

Los Angeles Audubon Society | laudubon.org

# WESTERN Tanager

September–October 2016 | Volume 83, Number 1





Los Angeles Audubon Society  
 P.O. Box 411301  
 Los Angeles, CA 90041-8301  
[www.losangelesaudubon.org](http://www.losangelesaudubon.org)  
 (323) 876-0202  
[LAAS@laaudubon.org](mailto:LAAS@laaudubon.org)

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Education	Margot Griswold	<a href="mailto:mgriswold@landiq.com">mgriswold@landiq.com</a>
Membership	Brad Rumble	<a href="mailto:bradrumble@laaudubon.org">bradrumble@laaudubon.org</a>

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Field Trips	Nick Freeman	<a href="mailto:mnfreeman@earthlink.net">mnfreeman@earthlink.net</a>
Bird Walks	Eleanor Osgood	<a href="mailto:gardenbird1@att.net">gardenbird1@att.net</a>
Monthly Programs	Nicole Lannoy Lawson	<a href="mailto:laas@laaudubon.org">laas@laaudubon.org</a>
Rare Bird Alert	Jon Fisher	<a href="mailto:JonF60@hotmail.com">JonF60@hotmail.com</a>
Schreiber Grant Program	Ryan Harigan	<a href="mailto:ryanharigan@laaudubon.org">ryanharigan@laaudubon.org</a>

**Staff**

Director of Communications and Development	Carol Babel	<a href="mailto:carolbabel@laaudubon.org">carolbabel@laaudubon.org</a>
Director of Outdoor Education	Cindy Hardin	<a href="mailto:cindyhardin@laaudubon.org">cindyhardin@laaudubon.org</a>
Director of Environmental Education	Stacey Vigallon	<a href="mailto:tem@laaudubon.org">tem@laaudubon.org</a>
Volunteer Coordinator	Cindy Hardin	<a href="mailto:cindyhardin@laaudubon.org">cindyhardin@laaudubon.org</a>
Member Services & Website Liason	Susan Castor	<a href="mailto:membership@laaudubon.org">membership@laaudubon.org</a>

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Editor Linda Oberholzer, [westemanager@laaudubon.org](mailto:westemanager@laaudubon.org)

Design & Layout, Susan Castor, [susancastor@laaudubon.org](mailto:susancastor@laaudubon.org)

Scientific Advisor, Kimball Garrett, [kgarrett@nhm.org](mailto:kgarrett@nhm.org)

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Black Oystercatcher, *Haematopus bachmani*, hunting on the rocks at the Redondo Beach marina.  
 Photo by Jamie Lowry

## ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER:

Jamie F. Lowry was born and raised in a small town in southwestern Michigan. After earning degrees from Michigan State University and the University of Michigan Law School, she relocated to Hermosa Beach, California, and began practicing law with a large international law firm with offices in downtown Los Angeles. Some years later she started a new career as a full-time mother of two children, a daughter and a son. She later combined motherhood with a part-time resumption of her legal career. She is now retired and continues to live in Hermosa Beach.

She has always been fascinated with nature, wildlife and natural science, and she and her husband have been long-time supporters of many environmental and conservation-related groups and causes. She is currently active in volunteer work along those lines, and is a certified California naturalist. She also enjoys travel, music, books and art. She frequently takes photographs while out in nature for her own personal records and to share what she has observed with friends and family. Outside of some postings on iNaturalist.org, this is the first general publication of any of her photographs. All photos in this article were taken with a Canon PowerShot camera (5.0-40.0mm 1:3.2-6.9, with an 8x15 zoom).

She can be reached at [lowryjf728@msn.com](mailto:lowryjf728@msn.com).

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# TALES OF A BUDDING NATURALIST, A Photo Essay

by Jamie Lowry

IT ALL STARTED WITH THE “PINKIES”.

It was about three years ago, in November. I happened to be at a stage in my life when I was in transition. I had recently retired. My children were well on their way to adulthood. And I wanted to get back in shape, after a few years of having let things slide from a physical fitness perspective. Key among the latter attempt was my resolve to go on frequent, long, brisk walks. Since I lived in Hermosa Beach, what better place was there to go on these walks than the beach?

Having lived in Hermosa Beach for over thirty years, I already loved the beach, especially in the fall and winter months when the summer crowds were gone. In the past, while going on walks or hanging out on the sand, I had always kept an eye out for wildlife -- whales, dolphins, pelicans, sandpipers, gulls and the like -- and for treasures waiting to be found along the shore, such as sand dollars, shells, sea glass, moonstone, quartz, agates and other pretty pebbles. But when I began walking along the shore on an almost daily basis, I started to notice more detail. For example, there wasn't just one kind of sandpiper. They were different sizes and colors and shapes and had different behaviors. I started to give them nicknames. The tiny ones that hung out in small flocks and ran in and out of the waves so fast their little legs were a blur I called “Chicklets.” The taller ones that looked similar to each other except for the shapes of their beaks I called “Hook-Bills” and “Straight-Beaks.” But the ones I most enjoyed watching were the largest, with cinnamon-tinted feathers and elegant long legs and extremely long bills that were mostly pink, with black tips. They walked in a leisurely, delicate manner along the edge of the waves while drilling those long beaks into the wet sand every few steps; they seemed oblivious to my watching them from only a few feet away. These were the “Pinkies.”

After some months of listening to me rhapsodizing about my walks and the birds I was enjoying getting to know, my daughter finally interrupted me one day and said, “Mom, you really should figure out what the real names of those birds are!” And she was right, of course. (In fact, I had often thought, while at the beach, that I should find out more about these birds, including their names; but once I got home I usually got distracted by other things.) So I did some searching on the computer. It turns out the “Chicklets” are in fact Sanderlings, and are wintering shorebirds that migrate back and forth from the Arctic every year. The “Hook-Bills” are Whimbrels and the “Straight-Beaks” are Willets. And the “Pinkies,” my favorites, are called Marbled Godwits.

While researching these birds on my computer, I arrived at some point at the Los Angeles Audubon Society website. (If, in classical times, it was true that “all roads lead to Rome;” I think it is equally true that, in modern

times, all bird searches lead to Audubon.) In any event, while at the website I noticed a heading relating to volunteer opportunities, clicked on it -- and the rest, as they say, is history.

Now, a few years later, it is safe to say that I have launched myself into a new career (my third or fourth if anyone's counting) -- that of a naturalist! My first volunteer endeavor was to be trained as a docent in Los Angeles Audubon's education program at the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve (“Ballona Wetlands”), located just a few miles to the north of me; the program is also supported by Santa Monica Audubon. This outstanding program provides field trips to elementary school children wherein they are led on a tour of the wetlands, stopping at four educational stations, and observing all manner of wildlife while hiking between them. The program is directed by the first naturalist I ever met, and the most inspiring in terms of her enthusiasm, breadth and depth of knowledge, and interpretive skills, Cindy Hardin. Each training session and each tour day at the wetlands was and is an eye-opening experience, as there is always so much to see and to learn about, from Cindy, from the guest speakers (at training sessions), from the other docents, from the students, and from nature itself.

I have also been trained and currently participate as a citizen scientist in Audubon's Snowy Plover Beach Monitoring program; have been trained and completed the requirements to become a Sierra Club ICO (“Inspiring Connections Outdoors”) Leader, participating in and leading local wilderness hikes for elementary through high school students; and have completed the University of California Naturalist Certification Course. And I am just getting started! Every little step I take and everything I learn makes me realize how much more there is to see and learn about nature, right here in the Los Angeles area of Southern California.



The bird that started it all for me: a Marbled Godwit, *Limosa fedoa*, (a.k.a. “Pinkie”), foraging in the surf in Hermosa Beach.

While out in nature, I enjoy whipping out my little pocket-sized digital camera and attempting to take photos of some of the interesting things that I see. When the conditions are right and the wildlife cooperates by holding relatively still and I take enough shots, I occasionally get one or two worth sharing. Here are some of my photos.

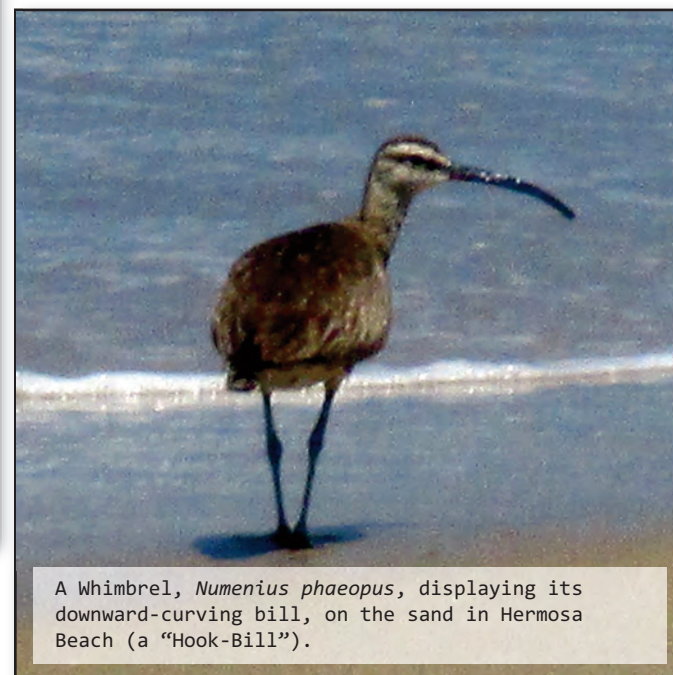
On my first beach walks, I first focused on the Marbled Godwit, pictured above. Then there were a few other local species of sandpipers I got to know: the Whimbrels, Willets and Sanderlings.



A Willet, *Catoptrophorus semipalatus*, posing at the rocks along Ballona Creek (Ballona Wetlands). I see these frequently on my walks in Hermosa Beach as well. (These I called "Straight-Beaks.")



Small flock of Sanderlings, *Calidris alba*, foraging together in Hermosa Beach (the "Chicklets").



A Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus*, displaying its downward-curving bill, on the sand in Hermosa Beach (a "Hook-Bill").

In my volunteer work with L.A. Audubon's Snowy Plover Beach Monitoring program, led by Stacey Vigallon, I learned how to spot the tiny, elusive (and endangered) Snowy Plover while on my beach walks, along with its larger cousin the Black-bellied Plover.



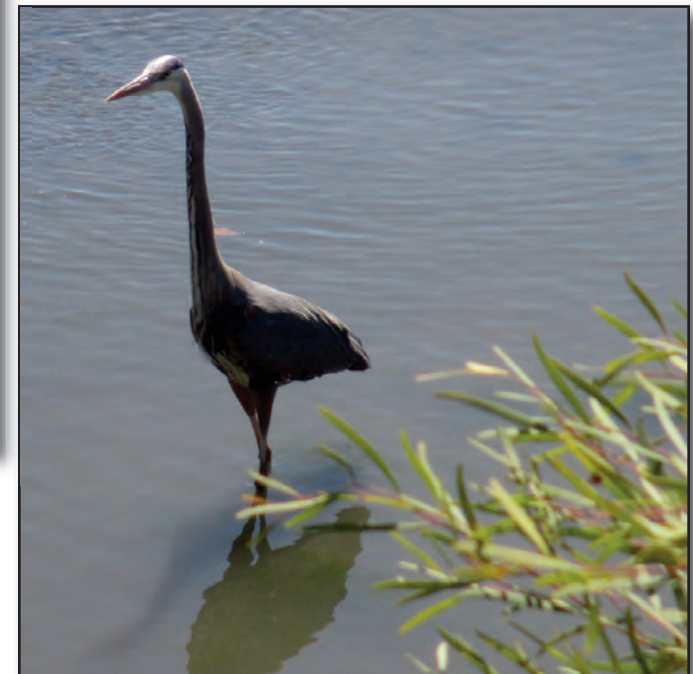
An alert Snowy Plover, *Charadrius alexandrinus*, on the beach in Hermosa, one of the few L.A. County beaches on which they winter. Some are banded and, when possible, while conducting our regular surveys for L.A. Audubon, we make note of the band colors, two on each leg, so that the experts can trace exactly where that particular bird was hatched and banded.



A few Black-bellied Plovers, *Pluvialis squatarola*, newly arrived in Hermosa Beach from their breeding grounds, some still at least partially bedecked in their black-bellied breeding plumage. A Whimbrel has joined them.

And of course there are many species of gulls and terns that frequent the beach, along with other birds, pictures of which I have not included in this essay.

Once I got involved in the education program at Ballona Wetlands, I became acquainted or reacquainted with an abundance of species of native wildlife residing in or visiting the wetlands. First there were the herons and egrets, large and highly visible, always star attractions for the schoolchildren.



Clockwise from left:

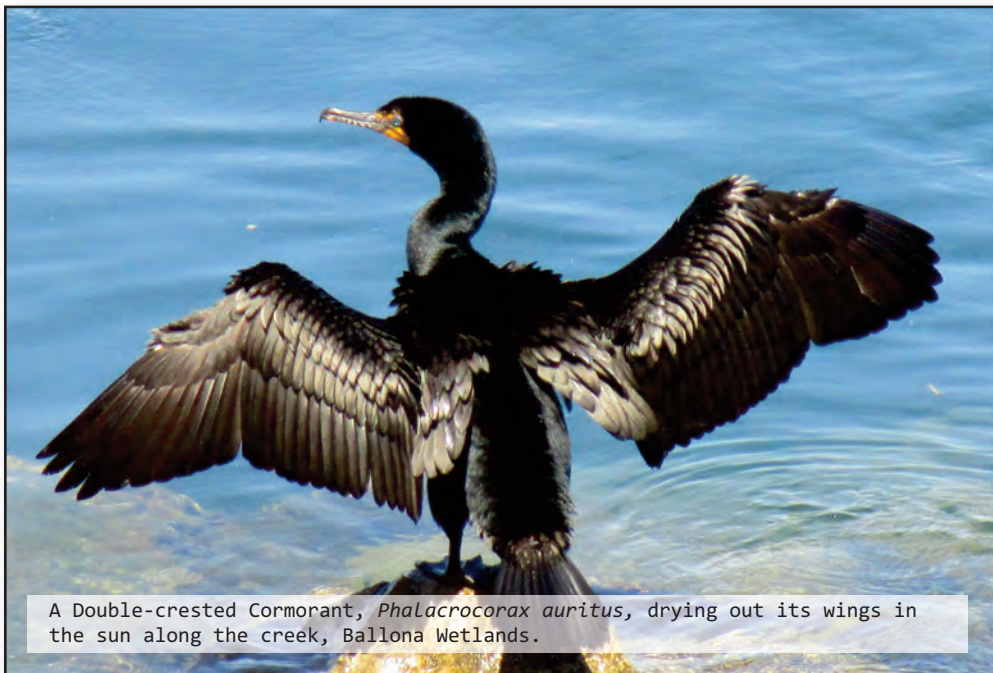
- A Snowy Egret, *Egretta thula*, in hunting mode in a tidal channel, Ballona Wetlands.
- Great Egret, *Ardea alba*, craning its neck in search of a meal, Ballona Wetlands. We've observed these birds consume snakes and lizards, as well as fish.
- Great Blue Heron, *Ardea herodias*, wading in the main tidal channel at Ballona Wetlands. These birds are year-round residents of the wetlands, and nest in nearby trees across the creek. During nesting season, we train one of our spotting scopes on the nesting activity, to the delight of the students.



Clockwise from left:

- An inquisitive Snowy Egret, getting up close and personal at our “Bird Station” on the creek, Ballona Wetlands.
- Black-crowned Night-Heron, *Nycticorax nycticorax*, foraging in a tidal channel at Ballona Wetlands.
- Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, *Nyctanassa violacea*, apparently airing out its wings, Ballona Wetlands.

Then there are the cormorants, grebes, and diving ducks.



A Double-crested Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax auritus*, drying out its wings in the sun along the creek, Ballona Wetlands.



Western Grebe, *Aechmophorus occidentalis*, Ballona Wetlands. This one was temporarily roused out of the creek by some boisterous college rowing teams passing by.



Another Double-crested Cormorant, this one displaying its white crests, the breeding plumage which gave it its name, Ballona Wetlands.



Red-breasted Merganser, *Mergus serrator*, Ballona Wetlands. There were three of these birds actively fishing right alongside this Double-Crested Cormorant, who somehow ended up in every photo.



One of the especially unique habitats at Ballona Wetlands is the saltpan. There are several areas encompassing saltpan which, when moistened by rainwater, draw large numbers of migrating and wintering shorebirds to feed, including stilts, avocets, several species of terns and many others.



Black-necked Stilt, *Himantopus mexicanus*, wading in one of the saltpan areas at Ballona Wetlands. There was a successful nesting pair here this year; this is one of the proud parents of three chicks.

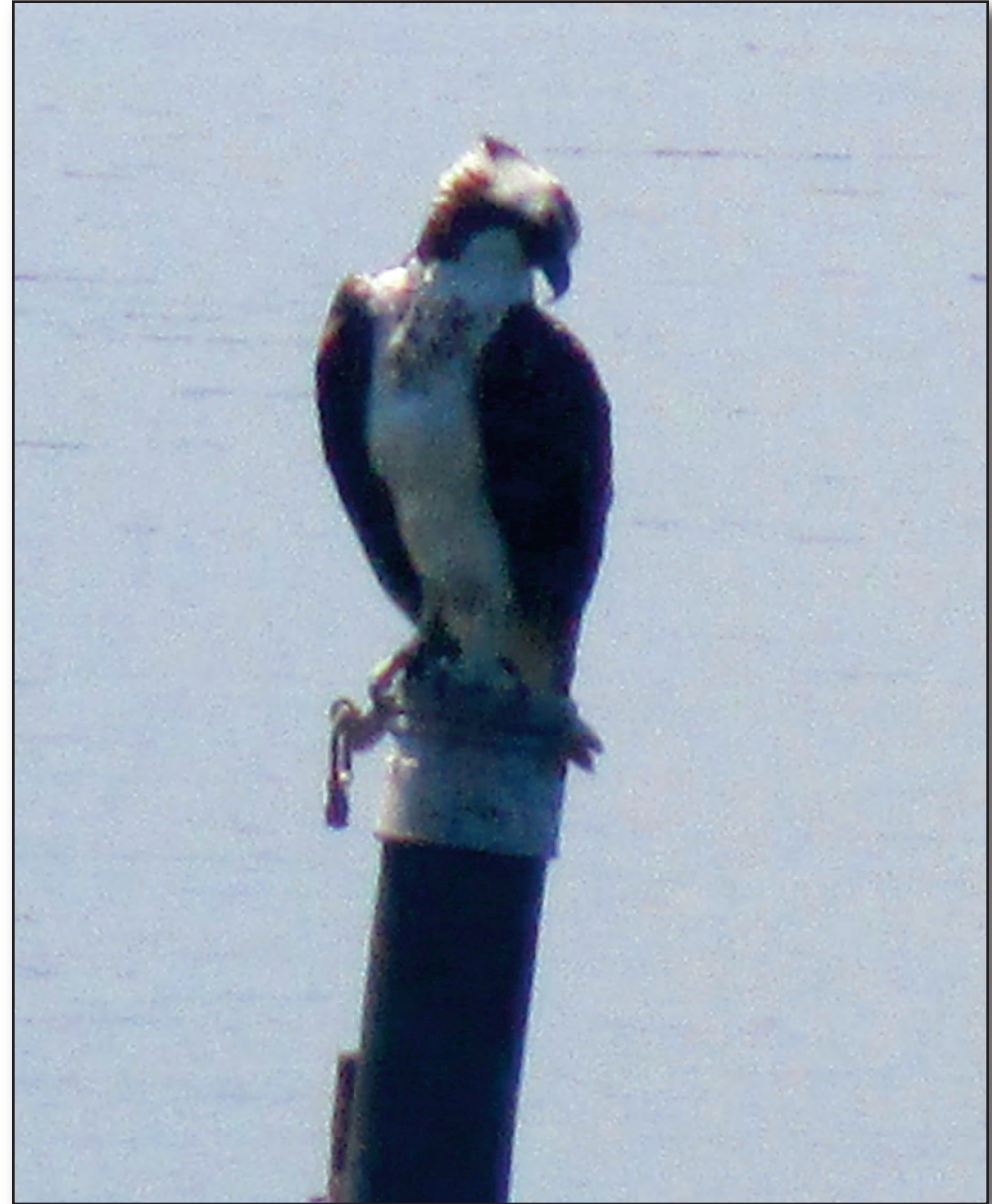


A pair of American Avocets, *Recurvirostra Americana*, foraging with their thin, up-turned, scythe-like bills in a water-covered saltpan at Ballona Wetlands.

Ballona is home also at various times to owls, ducks, geese, and such raptors as Red-Tailed Hawks, Red-Shouldered Hawks, Northern Harriers, Cooper's Hawks, and Ospreys, among others.



A Burrowing Owl, *Athene cucularia*, sitting quietly outside its burrow at Ballona Wetlands.



An Osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*, perched on a post in the main tidal channel, Ballona Wetlands. It is a special treat to watch one dive and catch a fish, or even devour a snake; both events have recently been observed here by students on field trips.

Then there are the mammals, reptiles and invertebrates, all of which abound at the wetlands. There are cottontail rabbits, ground squirrels, gophers, foxes, raccoons and coyotes; lizards and snakes; and a huge number of species of invertebrates including California horn snails, fiddler crabs, amphipods and other microscopic creatures, and insects in all stages of development.

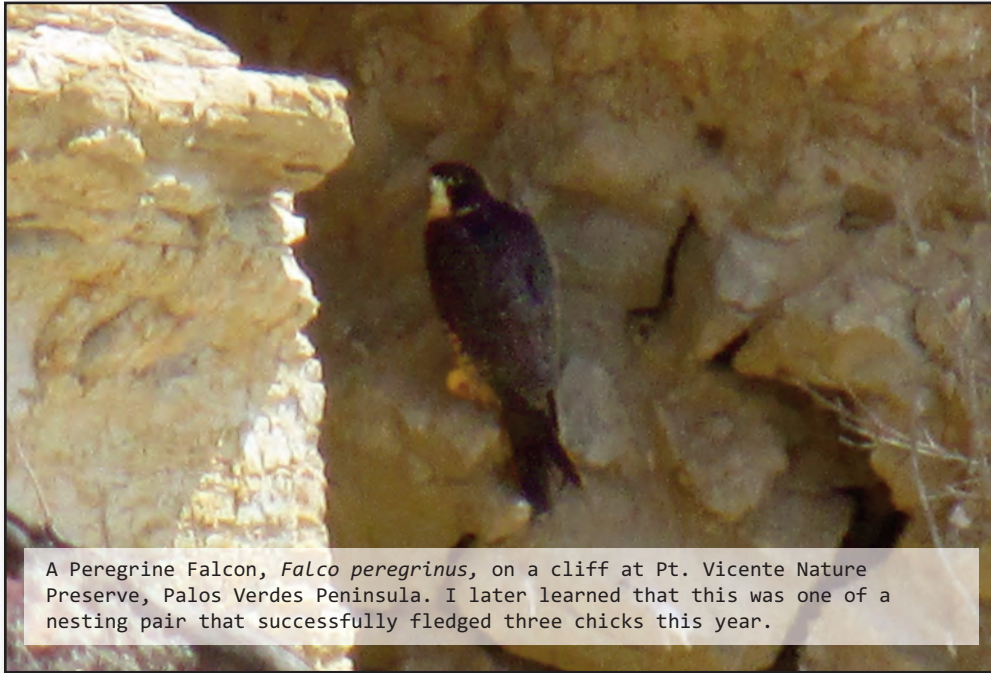


A baby Cottontail Rabbit, *Sylvilagus audubonii*, munching on native plants on the trail through the sand dunes at Ballona Wetlands.

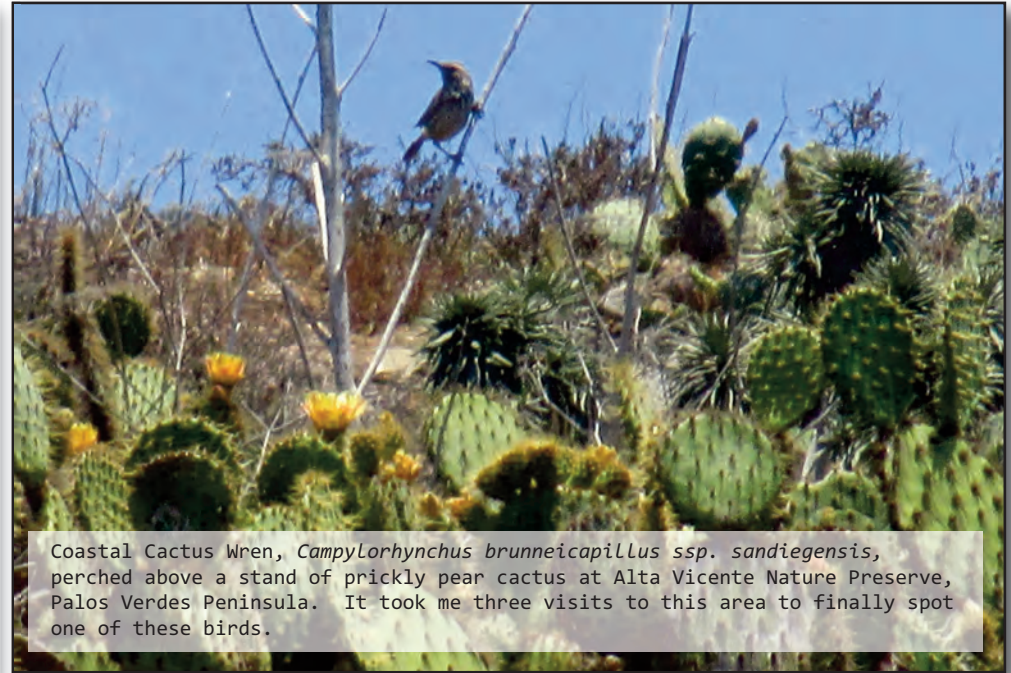


A pair of Pacific Gopher Snakes, *Pituophis catenifer catenifer*, coiling around each other near their hole, Ballona Wetlands.

Besides my local beach and the Ballona Wetlands, I have explored other local pockets of wilderness and come across more fascinating species of wildlife, both flora and fauna.



A Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus*, on a cliff at Pt. Vicente Nature Preserve, Palos Verdes Peninsula. I later learned that this was one of a nesting pair that successfully fledged three chicks this year.



Coastal Cactus Wren, *Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus ssp. sandiegensis*, perched above a stand of prickly pear cactus at Alta Vicente Nature Preserve, Palos Verdes Peninsula. It took me three visits to this area to finally spot one of these birds.



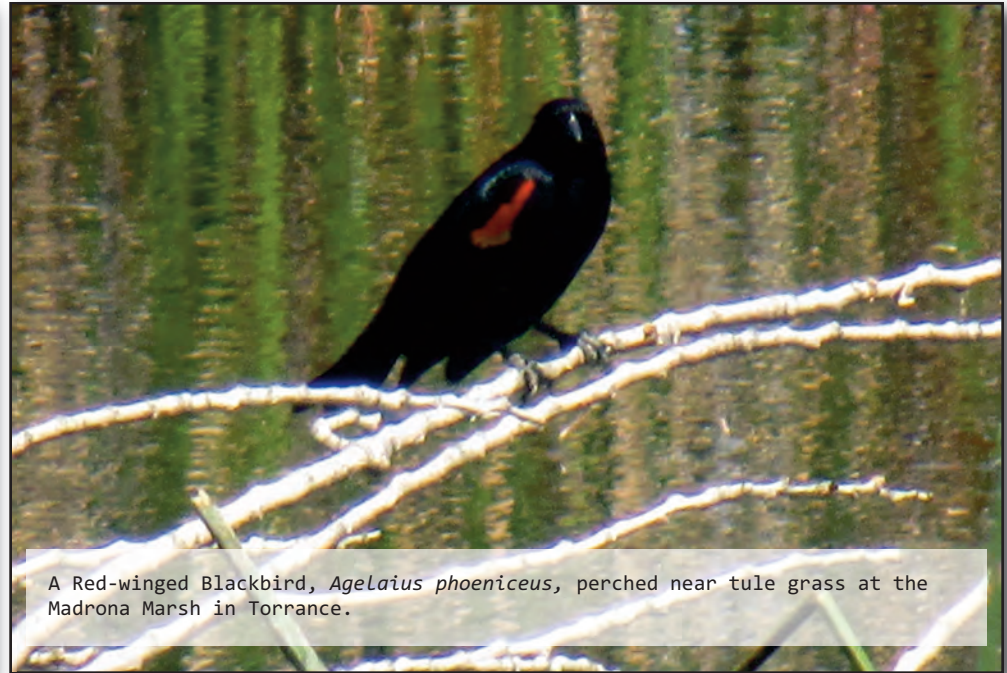
A Sweet Potato Sea Cucumber, *Caudina arenicola*, spotted while tide-pooling at Malaga Cove, Palos Verdes Peninsula.



A California Sea Lion, *Zalopus californianus*, opening one eye to peer at me while lounging on a boat ramp at the Redondo Beach marina.



Black Oystercatcher, *Haematopus bachmani*, hunting on the rocks at the Redondo Beach marina.



A Red-winged Blackbird, *Agelaius phoeniceus*, perched near tule grass at the Madrona Marsh in Torrance.



A Harlequin Bug, *Murgantia histrionica*, on its favorite native plant, Bladderpod, *Peritoma arborea*, at the Madrona Marsh.



Ruddy Duck, *Oxyura jamaicensis*, Dominguez Gap Wetlands (L.A. River), Long Beach

I sometimes range a little farther from home (but still within the L.A. area). Here are a few animals I spotted recently in the Santa Monica Mountains.



California Quail, *Callipepla californica*, Sycamore Canyon, Pt. Mugu State Park.



Flame Skimmer, *Libellula saturata*, Santa Ynez Canyon, Pacific Palisades.



California Mule Deer, *Odocoileus hemionus californicus*, Santa Ynez Canyon. My hiking companion and I came across a doe and fawn, both of whom gazed curiously at us for a moment and then continued their grazing.

Finally, coming full circle in my adventures, here is a shot of a wild bird that appears regularly within a few feet of my kitchen door. 🐦



A Northern Mockingbird, *Mimus polyglottos*, squawking (like a crow) angrily at my two cats, who were out on their deck in Hermosa Beach. This is one of a pair that fiercely guarded their nearby nest.

# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

## Caring For Nature in An Age of Utility

Travis Longcore



About five years ago, English writer Paul Kingsnorth published an essay in Orion Magazine presenting the position that people do not become ‘environmentalists’ in the 21st century “because we have an emotional reaction to the wild world” as once had been the case. Rather, it has become an exercise in utility with the purpose of “sustaining human civilization at the comfort level that the world’s rich people — us — feel is their right, without destroying the ‘natural capital’ or the ‘resource base’ that is needed to do so.” Nowhere is this mindset more visible, he argues, than in the quest for a zero-carbon economy, the premise of which is not one of avoiding the profligate growth that has made humans the cause of the sixth mass extinction on the planet, but rather to facilitate that growth, just with fewer carbon emissions to further disrupt the climate. Environmentalism is no longer an activity for those who seek to care for places and species and protect them from human excesses, but it has become the handmaiden of the very system fueling those threats.

Kingsnorth’s essay resonates deeply with me. By pulling apart the history of the environmental movement, he lays bare the contradiction of mainstream environmentalism in this century — it is an accessory to corporate interests in which everyone cares about “the planet” but without it being necessary to care about any particular place. And so we have environmentalists cheering the paving of our deserts, replacing plants that had been alive for 10,000 years with sterile plains of mirrors focusing the sun’s rays into beams so hot that they incinerate birds in mid-air. To the land itself, these actions are no less an abomination than the Appalachian mountaintop removal that they replace and yet the result is heralded as “green” and “sustainable” energy.

It was once a badge of honor as an environmentalist to stick up for a special place, for a species, for an ancient forest. We honored those who relentlessly and selflessly advocated to stop the development of a wetland or to protect the last stronghold of a species. Once it would have been anathema for environmentalists to acquiesce to the destruction of desert tortoises; now it is seen as a necessary evil for the greater business of cutting carbon emissions. Those who seek to protect their favorite patch or corner of wildness in the city are derided as NIMBYs and romantics out of touch with the collaborative, win-win world of the shiny new environmentalism.

Human-caused climate change is a unique stressor for other species on the planet and poses particular challenges for human societies. This has been obvious for decades, since before I studied these issues as an undergraduate student in the early 1990s. But unless environmentalists equally care about species and habitats in the world as it is today, these places and companions on the planet will not make it into the future anyway. As for those who care only about climate change, they are not going to prioritize protecting undisturbed desert washes or rare bird habitat, or care particularly much about long-lived and slowly reproducing bird species being killed at wind turbines. Those things just are not easily quantified into tons of carbon emissions avoided.

Los Angeles Audubon has a history of caring about places and species and inspiring love of and appreciation for the natural world. We invested heavily in the successful fight to save Mono Lake. The longtime steward of this column, the late Sandy Wohlgemuth, worked for decades to create and protect the Wildlife Area at Sepulveda Basin, shoulder to shoulder with

colleagues from other local conservation groups. We have introduced thousands of people to birds and birding for the first time and for decades sold new birders their first pair of binoculars so that they could see and appreciate the beauty and diversity of birds. We are replanting the sagebrush and goldenbush and cactus in the Baldwin Hills and immersing youth from grade school through college in our local nature — in schoolyard gardens, scrub-covered hills, pickleweed wetlands, and at the beach. That is, Los Angeles Audubon engages with and advocates to conserve and restore places in a world where the mainstream of environmentalism sees places as dispensable except for their utility to humans.

This is a guiding principle, which goes back decades. The purpose of Los Angeles Audubon is “to promote the study and protection of birds and other wildlife, plants, soil and water,” by, among other things, “enlightening the public on the great physical, mental, aesthetic and ethical value of Nature.” This purpose is as relevant today as it was when it was written in 1951. With climate-focused environmentalism having become a means to perpetuate economic growth with the minimum of pesky disruption from nature, where using the ‘right’ light bulb or buying the right car qualifies one to be an environmentalist, I would argue that our purpose is more relevant than ever. Because if we don’t care about individual species and individual places, and we don’t share that love with people from every community and background, nature will slip away, even in a low-carbon world.

Read Paul Kingsnorth’s full essay at <http://bit.ly/kingsnorth>.

To continue the conversation, email me at [travislongcore@laaudubon.org](mailto:travislongcore@laaudubon.org).



## Summer Day Camp 2016

Cindy Hardin, Director of Outdoor Education, Photos by Stacey Vigallon, Director of Environmental Education

Los Angeles Audubon's Summer Day Camp at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area concluded on Friday, August 12<sup>th</sup>. Over a two week period, from August 1<sup>st</sup> to August 12<sup>th</sup>, we worked with two separate groups of campers, ages 7 to 12. In total, 42 campers participated in camp activities, with the majority in attendance for all five days of their respective sessions.

**OUTREACH:** The camp was publicized on social media. This included postings on neighborhood websites that serve the Baldwin Hills area, and the Los Angeles Audubon website. In addition, several teachers who are involved with LAAS's environmental education field trips during the school year helped to spread the word. Flyers were also provided to the offices at the Community Center located in KHSRA, in order to address inquiries from visitors to the park.

We were able to fill our target enrollment number of 20 campers per session well in advance of the camp start date, and had a substantial wait list that was used to fill in a couple of last minute cancellations.

**CONTENT:** Morning hours were spent exploring all corners of the park with our campers. Each hike was designed to highlight the different habitats found at KHSRA. We explored the Coastal Sage Scrub that is found in the canyons that spur off from the Eastern Ridge Trail. We learned about the Ballona watershed as we took in the breathtaking views from the bluff trail pavilions on the west side of the park. A favorite day for both groups took place at Gwen Moore Lake. The lake was a perfect place to learn about aquatic invertebrates, which were collected by campers, viewed under microscopes, and then returned to their homes at the lake.

After each hike the children participated in educational activities designed to amplify their knowledge of what they had just observed. Each child received their own field journals, which were filled



*Camp took place at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area, offering plenty of open space to explore as well as fantastic views of the Ballona Creek Watershed and beyond.*

with illustrations of the morning's sightings by the week's end. Maps that were designed to show the park through the viewpoint of resident animals were created by student teams. Three dimensional models of the local topography were used in a hands-on demonstration, which helped to convey the concept of a watershed, and particularly the Ballona watershed. Insect observation was another component of the camp, complete with a presentation of an extensive insect collection gathered by a former intern, who was a tour leader during LAAS's regular school year program at the park.

The afternoon's activities were overseen by our partner group, reDiscover. ReDiscover staff helped the campers to design and build animal habitats that will enhance conditions for wildlife found in the park. Lizard lounging structures were created with sticks and branches that were





Thanks to our new partner organization, reDiscover, campers spent their afternoons Learning how to build with wood and tools.

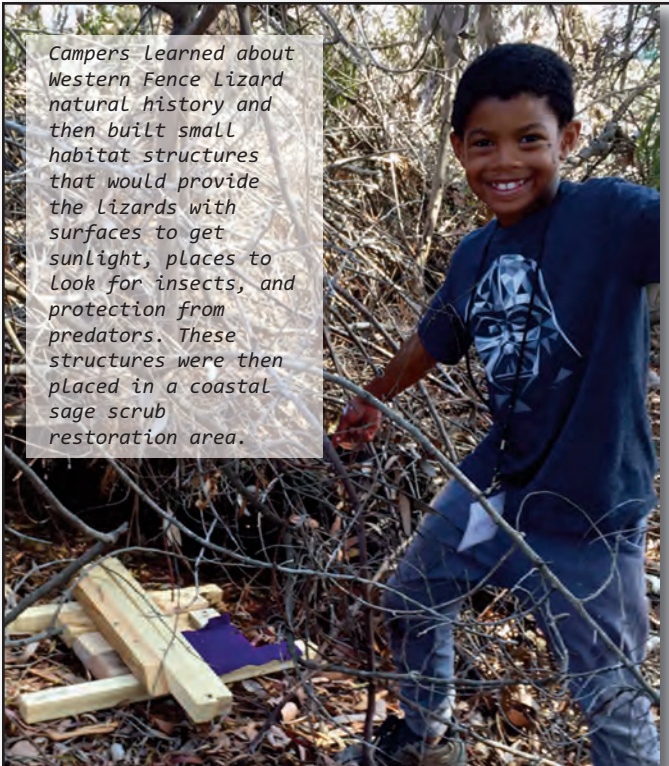
gathered on site. Bee boxes were also produced to provide nesting sites for our native Carpenter Bees. These projects taught campers how to use power tools and gain a better understanding of what animals need to survive.

**STAFFING:** We achieved our goal of providing an adult to child ratio of one adult to every four campers. Staff included two interns from West Los Angeles College. This high ratio enabled us to provide lots of individualized attention to our campers, and created a strong team with diverse knowledge and talents.

Special thanks to the Baldwin Hills Conservancy, KHSRA park staff, and to the Baldwin Hills Regional Conservation Authority for their support in this year's endeavor and our future camps, occurring through Spring 2019. 🐦



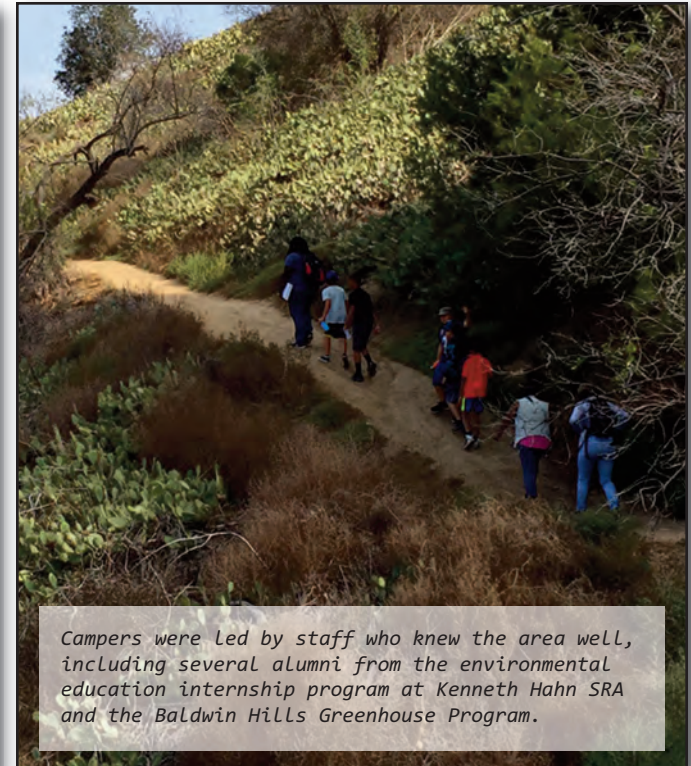
Campers worked in teams to create maps from the point of view of different wildlife species found in the park.



Campers Learned about Western Fence Lizard natural history and then built small habitat structures that would provide the lizards with surfaces to get sunlight, places to look for insects, and protection from predators. These structures were then placed in a coastal sage scrub restoration area.



One of the building projects that campers worked on included elaborate nest structures for our native solitary bee species. These projects will serve park pollinators and be on view to school field trip groups during the school year as well.



Campers were led by staff who knew the area well, including several alumni from the environmental education internship program at Kenneth Hahn SRA and the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program.

# BIRDS OF THE SEASON

August 2016

by Jon Fisher



Though spring migration was essentially over by mid-June, it didn't mean that birds had stopped moving. Even in the comparative doldrums of early summer it was clear that unusual summering birds, late spring and early fall vagrants and some with a simple case of wanderlust were there to be found.

As usual, shorebird numbers at favored spots increased markedly in July, with a few rarities thrown into the mix of more common species. While shorebirds can be found in any patch of suitable habitat, the Edwards Air Force Base Piute Ponds and the lower Los Angeles River continued as the county's premier spots to watch them. These locations continued to be a big draw for birders. However, that doesn't mean that the Ballona wetlands, Malibu Lagoon, Rio Hondo, San Gabriel River and other parts of the LA River should be neglected. All are well worth checking.

A handful of passerines were already on the move by the end of July. Lazuli and a few Indigo Buntings are among the earlier arrivals, but the number and variety of fall migrants really begin to expand in August.

It's hard to believe that the massive Station Fire, which altered habitat for decades to come, occurred seven years ago. Though only a quarter the size of the Station blaze, this year it was the Sand Fire near Santa Clarita that obliterated over 40,000 acres. The effects of persistent drought were evident in this and in several other major and a handful of minor wildfires in the southern half of the state.

Yet despite the paucity of rain, there is still water here. It's in the narrow ribbons of streams and rivers, in ephemeral patches and in reservoirs large and small. Wherever it is, water attracts birds.

Along with the naturally occurring species was the usual array of parrots and parakeets, an occasional Black-throated Magpie-Jay, a wandering Northern Cardinal or two, many bishops and munias and a sprinkling of less often encountered exotics. This "exotic" dimension of LA County birding is shared to the same degree by few other places.

Unusual inland in summer were single **Brant** at the Piute Ponds on June 25 (Mark Scheel, Amy Williamson) and at the Lancaster Water Treatment Plant from July 9–11 (Darren Dowell).

Up to a half dozen summering **Surf Scoters** were along Ballona Creek near the 405 Freeway crossing from July 16–August 6 (Brooke Keeney).

A summering **Common Merganser** remained around the LA River in the Atwater Village area through August 9 and two were at Castaic Lagoon on July 2 (Mei Kwan), with one still there through August 4. **Red-breasted Mergansers** were at Lake Balboa from June 16–August 1 (Mike Stensvold), at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB on June 25 (Mark Scheel, Amy Williamson) and at Quail Lake near Gorman on August 8 (John Garrett).

**Spotted Doves** were in Montebello on July 7 (Michael San Miguel Jr.), continuing at Col. Leon H. Washington Park in Los Angeles and in Huntington Park on July 13 (Tammy & David McQuade). **Inca Doves** continued at Col. Leon H. Washington Park through July 22.

A wayward **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** was on San Clemente Island on June 16 (Nicole Desnoyers). Today it's hard to imagine that this species was once a common breeder in the Los Angeles basin prior to the wholesale destruction of the willow riparian habitat it requires.

The only report of a **Chimney Swift** was one seen from Flat Rock Point on the Palos Verdes Peninsula on July 8 (Jun & Bin Wu).

A **Ridgway's Rail** continued at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh though June 26 and apparently summering **Soras** were at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on June 25 (Anders Frunck) and at the Piute Ponds from July 6–12 (Joseph Lepisto).

An early **Whimbrel** was at the Piute Ponds on July 3 (Jaclyn Catino).

The Piute Ponds also produced a **Ruff** that was present from July 20–24 (Kerry Ross)

A **Stilt Sandpiper** was at the ever productive Piute Ponds from August 5–7 (Darren Dowell, John Birsner).

The season's first **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was along the LA River in Long Beach from July 17–21

(Luke Tiller, David Bell) and was followed closely by one along the Rio Hondo in Rosemead from July 22–23 (Andrew Lee). The lower LA River produced another from August 5–7 (Andrew Lee) and one on August 10 (Richard Barth).

The Piute Ponds had an early **Wilson's Snipe** on July 30 (Jon Feenstra).

Scarce in summer—especially in the interior—was a **Glaucous-winged Gull** continuing at Apollo Park near Lancaster through June 13. More expected was a bird at Malibu Lagoon from June 17–26 (Irwin Woldman), with another at Lake Balboa in the San Fernando Valley from July 11–26 (Irwin Woldman).

A **Laysan Albatross** southwest of Santa Catalina Island on August 8 (Mark Girardeau) was outside of the expected window of occurrence for this species. Also unusual at this time of year was a **Flesh-footed Shearwater** spotted just off the Palos Verdes Peninsula on June 29 (Philip Carnehl).

A **Magnificent Frigatebird** was seen from Pt. Dume on June 21 (Cynthia Shotte) and another was over Redondo Beach on August 2 (Jeff Ward). These sightings were coincident with a few others found along the southern California coast this summer.

**Brown Boobies** were seen just off San Pedro on June 26, from Flat Rock Point on the Palos Verdes Peninsula on June 29 (Jun & Bin Wu) and over Redondo Canyon west of the Palos Verdes Peninsula on July 2 (many observers).

Always rare in the county was a **Little Blue Heron** at Malibu Lagoon on August 4 (Irwin Woldman, Ken Chotiner, Wayne Hyland). Also infrequently reported were **Reddish Egrets** that flew past Pt. Fermin on July 4 (Larry Schmahl)

and at Malibu Lagoon on July 30 and—likely the same bird—at Topanga Lagoon on August 2 (Jeffrey Sondheimer).

The **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** in the Ballona area continued with a second bird discovered there on July 23 (Don Sterba). At least one of these continued through August 10, being seen mostly at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh.

An **American Bittern** was at the Piute Ponds on July 5, with what was presumably the same bird still present on July 21 (John Birsner).

Quail Lake produced a **California Condor** on June 18 (Frank & Susan Gilliland, Dessi Sieburth).

A pair of **Bald Eagles** present near the San Gabriel Reservoir north of Azusa since March eventually successfully fledged a single young bird.

Early was a **Northern Harrier** at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on July 26. It was reported there through July 30 (Don Sterba).

An early fall migrant—or possibly a potential local breeder—was a **Willow Flycatcher** at Hansen Dam on July 18 (Kimball Garrett).

**Vermilion Flycatchers** included one at the Piute Ponds on June 14 and again from August 3–9 (John Birsner) and several continuing at Oakdale Memorial Park in Glendora.

A late spring vagrant **Eastern Kingbird** was on San Clemente Island on June 28 (Brian Flick), while a remarkable two presumed early fall migrants were at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on July 24 (Dean Schaff).

Single **Purple Martins** were at the Piute Ponds on July 31 (Joseph Lepisto) and along the LA River in Long Beach on August 7 (Jon Fisher).

At least one **Bank Swallow** was at the Piute Ponds from June 13–26 (Jon Feenstra), with multiple reports that may have involved more than one individual.

Small numbers of **Cedar Waxwings** typically stay late in spring and arrive early in fall, but eight lingering at the LA County Arboretum through June 11 were of note (Julia Ray, Javier Vazquez) and an exceptionally late bird was in Rubio Canyon above Altadena on June 26 (Darren Dowell).

A stunning record was that of a **Common Redpoll** found on San Clemente Island on June 27 (Justyn Stahl, Matt Brinkman). This marks the second record for both the island and the county, with this one greatly surpassing the late May 4 date of the first in 2012. There are now dozens of records for the state, but only a very few of these have been from the southern portion. In addition, a late June record is without precedent.

Very unusual was a **White-crowned Sparrow** at Hahamongha Watershed Park in Pasadena on July 30 (Darren Dowell). This species does not normally appear until mid-September, thus this bird almost certainly summered locally.

San Clemente Island produced a **Summer Tanager** on June 13 (Justyn Stahl, Michael Novak) and another was at the George F. Canyon Nature Preserve on the Palos Verdes Peninsula on July 27 (Philip Carnehl).

**Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were in Topanga Canyon on June 13 (William O'Leary) and on San Clemente Island on July 9 (Alex Bartolo).

A summering male **Indigo Bunting** continued at Malibu Creek State Park through July 28, while fall migrants turned up at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia on July 31 (Judy Hwa)

and at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on August 4 (Darren Dowell).

Eight **Red Crossbills** at Table Mountain on June 17 included two begging for food (Lance Benner) and three were at Apollo Park near Lancaster on July 19 where it's possible they are again breeding (Darren Dowell).

As we head into September, passerine migration will be a primary focus. But shorebirds will still be passing through and early waterfowl will begin to arrive. Vagrants from the southwestern U.S., eastern North America and Asia are all possible. This is also a time to watch for signs of irruptive species such as Red-breasted Nuthatch and Varied Thrush. As predictable as the movements, timing and numbers of many birds are, there is always an element of the unexpected.

As well-birded as Los Angeles County may be, there is plenty of room for exploration. The Palos Verdes Peninsula is extensive and offers many possibilities, as do the San Gabriel Mountains and adjacent desert.

There is certainly no bad season for birding in southern California, but no matter what flavor of birding you enjoy, autumn is a time that caters to every preference. That it spans a full six months makes it all the better for birders. 🐦

## **Your *Breeding Bird Atlas* Goes to Print!**

The page proofs for our *Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas* have just been reviewed and approved and authorization to proceed with the presswork has been given. We are waiting to learn when Allen Press can fit the printing into their schedule. For those of you who have pre-ordered the *Atlas*, your copies will be packaged and shipped right from the bindery and delivered to you via Federal Express. Thank you all for your orders and for your patience. —Larry W. Allen

### Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas

Larry W. Allen  
Kimball L. Garrett  
Mark C. Wimer



# INTERPRETING NATURE

## Sun Prints, Smart Phones and Technologies New and Old: Alternative Avenues to Appreciating Nature Now

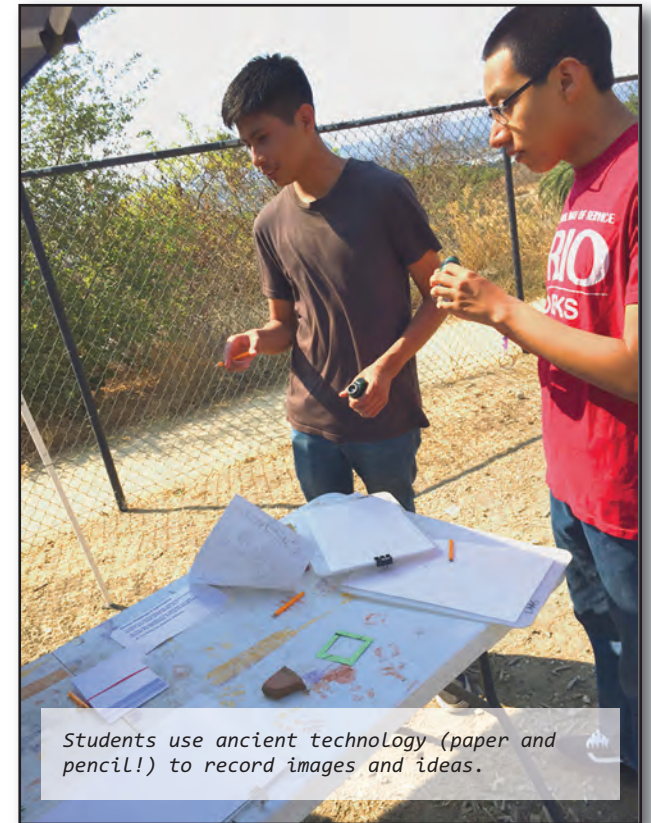
Robert Jeffers, LAUSD Educator and Los Angeles Audubon Board Member, and Stacey Vigallon, Director of Environmental Education

Summer 2016 will go down for many as another watershed moment in tech – the summer “augmented reality” apps came into their own, ushered into the mainstream by *Pokemon Go*. Many bemoan it as yet another example of how our culture has become increasingly tethered to the digital world and further disconnected from the natural world. But, can we as nature-lovers help people see that tiny screen as a window on the natural world, an entry point to stewardship and outdoor adventure?

In the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program, our overriding philosophy is that students should be truly present in nature, giving their full attention to the learning tasks at hand. In other words – put your phone away! However, this summer Los Angeles Audubon ran two workshops for Greenhouse Program students entitled “Art + Tech + Nature.” We wanted not only to broaden students’ understanding of what “technology” meant, but to also show students that smart phones can be powerful tools to understanding nature and communicating visually with others. For contemporary youth, digital connectedness is a fact of life. Schools increasingly do away with print and opt for digital, online textbooks and readings. Socially, *Instagram*, *Snapchat* and

the like keep kids connected and become the filter through which they learn about many aspects of the world and about being human. If digital technology plays such a pivotal, unavoidable role in the development and growth of youth in our culture, even environmental educators need to find ways to make the digital context work to meet learning goals.

For our “Art + Tech + Nature” workshops, we approached the idea of “technology” as any tool or methodology that humans developed to help accomplish a task. This allowed us to incorporate into our workshops a much, much broader sense of human history, put profoundly useful (but ancient) tools into a new perspective, and provide opportunities to include hands-on creation of artwork. Students first observed and drew the landscape and natural objects around them using paper and pencil – technologies that humans have been using to record images and ideas for a very long time. Next, students explored the cyanotype (“sun print”), a photographic process that has 170-year-old origins and let students to capture images outdoors and awaken their inner artist. Then, we created key chains with UV-sensitive beads, brainstorming ways that beads that



*Students use ancient technology (paper and pencil!) to record images and ideas.*

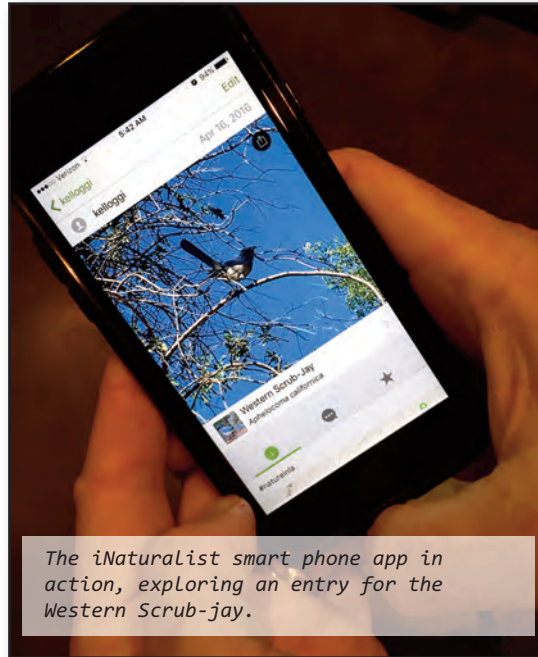


*Students created sun prints to explore an early photographic technology.*

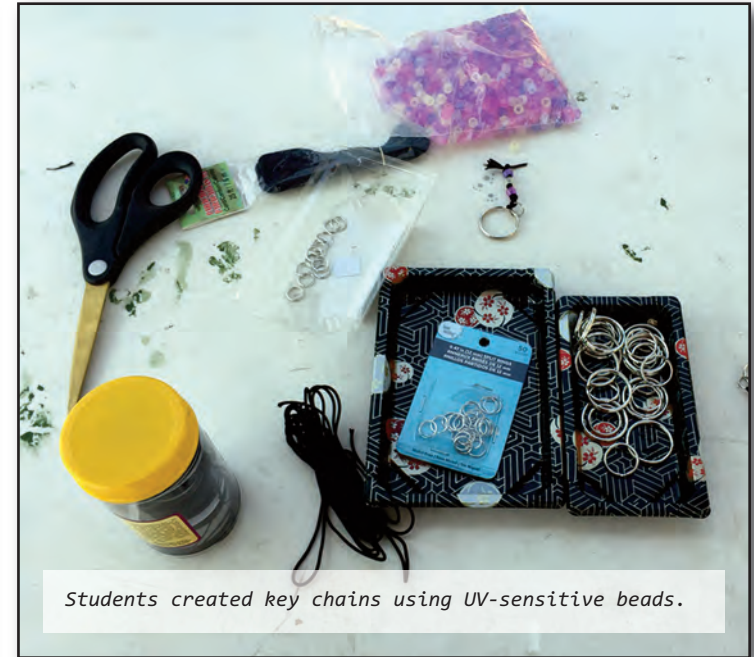
indicate exposure to UV light could be useful in daily life.

The last part of our workshop finally addressed digital technology. Using smart phones we taught students how they could use free apps to learn more about the natural world and support stewardship in their daily lives. *Merlin Bird ID* helps users identify birds in their respective patches using a sequence of questions plus location-based information, and *iNaturalist* plugs users into a social network of naturalists and a collective database of nature observations. Other apps like *Star Walk 2* allow users to explore the night sky in real-time, and *myGardenAnswers* helps with plant ID in real-time as well. We were also extremely fortunate to have Lorna Herf, a professional from the tech industry, as a guest speaker. She talked about some of the negative health impacts that screen time can have, and she demonstrated the types of light emitted from different phones using a spectrometer and a laptop computer. The discussion about digital technology and public health was a great opportunity for students to learn about career paths within both the tech and medical fields.

Our hope for students is that they begin to view technology (especially smart phone technology) as just another tool for understanding the world. Technology may be the entry point for people to become engaged in the natural world, but we think it will be the real birds, insects and plants that help keep them there. 🐦



*The iNaturalist smart phone app in action, exploring an entry for the Western Scrub-jay.*



*Students created key chains using UV-sensitive beads.*



*Workshop participants hold up their sun prints and their smart phones.*

# YOUNG BIRDERS

## The Tricolored Blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*)

by Dessi Sieburth

The Tricolored Blackbird is a near-endemic California passerine. The male can be identified by its glossy black body with a small red shoulder patch bordered by white. The female is brownish overall with a faintly streaked breast, and a pale throat and supercilium. The bill is thin and pointed. At a first glance, the Tricolored Blackbird may be mistaken for the more common Red-winged Blackbird. It is distinguished from the Red-winged Blackbird by a thinner and more pointed bill. On the Tricolor male, the small red shoulder patch is bordered by white, while on the male Red-winged Blackbird, the red shouldered patch is bordered by yellow. Female Tricolors are darker and have much less streaking overall than female Red-winged Blackbirds.



A drawing of a male Tricolored Blackbird

Tricolored Blackbirds prefer wetlands, flooded rice fields, and agricultural farms. They nest in cattails and they need access to reeds and open water when nesting. The female Tricolored Blackbird will build a cup nest and lay 3-4 eggs. She will sit on the eggs for about 11 days until they hatch, and the nestlings will be ready to fledge in 10-14 days. The adults and juveniles mainly eat insects, especially grasshoppers. During the winter, adults generally eat seeds from tall grasses. They nest in huge colonies, and in fact, Tricolored Blackbirds form the largest breeding colonies of any North American passerine since the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon in 1914.

Over 99% of Tricolored Blackbirds breed here in California. Some small and isolated populations can be found in Oregon, Washington, and western Nevada. Since 1980, the bird has been recorded nesting in 46 of California's 58 counties. The biggest population is found in the Central Valley, but nesting has also been documented in valleys of northeastern California, Santa Barbara County, and Los Angeles.

In the 1930's, the Tricolored Blackbird was one of the most abundant birds in California. About 736,000 Tricolored Blackbirds were observed in the Central Valley alone in 1934, and one colony contained over 300,000 birds! However, their numbers have declined significantly, and in 2011, the population was estimated at 258,000 birds. In 2014, that number decreased to just 145,000 birds.



*Two male Tricolored Blackbirds and one female (photo by Ian Souza-Cole)*


Tricolored Blackbirds face many threats. Habitat loss is the major threat. Many wetlands have been developed or converted into wheat or rye farms to feed cattle. Mass destructions of nests in agricultural fields is another reason for the decline of Tricolored Blackbirds. Triticale fields (wheat and rye hybrid) used for nesting were often harvested before the birds were ready to fledge, causing thousands of deaths. Tricolored Blackbirds were seen as agricultural pests and many were shot. Predators are contributing to the decline as well. Black-crowned Night Herons, for example, have been recorded taking chicks and eggs from about 15,000 Tricolor nests in the Central Valley.

Because of its decline, the Tricolored Blackbird was given an endangered species status in 2014. The listing was temporary and expired in June 2015. The Tricolored Blackbird's status is now being reviewed, and until a decision is made, the bird has the same protection as endangered species have. There have been several conservation efforts to protect the Tricolored Blackbird, such as monitoring the Central Valley blackbird colonies and paying landowners to delay triticale harvest. Also, the government and

environmental organizations have purchased land with nesting habitat from landowners.

In Los Angeles County, Tricolored Blackbirds can be found at several locations. Legg Lake in El Monte is a good place to look, especially in winter, and a few are found at Piute Ponds in Lancaster. Holiday Lake near Lancaster, has the largest breeding colony of Tricolored Blackbirds in Southern California. The lake has dense reeds and is usually dry during nesting season. Water needs to be pumped into the lake to provide nesting habitat for these birds. The funds for pumping water into the lake are provided by donations from volunteers. Also, every 3 years, volunteers participate in a statewide survey to count all Tricolored Blackbirds.

The future of the Tricolored Blackbird in Los Angeles depends on us. Volunteers are needed to help with funding and for the next survey in 2017.

To find out more details on how you can help, please contact Samantha Arthur at [sarthur@audubon.org](mailto:sarthur@audubon.org). (Illustration by Dessi Sieburth: <http://protectingourbirds.my-free.website/>) 



*A male Tricolored Blackbird in flight (photo by Teddy Llovet)*



## LOS ANGELES AUDUBON'S MONTHLY PROGRAM PRESENTATIONS UPDATE

LAAS program presentations for the 2016/2017 season are about to begin. Our new program chair, Nicole Lannoy, has lined up the following programs for September and October.

Please note that these two programs will take place in the theater at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park. In the future, we propose to hold the programs this year in different areas so we can reach all members across Los Angeles at least some of the time.

We also have an earlier start time of 7:00 PM.

Contact Carol Babeli [carolbabeli@laaudubon.org](mailto:carolbabeli@laaudubon.org) to RSVP or volunteer to help set up chairs in advance (at 6:00 PM) of the program. Come early to enjoy the terrific views and birds at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park.



Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook  
6300 Hetzler Rd  
Culver City CA 90232

**Wednesday, September 14, 2016**

**7:00 PM–9:00 PM**

**Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook, Theater**

### "Looking Back and Envisioning the Future: Historical Ecology and Restoration in Urban Ecosystems"

Travis Longcore is an Assistant Professor of Architecture, Spatial Sciences, and Biological Sciences at the University of Southern California. He is Past President of Los Angeles Audubon and current Conservation Chair. Dr. Longcore's research is focused on nature in cities.

*This is an historical nest record card.*

FROM THE COLLECTION OF	
RALPH ARNOLD,	
FIELD OÖLOGIST,	
PASADENA, CAL.	
No. 5810	Name, <i>Hermann Song Sparrow</i>
Collector, <i>Ralph Arnold</i>	
Locality, <i>Daughter, Cal</i>	
Date, <i>May 20, 1892</i>	
No. of Eggs in Set, <i>Three</i>	Set Mark, <i>5810 26</i>
Identity, <i>Birds</i>	Incubation, <i>Begin</i>
Remarks: <i>Nest in nettle near ground. Made of split fibers, grass, hair, etc.</i>	

**Monday, October 17, 2016**

**7:00 PM–9:00 PM**

**Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook, Theater**

### "The Consequences of Free-roaming Cats"

Dr. Pete Marra is a conservation scientist interested in reversing the declines of native species. His current focus is trying to understand the factors that control population dynamics such as climate, habitat, food and invasive species such as cats as sources of mortality on individuals and their populations. He works with the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center.



# Bird Walk Listings

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.

## Open Wetlands at Ballona

*1st Saturday of every month*

**September 3 & October 1**

**Time: 9:00–Noon**

Los Angeles Audubon Society hosts the ongoing 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](mailto:cindyhardin@laaudubon.org) or call (310) 301-0050 if you have any questions.

## Topanga State Park Birdwalk

*1st Sunday of every month*

**September 4 & October 2**

**Time: 8:00–11:30 a.m.**

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

**Directions:** FROM VENTURA BLVD: take Topanga Canyon Blvd 7 miles S. Turn E uphill on Entrada Rd. Follow the signs and turn left into Trippet Ranch parking lot. FROM PACIFIC COAST HWY: take Topanga Canyon Blvd. 5 miles to Entrada Rd. Parking fee. **Contacts:** Ken: (310) 455-1401, [ksafarri@aol.com](mailto:ksafarri@aol.com) Chris: (310) 455-1270

## Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area

*3rd Saturday of the month*

**(Except for July and August)**

**September 17 & October 15**

**Time: 8:00–noon**

4100 S. La Cienega Blvd  
Los Angeles 90056

Leader: *Eric and 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 Phoebes, Cassin Kingbirds, California and Spotted Towhee, Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper’s Hawk. We will look for southbound migrating birds such as warblers, vireos and flycatchers.

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

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.

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*

**September 11 & October 9, 2016**

**Time: 8:30 a.m.–11:30 a.m.**

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

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

**September 18 & October 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 [wbutorance@gmail.com](mailto:wbutorance@gmail.com)

# Field Trip Listings

Please visit [www.laaudubon.org](http://www.laaudubon.org) for updates to Los Angeles Audubon's field trip listings.

For more information: (323) 876-0202 or [membership@laaudubon.org](mailto:membership@laaudubon.org)



Nick & Mary Freeman  
Field Trip Chairperson  
& Trip Leaders

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 will be shared with the other confirmed participants unless you specify otherwise at sign-up.

## "FEE REQUIRED" RESERVATIONS

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

### Mail to:

Los Angeles Audubon  
PO Box 411301  
Los Angeles CA 90041-8301

## 'NO FEE' RESERVATIONS / MORE INFORMATION

**Email:** [membership@laaudubon.org](mailto:membership@laaudubon.org)  
**Phone:** (323) 876-0202

## Saturday, September 10

### South Bay Parks

#### NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader: *Tracy Drake* is the resident naturalist at Madrona Marsh Preserve, and frequent birder in the South Bay area. In addition to Madrona Marsh, plans to visit Alondra Park, and perhaps Sand Dune Park or wherever the migrants / rarities lead us. Fall song-bird migration should be starting.

Meet at Madrona Marsh Preserve headquarters (3201 Plaza Del Amo, Torrance, CA 90503) parking lot at 8:30 a.m., and bird until 1:00 p.m. or later, if enthusiasm and birds persist.

To get to the preserve, take the 405 Fwy to the Artesia Blvd W offramp in Torrance, turning S quickly onto Prairie Ave., which eventually becomes Madrona Ave. Take Plaza Del Amo E to the lot on the left. We will carpool here. Bring lunch if you wish to stay beyond a half day.

## Sunday, September 11

### Huntington Central Park and Bolsa Chica Wetlands

#### NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: *Irwin Woldman*. Huntington Central Park can be excellent for migrating songbirds. At Bolsa Chica, flocks of shorebirds should be heading south, mixing with residual terns and Skimmers, and a chance for American Bittern and Ridgeway's (a.k.a. Clapper) Rail. Bring a lunch for a full day of birds.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the HCP parking lot on the south side of Slater Ave. just east of Golden West St. in Huntington Beach.

## Saturday, September 17

### Mojave Desert

#### SIGN-UP REQUIRED, NO FEE, NO MAX

Leaders: *Nick and Mary Freeman*. Kern County has some of the best migrant traps in the state. Western warblers and flycatchers should headline. Reptiles may be encountered! Bird California City environs in

the morning, and probably hit Apollo Park as we bird our way back to LA.

To meet, take Hwy 14 about 4 miles past Mojave, then turn right on California City Blvd. Drive through town about a mile past the shops, turn left into the golf course parking lot past the fenced driving range.

Meet here at 6:30 a.m. both days.

To reserve, either call or e-mail LA Audubon with name(s), cell number, and e-mail address (for confirmation). Reserve a room at Motel 6 or other in Mojave, or the Best Western in CA City (10386 California City Boulevard, across the street from the meeting spot). Bring lunches, FRS radios, sun-block, bird and reptile books.

## Saturday, September 24

### Orcas Park and vicinity

#### NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Your leader for this morning walk will be *Dessi Sieburth*, a published speaker, 2015 ABA Young Birder of the Year, and overall congenial young man. Orcas Park is a residential park where we may see Hutton's Vireo, sparrows and Western Meadowlarks. Adjacent to Orcas park there is a unique habitat with rocky alluvial fan, coastal sage scrub habitats, and a riparian habitat with willow trees. We will look for Cactus Wren, Loggerhead Shrike, and migrant activity. If time allows, we will also visit a small, nearby riparian "oasis" near Oro Vista Park, at the end of Tujunga Valley Street, LA, that has also been good for migrating passerines (and dragonflies). Past finds here include Rock Wren (likely), Brewer's Sparrow (maybe), and Northern Waterthrush (unlikely).

We will meet at 7:00 a.m. and finish at about 11:00 a.m.

**Saturday, October 1**  
**Malibu to McGrath Field Trip**  
**NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE**

Leader: *Barbara Johnson*. Late passerines and shorebirds should be moving through coastal migration spots, mixed with early wintering birds. Possibly 100 species seen on this date, with a rich trip history of about 30 years.

Take PCH N over the bridge in Malibu to the stoplight, and park on PCH, or turn right on Cross Creek Road for free parking along the road (and Starbucks), or turn left into the fee lot. Cross PCH, and meet at the kiosk by the lagoon at 7:30 a.m. for a full day of birding. There may be an access fee at McGrath or elsewhere. Bring lunch.

**Sunday, October 9**  
**Oxnard Plain**  
**NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE**

Leaders: *Nick and Mary Freeman*.

Meet at the Hueneme sod fields at 8:00 a.m. to look for Red-throated Pipit, Golden-Plovers and longspurs. Later, we'll try to shake the migrating passerines—as well as a few eastern vagrants—out of nearby windbreaks. The tamarisks and eucalyptus rows on the Plain often concentrate migrants in the fall.

From the 101 N, drive S on Rice Avenue, following the Rice Avenue prompts to the end, then turn Rt. on Hueneme Rd. Meet on the N (Rt) side of Hueneme Rd. a couple of blocks west of this turn, just after the first building and just before Casper Rd.

**Saturday, October 22**  
**Condors at Hopper Mountain NWR**  
**DONATION SUGGESTED, SIGN-UP LIMIT OF 6**  
**HIGH-CLEARANCE VEHICLES (24 Ppts.)**

*Eddie Owens*, US Fish and Wildlife Service refuge biologist, will be leading this trip to Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge. This refuge was established in 1974 to assist in the recovery of the California condor. Participants will have a good chance of viewing California Condors, Golden Eagles, and other raptors from the mountain viewpoints that the refuge provides. The flock of 75 condors use steep cliffs and canyons around the refuge for nesting, and frequent the refuge often, although they range widely. There are currently 3 active nests in the vicinity of the refuge, and while not visible from the tour route, participants will have the opportunity to watch nest cameras that stream to the refuge facilities. Eddie will discuss many aspects of the condor recovery program and the role that the refuge plays in bringing North America's largest bird back from the brink of extinction. The tour will include a radio telemetry demonstration, views into recently used nest cavities, and up close looks at a condor trap site and vacant flight pens. Visit: [https://www.fws.gov/refuge/hopper\\_mountain/](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/hopper_mountain/) for more information about Hopper Mountain NW.

Take Interstate 5 North to SR 126 West (in Castaic Junction) to Fillmore.

Meet at 7:00 a.m. in the front parking lot of the Vons grocery store at the Ave. "A" light, just behind Starbucks (650 W Ventura St, Fillmore, CA 93015); and carpool from here, leaving at 7:30 a.m. Return to Fillmore by 1:00 p.m. or so. Some of us usually eat lunch in town afterwards.

High clearance vehicles are required, so bring one if you have one, and check the spare. These roads are not for the timid! *6 car limit*. We have alternate viewing plans if the roads are inaccessible or in the event of a Red Flag warning (high wildfire danger).

Reserve your place with LAAS by phone or email. Please provide •phone # (preferably cell) and •email address, •whether you have a high clearance vehicle that can accommodate at least 4 people total (priority) or if you would like to carpool (on site) with someone else. Wait for email confirmation.

Bring drinks, hat, snacks, lawn chair, and FRS radio and a scope if you have them. No fee, but donations accepted to the Condor Survival Fund (or get a cool T-shirt).

**Sunday, November 13 (Tentative)**  
**Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge**  
**SIGN-UP REQUIRED, NO FEE**

Refuge volunteer *John Fitch*, our own *Nick Freeman* and a refuge manager will drive up to 20 lucky participants around this prime limited-access wetland / 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 now provide your •Zip Code, •first, •middle-initial & •last names, •DOB, •e-mail and •home phone number, cell ph# optional but helpful; **by November 6**. Wait for email confirmation from LAAS.

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 5.7 feet around 9:38 a.m., and bird until noon.

Take Seal Beach Blvd. S from the 405 Fwy, pass Westminster Blvd., turn left onto the base at the Forrestal Lane light, and left again into the lot. Spotting scopes and FRS radios helpful.

## **Sunday, November 27**

### **San Jacinto NWR and Lakeview Area NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE**

Leaders: *Nick and Mary Freeman.*

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

Take the 10 or 60 Fwy E to the 215 Fwy S, exit E at Ramona Expressway, continue E just past Perris Blvd., and meet at the Farmer Boys Restaurant on the S side of the road (145A Ramona Expressway, Perris).

Leave from here at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch, warm clothing and footwear for (hopeful) mud. We will try to carpool to defray the \$10 entrance fee for Lake Perris, if we go there.

## **Christmas Counts!**

Originally started in 1900 by Frank Chapman, this will be the 117th Christmas Bird Count – the oldest continuous wildlife survey in North America! Originally only 25 counts, including Pacific Grove in California, there are now over 1,700 counts worldwide - mostly in the US and Canada – with over 45,000 participants. This huge database of information is frequently used to assess the health of bird populations, to help guide conservation efforts, and to better understand issues of habitat and our environment in general. All counts occur between December 14 and January 5 on any given year. CBC's were standardized in the late 1950's, and now typically have a 15-mile diameter. It's hard to find an activity that combines conservation and the fun of birdwatching quite as seamlessly. Some do 2, 3, even 4 counts!

### **Saturday, December 17**

#### **Lancaster Christmas Bird Count**

Contact compilers *Nick and Mary Freeman* at: (818) 636-4361 or [mnfreeman@earthlink.net](mailto:mnfreeman@earthlink.net) to be placed on a team or be given an area. Prairie Falcon, Mountain Bluebird, Greater Roadrunner, LeConte's Thrasher, and Burrowing and Long-eared owls usually reported by someone!

### **Sunday, December 18**

#### **Malibu Christmas Bird Count**

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

### **Monday, January 2**

#### **Los Angeles Christmas Bird Count**

Contact compiler *Daniel Cooper* at: [dan@cooperecological.com](mailto:dan@cooperecological.com) to be matched up with a team or a survey area.

## **Saturday, January 14**

### **Newport Back Bay NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE**

Leader: *Mary and Nick Freeman.*

Meet on the wooden boardwalk along the west side of the bay accessible from the end of University Drive (small street) at 8:00 a.m. for the 6.1' high tide, and a full day of birding in the area.

High tide at the mouth is 9:53 a.m. Ridgway's Rail, American Bittern, Eurasian Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal and California Gnatcatcher are expected. Short-eared Owl (rare) is also a target.

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 (2301 University Dr., Newport Beach), walk down the hill, over the bridge, and to the end of the boardwalk. Bring lunch. 'Scopes and FRS radios helpful.