (310) 839-5420.

Upper Franklin Canyon Sooky Goldman Nature Center

2nd Sunday of the month

Nov. 9 and Dec. 14

Time: 8:30–noon

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, Common Raven, Red-shouldered Hawk, Spotted and California Towhees, Song Sparrows and California Thrasher. Meet in the main parking lot for the Sooky Goldman Nature Center.

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, 2600 FRANKLIN CANYON DR, BEVERLY HILLS 90210. 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 (Except December)

Nov. 16

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.

Directions: Take the Marina Fwy (90) to Culver Blvd and turn left for a mile. Turn right on Pacific Ave. The lot is on the right. Lot or street parking is usually not a problem. Three hour walk. 'scopes helpful. **Contact:** Bob (310) 326-2473 wbutorrance@gmail.com

Program Presentations



Los Angeles Audubon's monthly evening program presentations are held the 2nd Wednesday of the month at the AUDUBON CENTER AT DEBS PARK | 4700 N Griffin Ave | Los Angeles 90031 | 323-221-2255 | <http://debspark.audubon.org>
Meetings start at 7:30 p.m. and are over at 9:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 12

Protecting Our Local Birds

Presented by Dessi Sieburth

Our local birds face many threats including habitat destruction, pollution, outdoor cats, lead and rat poisoning. Dessi Sieburth is a young birder who has decided he can make a difference and help the birds! He builds and monitors Western Bluebird boxes and educates the public about what we can do to help birds. He gets other kids involved by taking them birding and giving presentations of his Western Bluebird Project in schools. He educates people about bird protection by writing articles and exhibiting his conservation efforts at a local coffee shop. Dessi will discuss his conservation projects including his bluebird nest box project, and show bird photos from his Big Photo Day which was inspired by Tom Stephenson, the author of the *Warbler Guide*.



Dessi Sieburth, a 12 year-old birder and conservationist, lives in Montrose, California with his parents. He has been birding and drawing birds since he was eight-years old. Dessi has given several presentations about protecting birds to local schools. He has also helped one school with Great Backyard Bird Counts for the last two years. He has been building and monitoring Western Bluebird nest boxes since he was 10. Dessi met with District Senator De Leon to advocate passing the bill AB 711 which prohibits using lead ammunition to save the California Condor and wrote two articles on how to save the condor. This year, Dessi participated in the ABA Young Birder of the Year contest. He also received a scholarship to attend the Western Field Ornithology conference in San Diego, California this October. He regularly participates in field trips with Los Angeles Audubon and wrote a fieldtrip report on a trip to the San Gabriel Mountains for The Western Tanager. At Dessi's young age, his life list is currently at 460 species!

Wednesday, December 10

Feathers

Presented by John Schmitt

John will discuss some of theories for their evolution and theories of how they evolved to give theropods--birds, the power of flight. The talk will discuss the various functions of feathers, such as communication through displays, flight, thermoregulation, protection from the elements, protecting their young. Part of the talk will be devoted to tips for identifying the kind of bird a "found feather" came from. Many consider John to be the expert on bird feathers.



John Schmitt: artist, biologist, taxidermist, and feather expert extraordinaire. John was born and raised in Southern California and has had a lifelong interest in birds and natural history. He is a self taught artist, and has illustrated several books and field guides. His sketches of Turkey Vultures, woodpeckers, migrating birds and raptors have been specially designed for the Kern Valley Nature Festivals. His color rendition of the woodpeckers of the Kern River Watershed was the first t-shirt design that sold out before the first run. John Schmitt's work has formed the major artistic contribution to over a dozen books. Over two hundred of his illustrations have appeared in various ornithological journals, magazines, and environmental newsletters including American Birds, Continental Birdlife, and Western Birds. His Journal's of John Schmitt were a hit for many years with readers of Birder's World magazine. He also participated in both the Peregrine Falcon and California Condor recovery programs as a field biologist, and has also participated in Ornithological Surveys in Costa Rica and Ecuador. John currently resides in the Kern River Valley where he enjoys birdwatching and hiking, and is busy illustrating hummingbirds and raptors for two upcoming books.