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WESTERN TANAGER

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Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, April 1992 | Photo by Larry Sansone

WESTERN Tanager

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Volunteer Habitat Restoration — January 2015

Written in collaboration by Carol Babeli, LA Audubon Education Directors, Stacey Vigallon and Cindy Hardin and LA Audubon Education chair, Margot Griswold. Photos by Carol Babeli and Stacey Vigallon.

On January 24, Los Angeles Audubon hosted two events where 50 Fulbright scholars and 30 Ballona Creek Renaissance volunteers participated in restoration and conservation events held at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park and at Dockweiler Beach and Ballona Wetlands. The volunteers were guided by the very capable Los Angeles Audubon staff.

The Fulbright scholars, from all over the world, were visiting Los Angeles (many for the first time) and connected with LA Audubon through our relationship with the International Visitors Bureau. Ballona Creek Renaissance volunteers included community leaders, middle and high school students and environmentalists who are dedicated to facilitating the long-term renewal of Ballona Creek and its watershed.

At the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park site, our habitat restoration work resulted in the planting of 300 coastal sage scrub plants that included: toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), golden bush (*Isocoma menziesii*), CA sunflower (*Encelia californica*), CA sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) and buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*).

Another part of the Fulbright group headed further west to walk Dockweiler Beach in hopes of spotting Western Snowy Plovers (*Charadrius nivosus nivosus*). The search was successful; every participant was able to see

the tiny birds, laying low in the sand within the enclosure area on the beach. Lots of other species sighted too, including plunge-diving Pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) and a raft of Surf Scoters (*Melanitta perspicillata*) just off shore. The Ballona Wetlands was the next stop. A walk through the sand dune habitat culminated at Ballona Creek. Many of the participants are studying Engineering or Urban Planning at various universities across the United States, and all of the scholars had convened in Los Angeles for a conference on sustainability. We hope that the time spent at all three sites will encourage them to save and restore precious open space within the confines of their home cities once they complete their studies!

Los Angeles Audubon is extremely grateful to Ballona Creek Renaissance and to the International Visitors Bureau/Fulbright Scholars for their hard work - improving native habitat that will benefit birds, wildlife and park visitors! This work is part of Los Angeles Audubon's Ballona Creek Watershed Restoration Project, with funding support provided by the USDA Forest Service, Environmental Protection Agency, and FedEx.

For more information about ways to participate in a future habitat restoration for you or your group, please contact: carolbabeli@laudubon.org.



Sometimes The Things You Want for Christmas Come Late

By Louis Tucker

I don't think you can ever get enough of a good thing. Sometimes more is just better. The winter raptor trip for LA Audubon was a return to my "Happy Place", the Tejon Ranch. And, I met a very enthusiastic group of people at the Sylmar Denny's: Beatrix Schwartz, Derek and Dessi Sieberth, Dan and Calvin Bonn, Zachary Smith, Wendall Covalt, Joyce and Mark Brady and Marlene and Steve Ishii. In an hour we would be at Tejon, meeting our intrepid biologist guide Scot Pipkin, with help from two docents: Steve Justus and Chris Gardner.

It was an unbelievably beautiful day. (A kind of ridiculous statement, seeing as that happens in southern California many more times than not.) But, there was no wind on the ranch. The Ishii's and the Brady's decided to drive their vehicle and the rest of us piled into two ranch vehicles. On many of the roads up there, you really have to be confident about doing four wheel driving. A lot of it is rough terrain and it's not easy. One of the great components of this trip for me was to introduce two young birders to each other: Dessi Sieberth, who is 12 and who is developing quite a reputation around LA as a birder and a conservation activist. He is meeting Calvin Bonn, who is 8, which is the same age Dessi was when he started. Calvin has been on a number of bird walks in the South Bay and at Ballona and is developing into a good birder as well. Both of these guys take copious notes on what they are watching and keep track of all of their discoveries. When I was a kid, this was an activity I did by myself, which was OK for me; but, somehow I think how much better it can be to have a friend, a peer to do it with. These two hit it off pretty well — I would say immediately, judging from the laughter in the truck all day.

At the 300th Street gate, at approximately 8^{ish}, the bird activity is already hopping and flitting around. There were the ravens to tease; everyone wants to make them into some spectacular predator. But, also there were Horned Larks and some blackbirds. As we head toward the area where there are a number of burrows, we first spotted, standing low on a hill, the bold, wide and clear chest of our largest buteo: a Ferruginous Hawk, motionless and majestic. We tried to creep closer for better looks which I think everyone got. We continued further and saw a couple of Burrowing Owls. One in particular just had his head sticking out of the burrow. It is amazing looking out over a pretty dry desert landscape with very little color other than varying degrees of beige and brown trying to pick out a head and yellow eyes. Once in a while the owl will let you know it is there just by slightly turning its head. One owl flew a bit for us, showing the spotted patterns on the wings. I enjoy these almost comical creatures with their long legs and the spotting and barring on their bodies. And, like all owls, the way they can transform their shape is fun to watch. They were also obliging and giving us full body looks. So much fun to watch, and Tejon is one of the more reliable places here in southern California where you almost always see them.



Golden Eagle, Photo by Steve Ishii

Leaving them, we came across another Ferruginous Hawk, high atop an oak tree. This time we got to see the size of this bird from a profile, the large gape that seems to make the bill and head look pretty ominous. And, we got to appreciate the ferrite/rust in the shoulders, the mantle and the leggings. We were only to see these two birds; but, it was a good start for the morning. Along the way, there would be flocks of blackbirds, some Brewer's and looking hard into the flock, there would be some Tri-colored Blackbirds as well. That is something that garners interest because we don't see a lot of them lately.

It must be noted that this incredible drought which has hit the west, or it might be better said bludgeoned the west, has left its mark everywhere on the ranch. So, the number of rodents which eat seeds and the grasses don't have much to munch on. The ground has lost a lot of its cover and ground squirrels and rabbits, mice and voles are very scarce now. It's interesting since I pushed to have the winter raptor trip moved to Tejon, the alfalfa fields in the Antelope Valley, east of the ranch have more foliage; so, Ferruginous Hawks and Red-tails have moved over there because the rodents are there. Also, Red-tails are very tolerant of civilization. They are the "coyotes" of the birds of prey world. They are literally everywhere: cities, suburbs, and of course, wilderness.

We are searching the western end of the ranch, but, there are slim pickings. So, we start to move east. And, things start to pick up. We see Horned Larks in good sized flocks. And, we also see flashes of color. This would get more exciting during the day. Mountain Bluebirds in a good number were on the ground and jumping in the air. I have looked in so many bird books for at least an adequate description of the hue of this blue, and I am always disappointed. I can't even try to describe it. The National Geographic calls the color on the back of the male, "sky blue", maybe even azure blue. It is hard for me to put a definite tone to it. However, when the sun hits it, that blue is electric, neon maybe. it is really shocking how that color hits you. All through the day we would see these bluebirds in enormous flocks. I would guess throughout the day we saw somewhere between three to four hundred Mountain Bluebirds. For me, this is interesting. "Where do birds consistently winter; and do these birds just change location from time to time". I mention this because when I moved to California in January of 1987, in my first trips to the Antelope Valley, that winter, in the western part of the valley as you're driving west on Rt. 138, towards the 5 Freeway, on those rolling hillsides, I would see flocks upon flocks of Mountain Bluebirds, comparable to the

Ferruginous Hawk, Photo by Steve Ishii



Mountain Bluebird, Photo by Beatrix Schwarz



numbers we were seeing in Tejon this day. It seems to me for the last twenty years these birds were down in numbers in the winter. And, to see this great number today was something to celebrate.

I got this picture of the earth and sky was wearing jewelry. Some great, enormous multi-layered necklace; or some magical translucent, amorphous, diaphanous tapestry, that was constantly changing shapes and sizes, glittering in the light. In the fantastical, as if some great queen of tremendous wealth were trying on this most expensive and precious necklace. There would be waves of bluebirds in the air and then on the ground. They were foraging, hovering, flitting, and busy, always giving shocking flashes of light and shade and just overall beauty. Seeing this fantastic demonstration of loveliness has stayed with me all this time, even as I write this. It seems really boastful to say: "You had to be there!" But, you had to be there. Stunning, just stunning!

We changed directions and started moving eastward and upward. Going through the Joshua Tree forest, looking for smaller birds and moving to the Canon del Gato Montes, things kicked up a bit. We get our first looks of Golden Eagles. All day we would see them soaring, foraging, flying over ridges and disappearing behind them. And, we would also see them on rocks or on the ground. It was a very bright sunny day and when the sun hit the hackles of these majestic birds, in good looks you could see the gold just pop. We were mostly seeing adult birds. I think I caught sight of some sub-adults, but mostly mature

birds. Their soaring is so easy - not rushed, just riding thermals. Their broad wings making jaws drop. It was a kind of aerial serenade in the sky. Golden Eagles are residents of Tejon; but, they are joined by others in the winter. We had nine sightings of these phenomenal raptors during the day. Every time they appeared, everything stopped. The sight of them arrests you; and all you can do is look in wonder. And, look we did, almost in reverence and awe. I love these birds and it was fun for me to watch the younger two boys soak it all in. Dessi has seen eagles before but I think this might have been Calvin's first Golden Eagles.

We would wind our way up higher. There were Loggerhead Shrikes as we left the Joshua Tree forest. And when we were in the various oak forests we would see Acorn Woodpeckers, with its clownish appearance and its yacking noises and the dark green velvet and rose breast of Lewis' Woodpeckers and of course the occasional Scrub Jay, which doesn't do too bad in the blue department as well. Gaining altitude also meant more eagles and near the top where there is this incredible vast panorama of mountain and canyons on the Kern County side there was a good place to get a bite to eat. We were at a place where there is going to be a rerouting of the Pacific Coast hiking trail and you could see into the San Joaquin Valley.

After lunch we would proceed more toward the back end of the ranch. Even in drought, this land is just spectacular. It's also remarkable how resilient this land

Golden Eagle, Photo by Steve Ishii



Loggerhead Shrike, Photo by Steve Ishii



Pronghorn Antelope, photo by Steve Ishii



can be. Even parched, there is life. We even get to see a bobcat tearing down the mountain side after who knows what. That animal was like lightning; if you blinked you missed it. We are sometimes taking routes we've never taken before to see vistas more astonishing at every turn. We slowly wind our way down and back through the Joshua Tree Forest. And, leaving the forest near the 290th St gate, in the field, is a small herd of Pronghorn Antelope. And, time stands still once more. These beautiful graceful antelope are eating and also observing us. They don't seem to be disturbed by our party. You watch them and your mind travels back in time, when things like civilization didn't encroach on them and more of these animals roamed in complete freedom. These antelope are hanging on. They've got real four-legged enemies to be wary of: coyotes and mountain lions.

But, there is another surprise, atop a tree: a Prairie Falcon. It almost appeared out of nowhere. And, there seemed to be some resolve in this bird. It gave us some really good looks and then took off. It's coloring blending in so well with this desert setting. Flying purposely, showing its dark armpits, flew for miles in front of us. That was a nice finishing button for the day. A wonderful day. A day of excitement and a bit of serenity and peace and fun. A great day for the two new friends, who, I might add, razed me mercilessly as we were in our truck touring the ranch. All in good spirits and fun. We are grateful to Scot Pipkin, Steve Justus and Chris Gardner who were so accomodating and helpful at every turn. There is a really wonderful and very helpful staff up at Tejon and they make our visits such a pleasure. I, personally, have never had a bad time on that ranch - not even a so so time. It has always been just great, and we are appreciative of them for taking the time for us. 🦅

Pronghorn Antelope, Photo by Dessi Sieburth



Birding Group, Photo By Dessi Sieburth



Audubon Docents Head South

By Cindy Hardin, Director of Outdoor Education, Photos by Leslie Davidson

January is a great time to purge the last of the usual holiday excess, get outside and be inspired by the natural world. On January 3rd docents from the Los Angeles Audubon's Kenneth Hahn and Ballona Education Programs did exactly that on a group field trip to Crystal Cove State Park. The park, located just north of Laguna Beach, is a huge expanse of open land that includes miles of pristine beaches and bluffs, and multiple hiking trails through canyons and foothills. Formerly part of the Irvine Ranch holdings, this State Park contains many diverse and beautiful habitats, from tidepools and off-shore reef to the chaparral sage scrub of inland canyons.

Eighteen people met in the Ballona parking lot on Saturday morning. Carpools were organized off we went to the depths of Orange County. Upon arrival we were greeted by beautifully clear sunny weather and a sweeping view of California coastline.



The group commenced our hike along the bluff trail. Due to calm seas, the waters below were nearly transparent, and the extensive reef system that is part of the park was clearly visible from the bluffs above.



The waters of the park are part of a Marine Protected Zone, which has allowed fish stocks to multiply and increase in huge numbers. The Cormorants are one of the many species that have benefited from this designation.

The view from the upper bluffs of Crystal Cove State Park. Once covered in introduced grasses that fed the cattle of the Irvine Ranch, it is now a thriving example of Coastal Sage Scrub habitat. The end result of this massive restoration effort by the state is a thriving ecosystem, full of upland species like lizards, gophers and birds, including the California Thrasher.



This Harbor Seal also uses this area as a fishing ground, and is taking a much-needed nap after a morning of foraging.

The vegetation along the bluff was lush and bursting with life. Our group enjoyed the sense of rejuvenation that the recent rains had brought. The path winds through the native plants, and up to the edge of small gullies that have been carved out by years of run-off from the adjacent foothills.



A view of the sea from one of the many small canyons that edge the bluff.

At the terminus of the bluff trail we dropped down to the beach, where new sights and species awaited us. Dragonflies hovered above a pool of freshwater and its accompanying cattails and rushes nestled at the base of the cliffs, and Royal Terns roosted on the sand.



An entirely different ecosystem-freshwater habitat at the base of the cliffs.



Royal Terns relaxing on the beach.

We continued to head down the beach, and then turned inland to explore El Moro Canyon. This was formerly the site of a trailer park, whose tenants leased the land from the Irvine Company. Once the land was ceded to the state, and hiking trails, bathrooms, picnic facilities and parking replaced a privatized stretch of coastline. Although the term "Eminent Domain" can at times have negative connotations, in this case it was a huge win for both California residents and visitors to our state. There is now an extensive network of hiking trails throughout the foothills that link the park to the Laguna Coast Wilderness. One can literally spend days exploring the area, and primitive campsites are available at several spots along the trails.



Cindy Hardin, Joe Zell and Carol Babeli examine hiking options offered at one of the several map signs that are found throughout the backcountry.

As the group headed up the canyon we were surrounded by Riparian habitat. Although the streambed was dry on the day of our visit, it was obvious that water had recently coursed between its banks. Elderberry and Willow trees were sprouting fresh growth, and the Coyote Brush was sending out plumes of seeds in preparation for a fresh round of spring flowering.



Coyote Brush in all of its fluffy glory.

The canyon portion of our day was brief, as appetites had been whetted by all that fresh air, and lunchtime was upon us. We returned to picnic tables located at the mouth of the canyon, and shared a feast of salads and desserts. The setting was incredible, and included two Education Stations, which delighted our crowd of nature interpreters. One focused on birds of the area, and came complete with permanent telescopes. The other invited visitors to survey Harlequin Beetles on selected Bladderpod plants, and provided pencils, data sheets and a drop box for amateur entomologists to leave their findings.



Linda Rose, Cindy Hardin and Jonathan Hardin help to ready the comestibles as Jamie Lowry looks on. How about that for a “view restaurant”!

After lunch was over it was time to take the beach route back to our starting point. There was a minus tide that afternoon of -0.9, thanks to seasonal King Tides, which made for the perfect opportunity to check out the tidepools along our way. Seagrass, coralline algae, mussels, snails, sea anemones and the like were on full display, as the ocean continued to recede before our very eyes. The birds were out too, and our sharp-eyed crowd spotted a Loon in the water and a Snowy Plover on the sand.



This Loon was keeping her eye on us!



You can see why the common name is sea anemone—they really do look like underwater flowers, don't they?

After a full day of sea, sun and fresh air we walked through the tunnel that passes under Pacific Coast Highway and returned to our vehicles. All agreed that it was a day well spent. Surprisingly, most of the group had never visited Crystal Cove before. One participant said that “he felt like he had just been on vacation”. It is a true getaway, and a mere hour’s worth of driving from our starting point in Playa Del Rey. Although the \$15.00 entrance fee raised a few eyebrows, it was pointed out that this was about the cost of a movie ticket, and the entertainment value was far more lasting than two hours in a darkened cinema. If you haven’t had the chance to see this beautiful piece of California, Crystal Cove awaits, and is worth the effort any time of year. Bring the family, bring a friend, and come down and visit this special place and support our fabulous State Park System. You will be richly rewarded! 🐦



*Our intrepid group of explorers. **Back Row, l-r:** Jonathan Hardin, Brian Young, Okoy Dillon, Jamie Lowry, Morgan Edel. **Front Row, l-r:** Catherine Ronan, Cindy Hardin, Anne Kurosumi, Linda Rose, Carolyn Canterbury, Ellen Zell, Joe Zell, Leslie Davidson, Carol Babeli, Christi Nash **Kneeling:** Maura Estrada*

Protecting the “Least” Bell’s Vireo in California

By Dessi Sieburth

You may not think that there is anything special about this little gray songbird that breeds here in Los Angeles County. However, the “Least” Bell’s Vireo has been endangered since 1986, when just 300 pairs were found. Its survival depends on native willows trees and other native plants which grow on riverbanks and lakes. Urban development is the biggest threat to this bird. Is there anything we can do to help that this bird does not vanish forever?

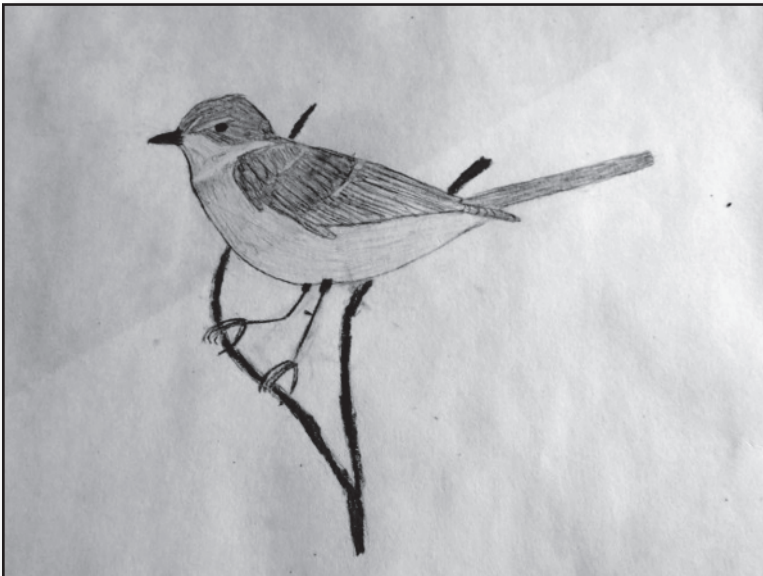
These active, gray birds only breed in coastal southern California. They then migrate south for the winter to Baja California. The “Least” Bell’s Vireo used to breed in the Sierra Nevada, Coast Ranges, Owens Valley, Death Valley, and the Mojave Desert. Now, their range is limited from northern San Diego County to the Santa Clara River (Ventura), and northeast to the Mojave River (San Bernardino). In Los Angeles, the “Least” Bell’s Vireo can be found during summer at a number of places such as Hansen Dam, Sylmar, Peck Pit, Arcadia and Hahamongna Watershed Park, La Cañada.

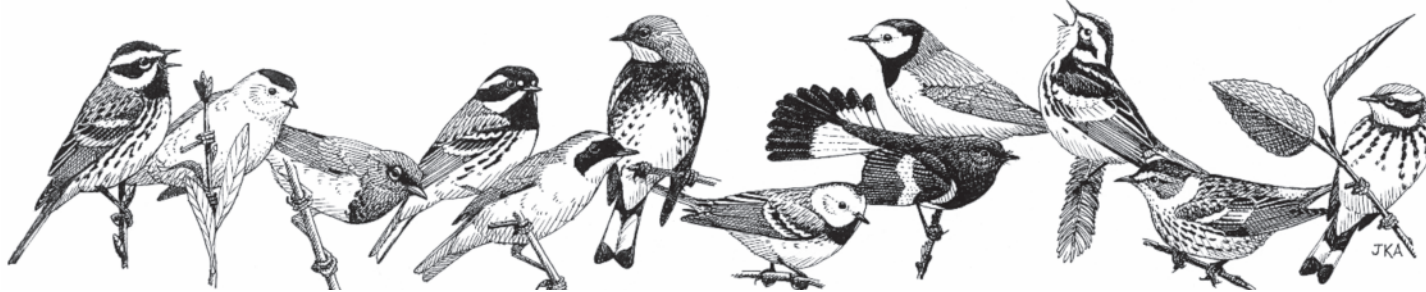
Urban development is not the only threat these birds face. The Brown-headed Cowbird, a brood parasite which lays their eggs in other birds’ nests, often targets the “Least” Bell’s Vireo as a host to their eggs and babies. There have been some efforts to help the “Least” Bell’s Vireo, and now the numbers are up to 2,500 pairs. Trapping cowbirds has been very successful, as well as creating new riparian habitat. However,

this bird needs more protection. We can make a difference by being aware of the threats that this bird faces and getting involved in the protection of its habitat by attending public meetings and by writing to our local representatives. For example, the public helped save habitat at Hahamongna Watershed Park by convincing the City Council members to change the location of a planned new athletic field from Hahamongna to a local high school instead. Unfortunately there is a new project that threatens Hahamongna. Los Angeles County decided to remove at least 2.4 million cubic yards of sediment over the next five years to provide flood protection. This project would destroy 71 acres of habitat. Local residents, environmentalists and birders disagree with this plan and have come together to support a plan that would have less impact on the habitat. We need to continue writing letters and speak to our city and county officials about protecting our watersheds. The “Least” Bells Vireo’s survival depends on our actions!! 🐦

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. 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. At Dessi’s young age, his life list is currently at 460 species!

Least Bell’s Vireo, Drawings by Dessi Sieburth





Birds of the Season — December 2014, By Jon Fisher

While true winter weather affects much of the country, in southern California we can hardly relate to such extremes. And our seemingly never-ending mild weather is attractive to birds as well as people. The non-birder is typically shocked to learn of the diversity of birds present at any season, and having a high density of birders in the field literally 365 days a year means that we find more of them, both common and rare.

Naturally there isn't uniformity across the county. Wintering insectivores and frugivores avoid the brisk temperatures of the desert and mountains where their food is scarce. Instead they are found primarily on the mild coastal slope, as are most birders. Many passerine vagrants fall into this category, and December and January saw a number of such continuing birds reported repeatedly. To be sure there were also a good number of newly discovered rarities.

A couple of outstanding passerines turned up, along with a myriad of lesser but certainly interesting sightings. Christmas Bird Counts produced another crop of good finds.

Continuing since late November, Varied Thrushes were widely reported in suitable habitat into February. A comparison of the eBird maps of this species for this winter and last vividly illustrates the scope of the invasion. They remained the only land bird that showed any evidence of an irruption in the region however.

As usual, a handful of **Ross's, Snow** and **Cackling Geese** were in the county, with a high count of 270 **Snow Geese** at Nebeker Ranch in the Antelope Valley on January 10 being noteworthy.

Always a nice find in the county was a **Tundra Swan** at the San Gabriel Coastal Basin Spreading Grounds in Pico Rivera from December 23–February 7 (Darren Dowell).

Most interesting at these spreading grounds was an apparent "**Mexican**" **Mallard**— or Mexican Duck— that was found on December 23 (John Garrett). Long considered a subspecies of the Mallard, the Mexican Duck may be more closely related to the American Black Duck and Mottled Duck and thus not a Mallard at all. Plumages of

males, relatively indistinct from that of females, would seem to at least superficially support this idea. Birds like this one are easy to overlook, in part because most birders aren't actively searching for them or even familiar with their identification. The possibility of hybrids is further cause for caution and confusion.

Other dabbling ducks included **Eurasian Wigeons** at Hansen Dam on January 13 (Kimball Garrett) and continuing on the LA River through January 29 near the Bette Davis Picnic Area in Glendale. Apparently back for another winter the spreading basins in Pico Rivera was a "**Eurasian**"/**Common Green-winged Teal** seen from December 14–February 7 (David Bell).

Male **Black Scoters** were at the Ballona Creek mouth on December 20 and again on December 27 (Irwin Woldman). What may have been the same bird was observed off Dockweiler State Beach in El Segundo from January 5 through February 3 when it was joined by a female (Richard Barth).

A **Common Merganser**, always rare along the coast, was at Del Rey Lagoon in Playa del Rey on December 9 (Rebecca Marschall).

Scarce away from the immediate coast, **Red-throated Loons** were at Legg Lake in South El Monte from December 13-24 (Mickey Long), at Lake Balboa in Van Nuys from December 19–January 1 (Dan Cooper) and at El Dorado Park in Long Beach from January 17–February 5 (Alan Wells). More expected was a **Pacific Loon** at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on December 26 (Andrew Lee).

Red-necked Grebes were at Malibu Lagoon on December 12 (Dan Cooper), along the San Gabriel River in South El Monte from December 20–31 (Andrew Lee) and at Castaic Lagoon from December 22–February 9 (Dan Cooper).

Brown Boobies turned up at San Clemente Island from December 26–30 (Justyn Stahl) and near the Los Angeles Harbor mouth from January 10–February 2 (Lance Benner, et al).

Regular but still quite uncommon were up to three **Bald Eagles** at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas from December 28–January 30 (Rod Higbie) and single birds at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on January 9 (Amy Willimason) and at Quail Lake near Gorman from January 10–February 8 (Kimball Garrett).

Rare but regular in adjacent counties- but far more unusual for us- was a **Zone-**

tailed Hawk over Sylmar on December 27 (Steve Summers). Also of note on the coastal slope was a **Ferruginous Hawk** over Burbank on January 16 (Alex Viduetsky). A returning light morph "**Harlan's**" **Red-tailed Hawk** was in the Ballona area present through February 10 (Rick Pine).

Alcids were part of the story this winter, with unexpected numbers of two species of murrelets turning up in LA County waters. These offered an all too infrequent chance to observe them from shore.

Reports began with a **Marbled Murrelet** off Leo Carillo State Beach from December 21–27 (Adam Searcy). Subsequently, others were at Malaga Cove on the PVP on December 28 (Kris Ohlenkamp), at the Ballona Creek mouth from December 29–January 17 (Ed Griffin) and near the Malibu Pier on January 4 (C. Warneke)

Ancient Murrelets staged a more significant invasion starting in late December. The first was at the Ballona Creek mouth on December 26 (Jeffrey Sondheimer). Later up to eight were present in subsequent days and continued to be reported through January 9. Well over a dozen others turned up elsewhere along the coast in late December and early January. An inability to find sufficient food is the most likely first guess as to the cause of these incursions, but confirming that can be difficult.

Quite rare anywhere in the county, but particularly so in the interior was a **Glaucous Gull** observed flying over Apollo Park

near Lancaster on January 1 (John Garrett).

Up to five **Inca Doves** continued to be reported at Col. Leo H. Washington Park in Los Angeles through February 10 and a **White-winged Dove** was at Cabrillo Beach in San Pedro from January 13–22 (David Ellsworth).

Away from their usual higher elevation haunts, both male and female **Williamson's Sapsuckers** continued at Veteran's Park in Sylmar through December 28, with at least the male still there through January 26.

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were at Castaic Lagoon from December 27–January 18 (Jeffrey Fenwick) and continuing at Veteran's Park in Sylmar through February 5. At least seven of the generally more numerous **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were present in the county over the period.

Northern "Yellow-shafted" Flickers were in the Lower Arroyo Seco on December 18 (Naresh Satyan) and in La Crescenta on January 17 (Linda Moore). Two more were at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles starting on December 20 with at least one still there on January 3 (Don Sterba).

Any Empidonax in winter is noteworthy. Such was a **Hammond's Flycatcher** at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles from December 28–January 3 (Don Sterba) and a **Gray Flycatcher**— the most regular of the genus in winter— continuing at Vina Vieja Park in Pasadena through February 2. A well above average eight **Pacific-slope Fly-**

catchers were found on the coastal slope during the period.

Vermilion Flycatchers were at the Piute Ponds on December 13 (Jim Moore, Becky Turley), continuing at the Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area in Willowbrook through January 27 and at Oakdale Memorial Park in Glendora where up to three birds continued through February 10.

A wintering **Ash-throated Flycatcher** continued at Madrona Marsh in Torrance through January 21 and two new birds were found in Arcadia on February 6 (Darren Dowell).

Single **Tropical Kingbirds** continued at El Dorado Park in Long Beach through January 13 and at Legg Lake in South El Monte through January 31 and the **Thick-billed Kingbird** wintering for its second year at Horsethief Canyon Park in San Dimas was reported through January 3.

Plumbeous Vireos were represented by at least six individuals while the rarer— in winter at least— **Cassin's Vireos** were represented by two individuals. One of these was along the San Gabriel River Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood on December 21 (Robb Hamilton) and the other was at Valhalla Cemetery in Burbank on January 22 (Richard Barth).

Pacific Wrens were in Topanga Canyon on December 14 (Lance Benner, Kathi Ellsworth), on the Palos Verdes CBC on December 21 (Jim Pike) and at Alma Park in

San Pedro from December 21–January 13 (David Ellsworth, Tom Miko).

Mountain Bluebirds were virtually non-existent on the coastal slope this winter with a single bird in San Pedro on December 20 being the lone report (Martin Byhower, Steve Wolfe, Steve Dexter).

Scarce on the coastal slope was a **Townsend's Solitaire** at the Village Green Condominiums from December 27–January 24 (Don Sterba). Another was on San Clemente Island from January 12–February 10 (Justyn Stahl, Ben Sandstrom).

With only about a dozen ever found in the county, a **Worm-eating Warbler** discovered at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles on December 20 was a great find (Don Sterba). This bird remained through February 11 and though sometimes elusive it was seen by many, many birders.

In addition to several continuing **Black-and-white Warblers**, another half dozen or so were found between December 17 and February 11.

The Palos Verdes CBC on December 21 produced a **Nashville Warbler** (Jim Pike) and a **Virginia's Warbler** continued at DeForest Park in Long Beach through December 20. A wintering **Northern Parula** at Castaic Lagoon from January 2–February 9 was a nice surprise (Steve Summers).

At least a half dozen **Palm Warblers** were present over the period, but notable

was one in the Antelope Valley at 50th Street East and Ave. K-8 on January 10 (Kimball Garrett). Wintering vagrant warblers are extremely rare on the cold deserts.

Painted Redstarts continued at Oakdale Memorial Park in Glendora through February 10 and in Sierra Madre through January 20.

A **Green-tailed Towhee** in Long Beach on December 21 was the only wintering bird reported (Robb Hamilton).

Very rare for the county was an **American Tree Sparrow** found at Castaic Lagoon on January 11 (David Bell, Luke Tiller). This was the second in as many winters, but to the disappointment of many observers neither bird could be refound on subsequent days.

Clay-colored Sparrows were at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on December 13 (Dinuk Magamanna) and at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale from January 4–25 (Andrew Lee) and the only "**Large-billed**" **Savannah Sparrow** reported was at Leo Carillo State Beach on December 30 (Jon Fisher).

A "**Red**" **Fox Sparrow** was in La Canada on December 20 (David Bell) and **Swamp Sparrows** included one at Legg Lake in South El Monte that continued through February 1 and another found at the Rio Hondo Basins in Pico Rivera on February 7 (Larry Schmahl).

A **Dark-eyed "Pink-sided" Junco** was at the Rancho Sierra Golf Club in the Antelope

Valley on December 9 (Dan Maxwell). Care needs to be taken when identifying this subspecies, with the variable Oregon Juncos as well as intergrades and hybrids complicating the issue. Still this subspecies is probably more common than records would indicate.

Always rare in winter, **Black-headed Grosbeaks** were found on the PVP CBC on December 21 (Jim Pike) and in Pasadena on January 2 (Frank & Susan Gilliland).

At least seven **Summer Tanagers** appeared to be wintering along with a handful of more common Western Tanagers. Exotic plantings have been a boon to both species and enabled them to winter in the area.

Rare wintering **Hooded Orioles** included a continuing bird in Granada Hills through January 5 and one in Culver City on January 27 (Don Sterba).

Thus what there was of winter is for all practical purposes already over. What appeared to be a promising start for a wet season ended up offering mostly false hope rather than anything in the way of significant precipitation. As of mid-February it looks like we're in for yet another dry year and continued drought, though we did fare slightly better than last winter.

Regardless, spring songbird migration is around the corner. With the exception of

swallows, just a trickle of birds will begin passing through in early March, but numbers will build quickly. The foothill canyons of the San Gabriels and the desert will be excellent places to watch northbound birds, but they won't be restricted to those places. Migrants can be found practically anywhere.

While rare birds drive a lot of our birding habits and activity, there's nothing like spring to provide us a renewed appreciation for common birds. The change in pace is obvious as resident species are bursting with song and busy with nesting activities. Eagerly awaited spring migrants are arriving. By mid-April and through early May, the sheer numbers of birds that can be encountered on a good spring day are inspiring. 🐦



LOS ANGELES AUDUBON'S "OPEN WETLANDS" AT BALLONA

On Saturday, March 7th, from 9 a.m. to noon, the Los Angeles Audubon Society will host their 1st Sat. of the month "Open Wetlands" event at the Ballona Salt Marsh. Binoculars will be available to borrow, and volunteers will help visitors view aquatic invertebrates through microscopes, learn about the unique ecosystems found at Ballona, and view birds through powerful spotting scopes along Ballona Creek. Please drop-in!

Enter through the gate located in the northeast corner of the parking lot behind Alkawater/Gordon's Market, in the 300 block of Culver Blvd. in Playa del Rey. *No baby strollers please.* Please contact Cindy Hardin at cindyhardin@laaudubon.org or call (310) 301-0050 if you have any questions.



Springtime at Ballona, Photos by Cindy Hardin

INTERPRETING NATURE — Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program, an update

By Stacey Vigallon, Director of Environmental Education

Since 2008, the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program has served as a way to connect high school students from LA's urban core with hands-on experience in urban nature and community leadership. Students who go through the Greenhouse Program participate in habitat restoration, mentor elementary school students, conduct original research, and lead adult volunteers in the community. Participating students have a wide range of interests and go on to attend schools like Brown University, Williams College, UCLA, UC Santa Cruz, Humboldt State University, and our local colleges and universities. Some find full-time work right after high school based on the skills they gained through the Greenhouse Program. Perhaps what's most impressive is that our students not only go on to do great things, but they also come back — they return to serve as volunteers and interns with Los Angeles Audubon during their college years and even after college graduation. They help monitor plover and terns, lead field trips at Dockweiler Beach and Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area, and mentor new Greenhouse Program students. The photos below highlight the work that's being done this year in the program as well as what a few of our alumni have been up to since graduating from high school.



Intern Magaly Lopez monitors her experiment in the greenhouse, a study of native California black walnut germination rate and survival.



Alumni Emily Cobar is a recent UC Santa Cruz graduate. During her time at UC Santa Cruz she won a much-coveted spot in the university's Natural History Field Quarter program and led nature walks on campus. She has served as an intern at Debs Park Audubon Center. Emily was recently selected to participate in the highly competitive Environment for the Americas internship program, where she'll be conducting shorebird and seabird research and doing community outreach with Los Angeles Audubon. She is currently assisting us with the Snowy Plover Field Trip Program.



Current Greenhouse Program Restoration Leaders assist with research and restoration tasks at the Venice Least Tern colony, fall 2014.



Alumni Bryan Payes has worked for Northeast Trees and currently works for Los Angeles Audubon while attending West LA College. He also presented his work at the California Naturalist Conference and California STEM Conference this past fall. In this photo, he teaches current Greenhouse Program students about dyeing with indigo, a plant-based dye.



Alumni Brian Young has worked for Los Angeles Audubon since he graduated high school in 2011. He has assisted with habitat restoration events, teaching science illustration, leading field trips at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area, and mentoring new students in the Greenhouse Program. He was selected to attend Yosemite National Park's Wildlinks Bridge Program and has presented his work at the California Naturalist Conference and the California STEM Conference. He currently attends West LA College.



Alumni Joyce Realegeno, a current UC Santa Cruz student, has worked at the Venice Least Tern colony since her freshman year in high school. She is a certified California Naturalist and has presented her work at both the Audubon Convention and the California STEM Conference.



Intern Diandra Dillon uses a sound level meter to study noise pollution at both Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook and her high school. Now a senior in high school, she has been conducting this project since her 10th grade year.



Intern Robert Morales installs an infrared wildlife camera at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook. His project focuses on nocturnal mammals and light pollution.

Volunteer Opportunities

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

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

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

Los Angeles Audubon Receives S. Mark Taper Foundation Grant

The Los Angeles Audubon Society (LAAS) has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from the S. Mark Taper Foundation. The grant will support Los Angeles Audubon's efforts in environmental youth education programs — specifically to provide under-served schools with bus transportation to LAAS outdoor education programs that are connecting urban youth to nature and science; and to invest in student efforts with paid internships (stipends) to support and recognize their work in environmental stewardship.

"Los Angeles Audubon is grateful for the generous support from the S. Mark Taper Foundation which allows us to continue and enhance our ongoing work with urban youth, aimed at providing an experience-rich pathway to higher education and career development" said Dr. Travis Longcore, president of Los Angeles Audubon's Board of Directors. *"This past year, Los Angeles Audubon served more than 5,000 students, introducing students from the heart of Los Angeles to the wonders of birds and the importance of open space conservation. The students, in turn, have contributed to habitat restoration and environmental research projects that have improved their local parks, schoolyards, and neighborhoods."*

For more information about Los Angeles Audubon youth education programs, visit www.laaudubon.org

Contact: Carol Babeli, Los Angeles Audubon Development Director, carolbabeli@laaudubon.org





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

Field Trip Listings

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

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

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

CARPOOLING

For ride sharing purposes, your contact information 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:

Los Angeles Audubon—Field Trips
Attn: Susan Castor
PO Box 411301
Los Angeles CA 90041-8301

'NO FEE' RESERVATIONS / MORE INFORMATION

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

Please leave voice message if no answer.

Saturday, March 14

Bonelli Regional Park

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: Rod Higbie resides in the park, and knows where all the birds are at! Bonelli Regional Park is a remarkable island of habitat, containing extensive coastal sage habitat, along with a large lake surrounded by parkland. Birds regularly seen in the past include California Gnatcatcher, Cactus Wren, Greater Roadrunner, and occasionally Bald Eagle. 200 other species through the years. From LA, take the 10 or 210 Fwy east towards San Dimas to the top stretch of the 57 Fwy. Proceed N from the 10, or S from the 210 on the 57 Fwy to the Via Verde exit just N of the 10/57 interchange (at the bottom of Kellogg Hill). If coming from the N, turn left onto Via Verde, and left into the "Park and Ride" lot. If coming from the S, take the Via Verde offramp and proceed Rt. to the "Park and Ride" lot on the Rt. We will meet here at 8:00 a.m. to carpool since there is a \$10.00/car park entrance fee. Rod can provide tips for those wishing to continue birding in the area after the 11ish finish time. Bring lunch, if you plan to bird with others past 11 a.m.

March 21 & 22 Weekend

Anza-Borrego State Park Birds, Wildflowers, Insects, and More

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

Leader Kurt Leuschner is a Professor of Natural Resources at College of the Desert in Palm Desert. He specializes in field ornithology, entomology, and desert natural history. On Saturday and Sunday we will car-caravan in and around Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, from Julian to the desert floor. This is a peak time for both wildflowers and the annual migration of Swainson's Hawks! High points over the years include: hundreds of Swainson's

Hawks in migration, LeConte's Thrasher, Bald Eagles nesting, Wild Turkeys, Peninsular Bighorn Sheep, Desert Lilies, Long-eared Owl, Chuckwalla, Baja Collared Lizard, Great Purple Hairstreak and Silvery Blue. Every year is different. Scenery is spectacular! Suggested accommodations in Borrego Springs: Borrego Palm Canyon Campground in the State Park (reserve through www.reserveamerica.com), Hacienda del Sol motel (760) 767-5442 is quite near our meeting point, Stanlund Motel (760) 767-5501 and Palm Canyon Resort (800) 242-0044 are just down the road. Anticipate a busy weekend and make your reservations months ahead of time. We will meet at 6:45 a.m. both days in the parking lot of the Borrego Desert Nature Center (address: 652 Palm Canyon Drive), just west of Christmas Circle in Borrego Springs, and finish up around lunchtime on Sunday. Net profits go to the Ralph Schreiber Grant Fund. Limit 20 people. Reserve by mail with \$20 fee for LAAS members / \$40 non-LAAS fee; cell #, and E-mail address to LAAS. E-mail attachments with more details will be sent later. Kurt will also be giving a lecture nearby on Friday evening on The Birds of Anza-Borrego, with a fee of \$8 for Audubon members. See:

<http://www.abdnha.org/calendar1.htm#birds>. Sign up for the lecture in advance if possible.

Sunday, March 29

Malibu Lagoon and Points North

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader Irwin Woldman will be pointing out waterbirds, gulls and shorebirds from the shore and at the estuary's two new viewing towers, continuing on to nearby Legacy Park. Thereafter on to Solstice Canyon. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Malibu Lagoon kiosk. To get here, take PCH N/W over the bridge in Malibu, and park free on either side of PCH after

the estuary turn on the left, or turn right on Cross Creek Road for free parking along the road (near Starbucks), or turn left into the Malibu estuary lot to park for a fee. Cross PCH, and walk to the kiosk across from Cross Creek Road. Bring water, sun-block, and a scope if you have one, for a morning of birding.

April 5 – Easter!!

Sunday, April 12

Wind Wolves Preserve

NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP (20 max.)

Leader: Guy Commeau, with a guide from The Wildlands Conservancy. The 95,000 acre preserve stretches from rolling grass and saltbush on the valley floor (west of Grapevine), to California blue oak and valley oak, transitioning to juniper, pinyon pine, and eventually ponderosa pine and big cone spruce. Some riparian habitat. The 200 elk that now roam the preserve may eventually expand to 2,000 animals, helping California Condors live in a more natural state. Guy has visited the Preserve many times, and is drawn to the spectacular and varied scenery. Resident birds such as Burrowing Owl and Golden Eagle, migrant songbirds, as well as real possibilities for big cats and other wildlife. Directions: I-5 north to Maricopa Hwy (CA-166) west for 10 miles, turn left at Preserve sign and continue for 3 miles, and turn right at sign and continue straight for 1.7 miles to the Preserve headquarters. Meet here at 8:00 a.m. Leave LA around 6:00 AM if you drive fast, or camp at HQ Saturday evening (well-equipped, visitor's center, small optional donation), or hotels in Lebec or Maricopa. Best Western Lebec is \$85-100 (good, but ask for a room away from Fwy), Motel 8 Maricopa (good reviews) is \$48. Limited to 20 participants. Sign up by

phone, letter or e-mail with LAAS. We will carpool into high-clearance vehicles. Bring FRS radios and lunch.

Friday, April 17

Small Owls of the San Gabriels

NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP (10 Max.)

Leaders Mary and Nick Freeman. We will be looking for Flammulated, Saw-whet, Northern Pygmy and Western Screech-Owls. Sign up, and meet at 5:00 p.m. on the frontage road for Angeles Forest Hwy just north of the 210 Fwy in La Canada. Turn N on ACH, take the second right (Milmda Dr.), and a quick left (Flanders Rd.). Meet along the first 50-yard stretch, fed and gassed up, and we will carpool from here. Bring quiet cold weather gear (no nylon if possible), a small walking flashlight, binoculars, powerful flashlight optional. Photo ops possible. LAAS telephone / e-mail sign-up mandatory. 10 max.

Sunday, April 19

Techniques for Better Bird Photography

Marina del Rey / Santa Monica

\$40 FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP OF 10

Your workshop host will be Christopher Taylor, an accomplished and published local photographer who has conducted similar workshops here and back east. While Christopher is most experienced with Canon equipment, he'll provide techniques that will enhance your ability to capture outstanding images of birds no matter what brand you're using, and should be able to help reproduce camera effects on other brands. During the field lab, shorebirds and gulls should highlight. Christopher will be addressing a basic approach to one of the most difficult arenas of photography. Christopher does not typically use

flash at all, and he'll explain why, and how to compensate in various light and wind conditions. He'll also offer guidance on when it's best to hand-hold a shorter lens and when it is best to use a tripod and more magnification. He will discuss how to make your photographs more captivating by incorporating habitat into your frame. Learn how to use bokeh effects to help emphasize your subject. He will cover different aperture, lighting and metering techniques to help make your photographs POP! Bring your DSLR camera and telephoto lens. Meet at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot at 7:30 a.m. 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. Early morning lot or street parking is usually not a problem.

After a nearby lunch (with Christopher if you wish), we will meet in a classroom setting at a Santa Monica office, where Christopher will review basic post-production Photoshop techniques, and tips to make good photos great and great photos truly eye-catching. A charged laptop with Photoshop loaded, and the day's photos downloaded, is useful but not required. Office directions will be provided before the lunch break. Finish up around 4:00 p.m.

April 25 & 26 Weekend (note: NEW DATE!)

Owens Valley Grouse Trip

\$55 FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP of 20

Mary and Nick Freeman lead. Reserve rooms NOW (not tomorrow or after confirmation)! Cancel later PRN. This is also the first day of fishing season, which is HUGE in Owens Valley! No choice, due to access issues. 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.

Field Trip Listings, cont'd

Saturday, May 2

South Bay Parks

NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader *Ron Melin* visits many of the South Bay parks regularly, including Madrona Marsh, Alondra Park, Sand Dune Park, and Wilderness Park if time allows. Colorful warblers and other passerines should headline. Start and finish at Madrona Marsh Preserve, for carpoolers, and visit the parks listed as time allows. To get here, get yourself from the 405 Fwy to Prairie Ave. (becomes Madrona Ave.) heading south. Pass Carson Street, and turn left (E) at Plaza del Amo, and into the parking lot on the left. Meet at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch, especially if you might carpool, as we may bird until 3:00 p.m., if enthusiasm warrants.

Sunday, May 3

Orcas Park & Big Tujunga Wash

NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Kimball Garrett will lead us on a morning of birding at these oft-overlooked step sisters to nearby big sister Hansen Dam. We'll cover park, foothill riparian, and alluvial scrub habitats; looking for specialties such as Yellow-breasted Chat, Swainson's Thrush, Hutton's Vireo, Cactus Wren, and Hairy Woodpecker along with a variety of migrants. Expect to walk up to two miles, sometimes over slightly uneven terrain. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the parking lot at the far (south) end of Orcas Park in Lake View Terrace. Coming from the east: exit the 210 Fwy at Wheatland Ave.; go one short block north to Foothill Blvd. and then 0.9 mi. west to Orcas Ave. Turn left, entering Orcas Park after about 0.2 miles, then continue another 0.2 mi. to the parking lots closest to Big Tujunga Creek. If you're coming from the west, exit the 210 Fwy at the Osborne/Lake View Terrace exit, turn left to go east on Foothill Blvd., turn right on Orcas Ave., then follow the directions above. We should finish up around 11:00 a.m.

Sunday, May 10

Mojave Area

SIGN-UP REQUIRED, NO FEE, 12 max.

Leaders: *Nick Freeman and Don White*. Western warblers and flycatchers should headline. Reptiles may be encountered! Veer right heading north out of Mojave, take Hwy 14 for about 20 miles, just over the riverbed, and take Jawbone Canyon Road on the left. Meet right at the turnoff at the ranger station parking lot at 6:00 a.m. (restroom). 6:00 a.m.??? Birds start shooting up this canyon at first light, so even this will get us into Butterbred a tad late, but if we happen to hit migration on the nose, it will be magical! We will carpool to Butterbred Springs, backtrack to California City environs for lunch and more birds, and possibly finish the day at Apollo Park. LAAS sign-up with ph# & e-mail mandatory. 12 max. Bring lunches, sun block, FRS radios. Reserve rooms (Motel 6 or other) in Mojave, or Best Western in CA City.

Friday, June 5

Small Owls of the San Gabriels #2 (tentative)

NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP

Leaders *Mary and Nick Freeman*. We will be looking for Flammulated, Saw-whet, Northern Pygmy and Western Screech-Owls. Sign up, and meet at 5:00 p.m. on the frontage road for Angeles Forest Hwy just north of the 210 Fwy in La Canada. Turn N on ACH, take the second right (Milmada Dr.), and a quick left (Flanders Rd.). Meet along the first 50-yard stretch, fed and gassed up, and we will carpool from here. Bring quiet cold weather gear (no nylon if possible), a small walking flashlight, binoculars, powerful flashlight optional. Photo ops possible. LAAS telephone / e-mail sign-up mandatory. 10 max.

Please support LAAS with your donations.

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

June 12-15 Long Weekend

Birds of the Southern Sierra and Kern River Valley

LIMITED SIGN-UP (8 min./12 max.), FEE (SEE BELOW)

Leaders: Fri & Sat – Bob Barnes, Sun & Mon – Jon Schmitt. John's skill as a field trip leader is top-of-the-chart as he has fascinating bird and overall natural history anecdotes readily gobbled up by trip participants. He has worked as a field biologist for both the Peregrine Falcon and California Condor recovery programs. John knows the haunts of Greenhorn Mountain birds better than anyone.

Bob Barnes has led over 300 formal birding field trips to the Kern River Valley, Southern Sierra, and Kern County Mojave desert oases for Audubon groups, bird clubs as the local guide for two WINGS Kern River Valley and Southern Sierra Nevada trips led by Jon Dunn.

Please visit the LAAS website for itinerary details.

Min. 8 participants, max. 12 participants.

Sat. & Sun. \$35 ea., Fri. & Mon. \$25 ea. (i.e. F-M is \$120 ea.).

July 3 thru 6 Long Weekend

Ponderosa Cabin Owling

SIGN-UP (6 MIN / 10 MAX), \$100 – BUDGET PRICED!

(3 NIGHTS CABIN, 1 HOT DOG BBQ DINNER, & OWLS INCLUDED)

Leaders: *Mary and Nick Freeman*. Ponderosa is above Porterville in the southwest Sierra. Owling by night, bird walks by day! Must be a night owl (1–2 a.m.?). More details online.

We have presently arranged for a nice big cabin. Our first dinner will be potluck, others provided or eat out. Tentatively meet Friday 3:00 p.m. at the cabin (directions pending), finally leaving the mountains late Monday morning. More details in flyer. To reserve, send phone, \$100 check for cabin, and e-mail. **10 sign-ups maximum, including leaders.** The leaders pay too, to bring this price to you! No small children or pets, please. And please plan to stay around for the Monday clean-up! 🐾

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

Mar. 1 and Apr. 5

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)

Mar. 21 and Apr. 18

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, Cooper's Hawk. We will also look for newly arrived migrants such as Bullock's and Hooded Orioles, Western Kingbird, Warbling and Hutton's vireos. Resident birds have begun to nest providing a whole new way of watching birds.

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) 876-0202 leave a message. We will attempt to connect you with other birders interested in sharing a ride to our events.

Upper Franklin Canyon Sooky Goldman Nature Center

2nd Sunday of the month

Mar. 8 & Apr. 12

Time: 8:30 a.m.–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, Spotted and California Towhees and California Thrasher. We will look for early spring migrants such as warblers, flycatchers, swallows, orioles. Resident birds have begun to nest providing a whole new way of watching birds. 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 Dr. to Coldwater Canyon Dr. to Mulholland Dr. Veer left on Mulholland Dr. 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. **Binoculars provided.**

Ballona Wetlands Bird Walk

3rd Sunday of the month (Except December)

Mar. 15 and Apr. 19

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

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

Please note: The LAAS monthly program presentations for March - June 2015 will be held on the **2nd Thursday** of the month.

Thursday, March 12th

Ecuador, High to Low

Presented by Jon Feenstra

Ecuador is a country approximately the size of Arizona and hosts more than 1600 bird species (not to mention an uncountable number of plants and insects). This remarkable diversity is due to a sweeping geography that includes Pacific coast, the snow-capped Andes and steamy lowland jungle including a part of the vast and mysterious Amazon rainforest. New species are continually being discovered and parts of the country still remain remote and inaccessible. That said, it is also possibly the most accessible country in South America and well visited by researchers and tourists. In this presentation, Jon will give a virtual tour of many of the various regions of mainland Ecuador with comments on the habitat, stories from the field, and, of course, photos of birds.

Raised in the Appalachian ridges of northwestern New Jersey, Jon Feenstra's playground was the outdoors. Though birding was a passion, it was chemistry that drove his academic education. After graduating college he moved from New Jersey to Los Angeles to conduct graduate research in physical chemistry at the California Institute of Technology. There, all while studying, he became active in Southern California birding: leading field trips, writing articles on bird distribution and local issues, and spending time exploring the diverse and bird-rich area. He finished a Ph.D. dissertation in ultrafast electron diffraction then decided it was finally time to go "all in" and make birding his full-time passion. When not traveling the country or the world, Jon lives in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains and works as a freelance ecological consultant. He volunteers for the Pasadena Society, has served on the board of directors of Western Field Ornithologists, leads many of Southern California's pelagic trips, and has contributed to several publications on terrestrial and pelagic bird distribution. During any time between those activities he reads widely, brews beer, and plans his next adventure.



Moss-backed Tanager, by Jon Feenstra

Los Angeles Audubon's monthly evening program presentations are held 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.

Please note: The LAAS monthly program presentations for March - June 2015 will be held on the **2nd Thursday** of the month.

Thursday, April 9, 2015

"Shakespeare's Birds"

Presented by Martin Hyatt

Birds have magical qualities. They fly, they sing, and they anticipate the seasons. They have inspired artists and writers in every age and society. Shakespeare filled his works with bird imagery, drawing upon renaissance, medieval, Roman, Greek, and biblical sources in addition to his own experiences. For his time, he was quite the birder, mentioning over 60 species in his plays and poems. Shakespeare was also famously compared to birds. At the beginning of his career, he was labelled an "upstart crow," and after his death, he was eulogized as the "swan of Avon." Dr. Hyatt will share some of Shakespeare's most intriguing allusions to birds. In some cases, Shakespeare used biologically accurate information. Other times he referred to longstanding myths or drew from ancient fables. Understanding these literary traditions leads to some surprising discoveries about Shakespeare and his works.

Dr. Martin Hyatt is a biologist with degrees from Harvard University and the University of Pittsburgh. He has tracked radio-tagged homing pigeons from a small plane, chased down gorged albatrosses from an inflatable boat, found roadrunners in the mountains, and observed penguins in the desert. Now, he pursues Shakespeare's birds.



Red Kite, by Steve Nesbitt

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