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WESTERN Tanager

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Black-crowned Night-Heron, Photo by Dessi Sieburth



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ON THE COVER:

Black-crowned Night-Heron

Photo by Dessi Sieburth



ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER:

Dessi Sieburth, an avid birder, photographer, and conservationist, is a 9th grader at Saint Francis High School in La Canada, California. He started birding at the age of 8 when he made a birdfeeder for his yard. He began taking photos of birds and writing articles about birds and conservation when he was 10 years old. He has been writing articles for the Los Angeles Audubon Society, the Pasadena Audubon Society, the American Birding Association, and his local newspaper. Dessi has led bird walks for Los Angeles Audubon Society and Pasadena Audubon Society and he has given talks on bird conservation to schools, several Audubon chapters, and his local library. This year he attended his third Western Field Ornithology (WFO) conference. At the WFO conference he presented his research project about Golden-cheeked Woodpeckers, which he did at the specimen collection at the Moore Lab of Zoology at Occidental College in Los Angeles. Dessi is the 2015 ABA Young Birder of Year, and this year, he received one of the national Gloria Barron Honoree awards for his bird conservation efforts.

THE BIRDS OF LOS ANGELES NEED YOU.

Become a member of the Los Angeles Audubon Society to directly help the birds of our region. Your membership supports the organization's efforts in the following areas:

- **RECREATION** Join other members of the local birding community on field trips, bird walks and trips for the beginning to advanced birder. Join us at the beach, the mountains and places in between.
- **EDUCATION** Our outdoor education program has become a national model. Thousands of urban youth gain valuable insight into local ecosystems, including the Ballona Wetlands, the Baldwin Hills and their own school yard habitats. Our research grants support university students in biology and environmental sciences. Our lectures, workshops and acclaimed *Western Tanager* newsletter serve nature lovers throughout Los Angeles.
- **CONSERVATION** Los Angeles Audubon Society leads Los Angeles County in citizen science to monitor and protect habitat for birds and other wildlife through federal, state and local policy, programs and partnerships. We help resolve conflicts between urban populations and wildlife via education, advocacy and action.
- **RESTORATION** Our revitalization projects are transforming urban wastelands, parklands and school yards into prime habitat for birds and wildlife. Our Audubon at Home program helps Angelenos create native plant gardens which attract and support birds.

Individual membership only \$25 per year. Join today at: laaudubon.org

YOUNG BIRDERS

Helping Birds Through Photography

Dessi Sieburth

Taking photographs of birds is one of my favorite hobbies. In addition to taking photos for fun, I have used my photos for conservation purposes to spread awareness about helping birds. Many bird populations are declining, and birds need our help. They face many threats including habitat loss, outdoor cats, rat poison, window crashes, trash, pesticides, and lead in the environment. I have used several of my photos for conservation articles, photo exhibits, and presentations to educate people about the challenges birds face and how they can help birds. I also used my photos for a fundraiser to save habitat for birds. I have been taking photos on my birding trips in California, Alaska, Texas, and Arizona. My main goal when photographing birds is to bring the beauty of birds to people because I think that when people see how beautiful birds are, they are more willing to protect them. Here are some examples of how I help birds with my photography.

This photo of a Bohemian Waxwing was taken in Denali National Park, Alaska, in July. It was raining lightly while I took this photo. It was part of two bird photography exhibitions. One exhibit was at a library in La Crescenta, and the other exhibit was at an art gallery in my hometown, Montrose, CA. At the openings of both exhibits, I gave presentations about what people can do to help birds in their neighborhoods. For example, I talked about the dangers of rat poison, to never leave cats outside, and that people need to plant native plants to help birds.



This male Western Bluebird was nesting in my bluebird nest box in Sylmar, CA. Western Bluebirds are cavity nesters and rely on dead trees. I help cavity nesters by educating people about saving dead trees and by providing nest boxes for cavity nesters. This photo was published in a cavity conservation article in the Los Angeles Audubon newsletter to help cavity nesters.



This Double-crested Cormorant was occasionally flipping its head straight up in the air. I had to take over 100 photos on a tripod to finally get this shot. This photo was also shown at my two photo exhibitions to help birds. I used 70% of the funds I raised from selling my photos for a birding trip to the Pribilof Islands and Nome in Alaska where I did a conservation project on the Bar-tailed Godwit, a declining shorebird who has the longest non-stop migration of all birds. The other 30% of the sales went to the art gallery, who donated the money to help the endangered California Condor.



I took this photo of a Tufted Puffin from a boat out of Homer, AK, on a clear day in July. This photo was especially popular at my photo exhibit because puffins are so beautiful.



Every year, I make calendar with my bird photos. This photo of two White- faced Ibis is from my 2016 annual bird calendar. It was taken at one of my favorite birding spots, Piute Ponds, in Lancaster, CA.



This photo of a male breeding Ruddy Duck was taken at my first “Big Photo Day” in 2014. I went out to photograph as many species as possible in a single day to raise money for habitat conservation. The money I raised went to help save Cottonwood Canyon, an important wildlife corridor in Pasadena.

I also like to teach adults and kids about ethics in bird photography. Here are some important things to remember when photographing birds.

- *never lure in a bird with bait. For example, never use mice to attract owls or hawks to get a photo of the bird.
- *always keep your distance from birds, especially nesting birds, as they may abandon their nest if bothered.
- *use bird recordings responsibly and never use recordings to attract endangered birds.
- *never trample or alternate habitat to get closer to a bird or to get a better photo.
- *don't get too close to a bird, when a bird changes its behavior and flies away you are too close. Birds need their energy for feeding and nesting.

Special thanks to Los Angeles Audubon Society, Pasadena Audubon Society, La Crescenta Library and Diggs Art Gallery in Montrose. All photos were taken by Dessi Sieburth (<http://protectingourbirds.my-free.website>)

CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

Western Snowy Plovers Past and Future in Coastal Los Angeles

Travis Longcore

As recently as the 1940s, a beachgoer to the shores of the Pacific Ocean in Los Angeles County could have encountered the shallow depression and eggs that make up the nest of a Western Snowy Plover. The egg collectors of the late 1800s and early 1900s gathered up and vouchered eggs at Los Angeles County locations down the coast from Malibu to Santa Monica, Playa Del Rey/“Ballona Beach,” Redondo Beach, and Manhattan Beach. In addition, nest locations included the salt pan of the Ballona Wetlands and around the freshwater wetland system of the south bay that has its remaining manifestation at Madrona Marsh. Sixty years later, in 2006, the Audubon chapters of the Los Angeles County coast embarked on a volunteer science effort to understand the continued wintertime use of the beach by these tiny shorebirds. Old habits are hard to break, and despite the lack of nesting habitat caused by the disturbance of urban beach use and grooming, plovers return to Los Angeles County shores each year until departing for breeding grounds.

For a decade now, volunteers led by LA Audubon biologists Tom Ryan and Stacey Vigallon have undertaken a periodic census of these threatened birds, documenting their roosts and habitat use on some of the most well-loved and used beaches in the country. With knowledge about the locations of the seasonal roosts, Los Angeles County Department of Beaches and Harbors and the California State Parks have established fenced enclosures to protect the birds during the winter. Together, Los Angeles Audubon, Santa Monica Bay Audubon, and Palos



Verdes/South Bay Audubon have collaborated with State parks to maintain an enclosure at Malibu lagoon since 2008 and with Beaches and Harbors to maintain an enclosure at Dockweiler State Beach since 2010 (including year-round trash removal).

The program, funded by a number of sources (from California Department of Fish and Wildlife to the Disney Conservation Fund) has grown, with 60–100 members of the public participating each year in plover-themed beach walks, hundreds of volunteers participating in the counts over the years, and thousands reached throughout the County from tabling events, presentations, and online resources. We have developed educational materials for beach managers, and provided maps and a beach driver habitat to help Beaches and Harbors to ensure that those with permission to drive on the beach do not kill these federally protected birds. Sadly, “roadkill” mortality does occur and local Audubon volunteers have documented it. Since development of the driver handout and outreach to agencies, the number of vehicles seen speeding on the beaches has declined.

This program has also built local conservation capacity, with three young professionals recruited and trained through the Environment for the Americas program who are now employed by LA Audubon to work on monitoring and outreach tasks for Western Snowy Plover and our other endangered beach-nesting species, California Least Tern.



A hatchling Western Snowy Plover at Coal Oil Point, Santa Barbara County (in captivity being rehabilitated).

The exciting thing is that wintering sites, with proper management, can be converted to breeding sites. The managers of Coal Oil Point, at the northern end of UC Santa Barbara, established a year-round enclosure and successfully encouraged nesting by Western Snowy Plovers after years of wintering-only behavior. Our volunteers and staff have documented scrapes in the sand in Los Angeles County that indicate the first steps of nesting. The frequent grooming of Los Angeles County beaches, however, is an impediment to Western Snowy Plovers nesting once again, as are off-leash dogs, and large events at roost sites.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service, which is responsible for protecting federally endangered species, wrote a letter to the various agencies managing Los Angeles County beaches earlier this year. In this letter, they cited the years of work done by local Audubon chapter volunteers and staff and established a set of “Special Protection Zones” within 500 feet of each of the main roost locations that we have mapped. These zones must be protected from plover arrival in July until departure the following April or May at all of these zones except at Surfrider Beach in Malibu where the zone is to be protected year-round. This is tantalizingly close to year-round protections for plover roosts throughout Los Angeles County.

Those who have been involved in this program deserve congratulations and our appreciation. Their work has laid the groundwork for a possible recovery of Western Snowy Plover in Los Angeles County. But much is left to be done. The roosts must be protected

by all parties – unfortunately a volleyball court was built in the middle of a known and documented roost at Zuma Beach, and that mistake should be reversed. The potential for inland nesting at the salt pan at Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve should be acknowledged and that habitat protected and managed for this possibility. If and when an intrepid plover makes another scrape on a Los Angeles County beach and lays an egg, we should stand ready to celebrate and ensure that Angelenos work with us to see fuzzy puffballs of plover hatch once again in the county. 🐦

BALLONA DOCENTS HEAD SOUTH!

Cindy Hardin, Director of Outdoor Education & Volunteer Coordinator

DOCENT TRAINING AT BALLONA BEGAN ON September 13th, and sessions were well attended by both new and returning naturalists. The group was treated to several fabulous speakers that shared information about various aspects of the wetlands, including the archeology of the indigenous people of the region, invertebrates and birds that are found at the wetlands, and the historical ecology of the site.

It has become an annual training tradition to include a docent field trip to the Bolsa Chica Wetlands in beautiful Huntington Beach, along with our on-site sessions. Our neighbor wetland to the south is a lovely spot, with diverse habitats that include an upland section, tidal marshes and a connection to the open ocean. Training coincides beautifully with the Fall Migration, and we always have a chance to see birds that are returning to spend the winter in Southern California, and others that are using Bolsa Chica as a stopover to re-fuel and rest as they undertake their long seasonal journeys.

Fifteen Audubon docents arrived at the Bolsa Chica parking lot at 9 am on September 22nd, and almost immediately an Osprey soared directly overhead. The marsh was at mid-tide, and abuzz with avian activity. Shorebirds were probing the mudflats, and Forrester's Terns were scooping the topmelt that was present in the thousands. As we walked the four mile loop trail that included

the upland area of the mesa, it seemed that every bird we saw was on the hunt for a meal. As we descended the mesa we caught the cooling breezes coming off the ocean, which were quite welcome on the sunny day.

All of that walking and birding (and watching the birds forage) brought on hunger pangs for the human participants, so we finished up with a delicious lunch at a local Mexican restaurant that is usually part of this excursion.

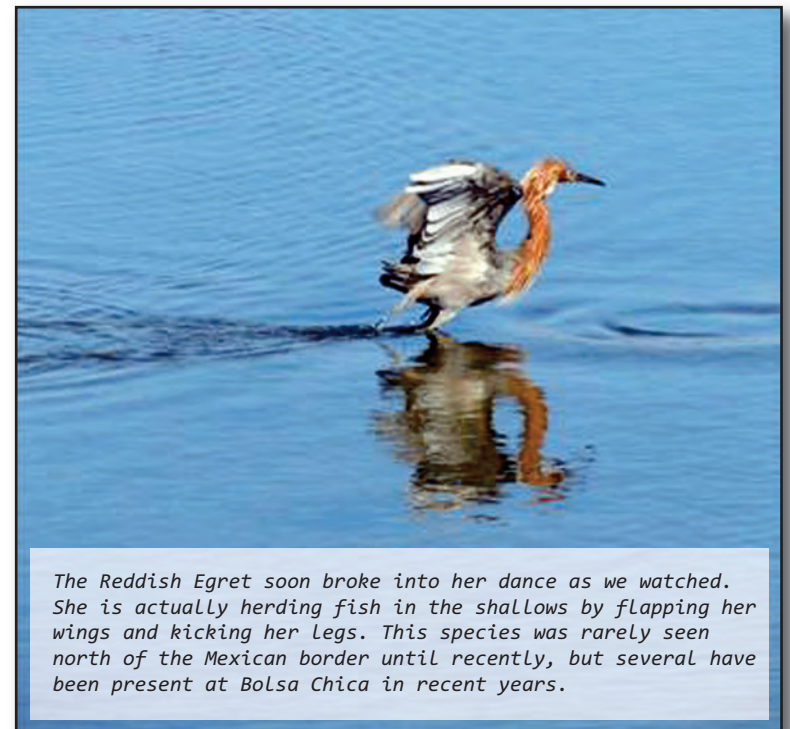
The Bolsa Chica Wetlands are a mere 45 minute drive from the LAX area. If you have never had a chance to visit it is something to put on your list. Los Angeles Audubon's docent group makes this trip every year, and anyone and everyone are welcome to join us. If you would like to be informed of next year's trip, please drop me an e-mail at cindyhardin@laudubon.org. I would be happy to notify you when planning for next year. Don't worry-we won't try to rope you into being a docent! But, after you see how much fun is included in our activities, you might just want to become part of our group of wonderful volunteer naturalists.

Meanwhile, if you have a little time on your hands before September 2017, and are looking to "head south" for the day, Bolsa Chica is open from dawn to dusk daily, and well worth the trip.

Thanks to ace staff photographer Leslie Davidson for the beautiful photos.



Our Ballona docent group was greeted by birds aplenty immediately upon our arrival. Within minutes we had the Reddish Egret in our view.



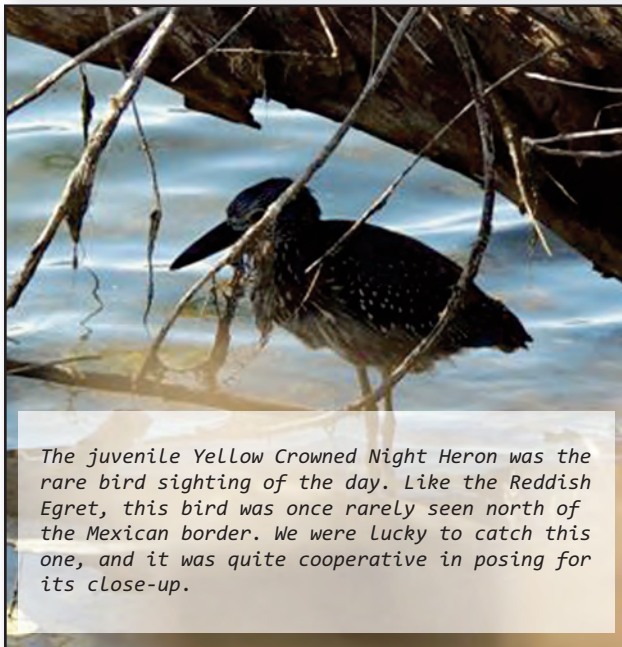
The Reddish Egret soon broke into her dance as we watched. She is actually herding fish in the shallows by flapping her wings and kicking her legs. This species was rarely seen north of the Mexican border until recently, but several have been present at Bolsa Chica in recent years.



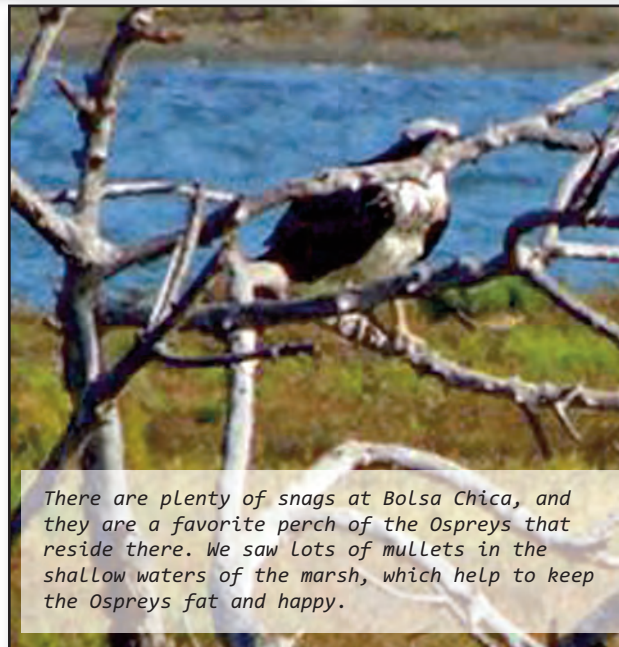
The Reddish Egret was not the only bird looking for lunch, and the bird on the right has met with success! These Marbled Godwits are recently returned from their summer sojourn to the northwestern states. Although Godwits spend their winters in estuarine habitats, they summer on the prairies of places like Idaho and Washington, where they nest in the tall grasses.



There was lots of foraging on view during our visit. This White Pelican was having great success in the pocket wetland section of Bolsa Chica. Every fall large flocks of these birds make a stopover at Bolsa Chica for a much needed rest as they journey to freshwater habitats further south.



The juvenile Yellow Crowned Night Heron was the rare bird sighting of the day. Like the Reddish Egret, this bird was once rarely seen north of the Mexican border. We were lucky to catch this one, and it was quite cooperative in posing for its close-up.



There are plenty of snags at Bolsa Chica, and they are a favorite perch of the Ospreys that reside there. We saw lots of mullets in the shallow waters of the marsh, which help to keep the Ospreys fat and happy.



This Semipalmated Plover was keeping an eye on our group between probes in the mudflat as he searched for invertebrates.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA, AUDUBON CALIFORNIA AND RESTORING THE SALTON SEA

LOCATED ABOUT 130 MILES EAST OF SAN DIEGO, the Salton Sea is a study in contradictions. It is massive, yet practically unknown to most Californians. The landscape is barren and apocalyptic, but full of life. It is natural, but man-made. The environment puts birds at risk, but it is also vital for their survival.

More than 300 bird species rely on the deep water, shoreline, mudflats, and wetlands at the Salton Sea, as well as the river channels and agricultural drains leading into it. Tilapia live in the deeper waters, providing essential food for many species, including California Brown Pelican, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, and Caspian Tern.

Perhaps the sea's greatest value for birds is its ability to support very large numbers of waterbirds during the winter months, including up to 90% of North America's Eared Grebes, 50% of Ruddy Ducks, and 30% of the American White Pelicans. The mudflats and shorelines are also essential for hundreds of thousands of shorebirds.

The Salton Sea has hosted two Christmas Bird Counts for decades, and the lake draws thousands to birding festivals and other events.

Beginning in 2018, thanks to a 2003 agreement between the State of California and Southern California water districts, the Salton Sea will get a lot less water from the Colorado River, eventually up to 40 percent less. The shrinking sea will also expose up to 64,000 acres of the lakebed and result in massive dust storms that could create the worst air pollution crisis in North America. Tens of thousands of acres of habitat will disappear.

The State of California hasn't fulfilled its promise to pay for habitat restoration and dust mitigation in

advance of the 2018 deadline. But in the last year, the state named an assistant secretary for Salton Sea policy to build stakeholder support for a new management plan for the sea. Gov. Jerry Brown included \$80 million in his budget for Salton Sea restoration.

Audubon California and a number of other conservation groups believe that now is a rare opportunity.

"There's just no way that you can talk about doing flyway-level bird conservation in California and not throw your weight into finding a solution at the Salton Sea," said Audubon California Executive Director Brigid McCormack. "The challenges are daunting, but there hasn't been a better time to make real progress than right now."

Audubon California is fully participating in the state process, offering testimony before the State Water Resources Control Board and the many subcommittees created as part of the management planning process. Audubon California is also working with Point Blue Conservation Science to provide the state with detailed habitat map and develop a monitoring program to measure change in the sea to bird populations.

"Ultimately, the state of California is going to need to make a substantial, sustained investment in restoring the Salton Sea," McCormack said. "Our engagement now will help ensure this is done right—that critical bird habitat is protected, and the toxic dust no longer threatens local communities." 



Pelicans at the Salton Sea, Photo by Wayne Stadler

BIRDS OF THE SEASON

October 2016

by Jon Fisher

It's well known that Los Angeles is a melting pot of people and cultures. That holds true for the plants and animals that live here as well. The county is home to a complex mix of both native and introduced species from around the world.

Birds are no exception, and birding in the county for any length of time can produce a list of exotics that reads like a walk through a well-stocked pet store. Like them or not, they are here to stay. And if exotics aren't your cup of tea, there were plenty of rare and regular native birds to occupy your time this fall.

The showing of rare shorebirds, flycatchers and vireos was less than impressive. On the other hand, a very satisfying variety of wood warblers were recorded over the period. Fifteen rare species complemented the expected ten western varieties.

A handful of Willow Flycatchers and Hooded Orioles were encountered into first part of October as were a few Western Kingbirds. Increasingly the coastal slope of the county offers Neotropical migrants a place to either linger late or spend the winter.

It was no surprise that vagrant traps like San Clemente Island and the Piute Ponds produced quite a few rare birds. A number of other spots—all well known to local birders and readers of this column—added plenty more vagrants. Sand Dune Park, the West San Gabriel River Parkway Nature Trail, Madrona Marsh, Hahamongna Watershed Park and DeForest Park were all good at

times. Many other lesser known locales had their share of rare birds as well.

Just outside our area of coverage, but worthy of mention, was a Dusky Warbler found in Huntington Beach the second week of October. This was the second found in the state this fall and it's probably a safe bet that this species has occurred in Los Angeles County in the past. Such finds are tantalizing, yet this is one of those species that even when present tends to be difficult to find and also one that may be easily overlooked or passed off as a more common species.

Waterfowl of interest included an inland **Brant** at the Lancaster Water Treatment Plant on September 4-14 (David Bell, Mark & Janet Scheel), a few **Surf Scoters** summering along Ballona Creek and a summering **Common Merganser** continuing in Silver Lake through September 29. Typically scarce inland was a **Red-breasted Merganser** at Quail Lake near Gorman on September 17 (Kimball Garrett).

A small number of **Inca Doves** persisted at Col. Leon H. Washington Park in Los Angeles with a high count of three there on September 13. **Common Ground-Doves** included one at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on September 18 (Dorian Anderson) and another continued along the San Gabriel River in Bellflower as of September 30 where a few birds have been regular recently.

White-winged Doves were along the Rio Hondo at Rush Street in Rosemead on August 12 (Larry Schmah) and at the Ballona



Freshwater Marsh on August 13 (Barbara Johnson).

A lone **Ridgway's Rail**, perhaps holding out for a mate that may never show up, remained at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh through September 21. Regardless, the occurrence of this species in the county is an encouraging sign.

Either a **Masked** or **Nazca Booby** was seen in LA County waters between Oceanside and Santa Catalina Island on September 15 (Ryan Lawler). Just two previous records exist for Nazca, with Masked being significantly more likely. Our understanding of the distribution of these two species may change as they were split rather recently. In addition, it can also often be challenging to distinguish between them.

More expected and now fairly regular were two **Brown Boobies** in the San Pedro Channel south of Long Beach on September 11 (Bob Schallmann) and two in that area again on September 24 (Jon Feenstra).

A **Brown Pelican** in Lakewood from September 3-5 was well away from its usual coastal haunts (Mark & Janet Scheel), but straying much farther inland was one at Lake Palmdale on September 29 (Cal Yorke). This was only the second ever recorded in the Antelope Valley.

A **Reddish Egret** was at Malibu Lagoon on September 6 (Rose Liebowitz). Birds found recently at this location are undoubtedly in transit between Orange and Ventura Counties where they are

regular and where suitable habitat is far more plentiful. Several different **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** were observed at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh and nearby areas over the summer, with at least one — a juvenile — present through October 2 (Don Sterba, Bill Figueroa).

A nice find in the county was an **American Golden-Plover** on the LA River in Commerce from August 30–September 1–5 (Richard Barth). Interestingly, its more likely congener — the Pacific Golden Plover — was unrecorded in the county this fall.

The first **Dunlin** of the fall was an early one along the LA River in Long Beach on September 20 (Richard Barth).

Semipalmated Sandpipers were very scarce this fall, with a couple on the lower LA River in the first half of August, one at the Piute Ponds on August 30 (Kerry Ross) and one on the LA River in Glendale from August 14–15 (Kimball Garrett).

Sabine's Gulls turned up inland with above average frequency this fall and included birds at the Piute Ponds on September 25 (Cuyler Staple-
mann), at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia on the same day (Chris Dean, Morgan Edel, Jes Burton), and at Castaic Lake on October 11 (Karl Fairchild). Close to the ocean, but still far from its usual offshore habitat, was one along Ballona Creek in Culver City from October 1–3 (Kevin Lapp).

Other gulls of interest included a **Franklin's Gull** at the Lancaster Water Treatment Plant on September 1 (Peter Gaede) and an out of season **Glaucous-winged Gull** flying over the San Gabriel River in Whittier on September 3 (Kimball Garrett).

At Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas, a **Bald Eagle** was present from September 2–5 and again on October 3 (Rod Higbie). Rare were **Broad-winged Hawks** above Tujunga Wash on September 17 (Luke Tiller) and over Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area on October 7 (Jeffrey Sondheimer).

The LA River produced a **Burrowing Owl** in Vernon on October 10 (Richard Barth), where according to a local it has apparently spent the last few winters. This species is often partial to our channelized rivers which offer appealing man-made “burrows” in which to shelter and roost.

A **Lewis's Woodpecker** on San Clemente Island on October 6 was the only one reported thus far (Justyn Stahl) and likewise was a **Northern “Yellow-shafted” Flicker** at Jackie Robinson Park in Palmdale on October 8 (Andrew Lee).

The only *Empidonax* of note was a rare **Least Flycatcher** found on Edwards AFB on September 23 (Jon Feenstra).

A **Vermilion Flycatcher** continued at Piute Ponds through September 24 and one was at Holiday Lake on August 27 (Cuyler Staple-
mann). On the coastal slope they were recorded at Legg Lake in South El Monte on September 4 (Darren Dowell) and at La Mirada Park on September 28 (Jonathan Rowley). Up to four more continued at Oakdale Memorial Park in Glendora through September.

Rare on the coast was a **Horned Lark** at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on September 28 (Dean Schaff).

A **Purple Martin** at the Piute Ponds on September 7 was the only report of that species this fall (John Birsner).

On the early side was a **Pacific Wren** at Orcutt Ranch Horticultural Park in West Hills on September 22 (Keri Dearborn).

Quite rare was a **Gray Catbird** at El Dorado Park in Long Beach on October 11 (Joyce Brady).

The only **Red-throated Pipits** recorded were on San Clemente Island on October 1 (Justyn Stahl) and again on October 11 (Chris Benesch).

San Clemente Island also had the longspurs this fall with a **Lapland Longspur** on October 5 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole Desnoyers) and a **Chestnut-collared Longspur** on October 1 (Justyn Stahl). Far surpassing those was a **Smith's Longspur** found on September 23 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole Desnoyers). There are over a dozen records for the state, but this was another first for the county. And so we continue the trend of adding new birds to the county list with remarkable regularity.

Northern Waterthrushes were at Madrona Marsh in Torrance from September 13–18 (Tracy Drake), at the West San Gabriel River Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood from September 24–25 (Tracy Drake) and in the Exposition Park Rose Garden in Los Angeles on October 7 (Kimball Garrett).

Black-and-white Warblers were at the Village Green Condominiums from August 28–29 (Don Sterba), at DeForest Park in Long Beach from October 6–9 (Kim Moore) and at American Gold Star Manor in Long Beach on October 8 (Philip Carnehl).

Always a rewarding find was a **Prothonotary Warbler** on San Clemente Island on September 29 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole Desnoyers).

Far more expected were about a half dozen **Tennessee Warblers** recorded between August 22 and October 8. The only **Lucy's Warbler** was at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena from August 13-24 (Darren Dowell), while at least a half dozen **Virginia's Warblers** were found between August 22 and October 1.

At least six **American Redstarts** were found between September 8 and October 6. A **Northern Parula** was at Peck Park in San Pedro on September 23 (Philip Carnehl) and a **Magnolia Warbler** was at Tierra Bonita Park in Lancaster on October 1 (Andrew Lee).

Blackburnian Warblers turned up along the LA River in Glendale on September 17 (Cuyler Staplemann) and on San Clemente Island from September 28–29 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole Desnoyers, Joel Throckmorton). **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were at Zuma Creek mouth on September 26 (Dan Cooper), at Tierra Bonita Park in Palmdale from October 7–10 (Andrew Lee) and at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on October 11 (Mark Rubke).

Blackpoll Warblers were found on San Clemente Island on September 20 (Joel Throckmorton), at Legg Lake in South El Monte on September 24 (Larry & Matt Schmah), at DeForest Park in Long Beach from October 4–8 (Merryl Edelstein, Kim Moore), on San Clemente Island on October 5 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole Desnoyers) and at the Pepperdine University ponds in Malibu on October 11 (Dan Cooper). About seven **Palm Warblers** also turned up between September 28 and October 11.

Very rare was a **Canada Warbler** found at the West San Gabriel River Parkway Nature Trail on September 17 (Jun Wu & Bin Cao). It remained there through September 21 offering a chance for many observers to see it.

Rounding out the very decent variety of warblers was a **Painted Redstart** at Wilderness Park in Redondo Beach on September 22 (Mark Rubke).

Away from the mountains and deserts, **Green-tailed Towhees** were at the West San Gabriel River Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood on September 11 (Tracy Drake), at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas from October 6–7 (Rod Higbie) and along the Playa Vista Riparian Corridor on October 10 (Russell Stone).

At least six **Black-throated Sparrows**— rare fall migrants on the coastal slope and typically all hatch year birds— were recorded over the period. At least nine **Clay-colored Sparrows** were also found and the odd summering **White-crowned Sparrow** continued at Hahamongna through September 3.

Summer Tanagers were at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on September 13 (Jun & Bin Wu), at Peck Park in San Pedro on September 23 (Philip Carnehl) and at DeForest Park in Long Beach on September 1 (Mark & Janet Scheel).

A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** appeared at a feeder in Tujunga on October 10 (Ken Gilliland) and half dozen **Indigo Buntings** were detected on the coastal slope between August 26 and October 4. San Clemente Island recorded a rare **Dickcissel** on October October 3 (Justyn Stahl).


At least two **Bobolinks**— and almost certainly more— were at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia between September 17–October 8 (Mark & Janet Scheel, et al). Another was at the West San Gabriel River Parkway Nature Trail on October 2 (Tracy Drake).

Wrapping things up were two colorful adult male **Baltimore Orioles**, one at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas from September 19–27 (Michael San Miguel Jr.) and the other at La Mirada Creek Park on October 11 (Andrew Lee).

Passerine migration has pretty much ended by the end of October, though a few stragglers will still be passing through. After that, birders will likely turn up a handful of unusual Neotropical migrants in the coming months.

As we approach winter, birding can be good anywhere in the county. Coastal spots, the Antelope Valley and many city, county and regional parks hold plenty of birds and often something unusual.

The San Gabriel Mountains are at their quietest in winter, but even then can be worth birding. Various woodpeckers and other residents remain here throughout the year and Fox Sparrows of several races abound, as do a perplexing variety of juncos.

Looking ahead, Christmas Bird Counts are coming up in mere weeks. Even well covered counts can generally benefit from additional help, so do consider volunteering if you haven't already. They are a great way to bird with a purpose and contribute to the scientific record. In addition, they're quite a lot of fun. What better combination for the avid birder? 

ALWAYS EXCITED FOR YOUR FIRSTS: THE CHASE

By Louis Tucker, Field Trip Leader

Growing up in southern Westchester County, New York, in the 1950's and 1960's was a very interesting time for a young, curious, introverted boy. Right outside of White Plains, NY, there is this sleepy, but, very large town called Greenburgh. Greenburgh didn't have a postal address, so the postal address the town was assigned to was White Plains, because Greenburgh proper was unincorporated. Greenburgh had within its large borders villages such as Scarsdale, Hartsdale, Elmsford, Valhalla, Ardsley and a few more, which escape me at the moment. These villages, however had post offices; which is probably why you may have heard of them. White Plains was the county seat of Westchester County and is a city which has grown enormously since I was a kid. Actually everything in Westchester has grown enormously and is major suburbia, USA.

But, in Greenburgh in those middle 20th century years, one of the wonderful things about it was that it was wooded, and had ponds and streams and vast fields to explore. It was also incredibly safe. None of the late twentieth century, twenty-first century horrors and fears faced families with children in this rather diverse town. This allowed yours truly, the introverted, and independent boy to roam and explore the natural realm; completely without fear or hesitation. No one in my family or any of my friends were interested in this exploration. Consequently, I did it alone. Birds attracted me like a moth to a flame. And, when my mother had errands, shopping to do, or take my siblings to the doctor, I would always ask her to drop me by one of the big ponds which the Bronx River would form around White Plains, Hartsdale or Scarsdale. The ducks and geese would just mesmerize me. The variety was actually pretty limited: mostly Canada

Geese, Mallards, Black Ducks, Gadwalls and an occasional Pintail. It didn't matter, I would just sit and observe their behavior. It fascinated me, even at five years old.

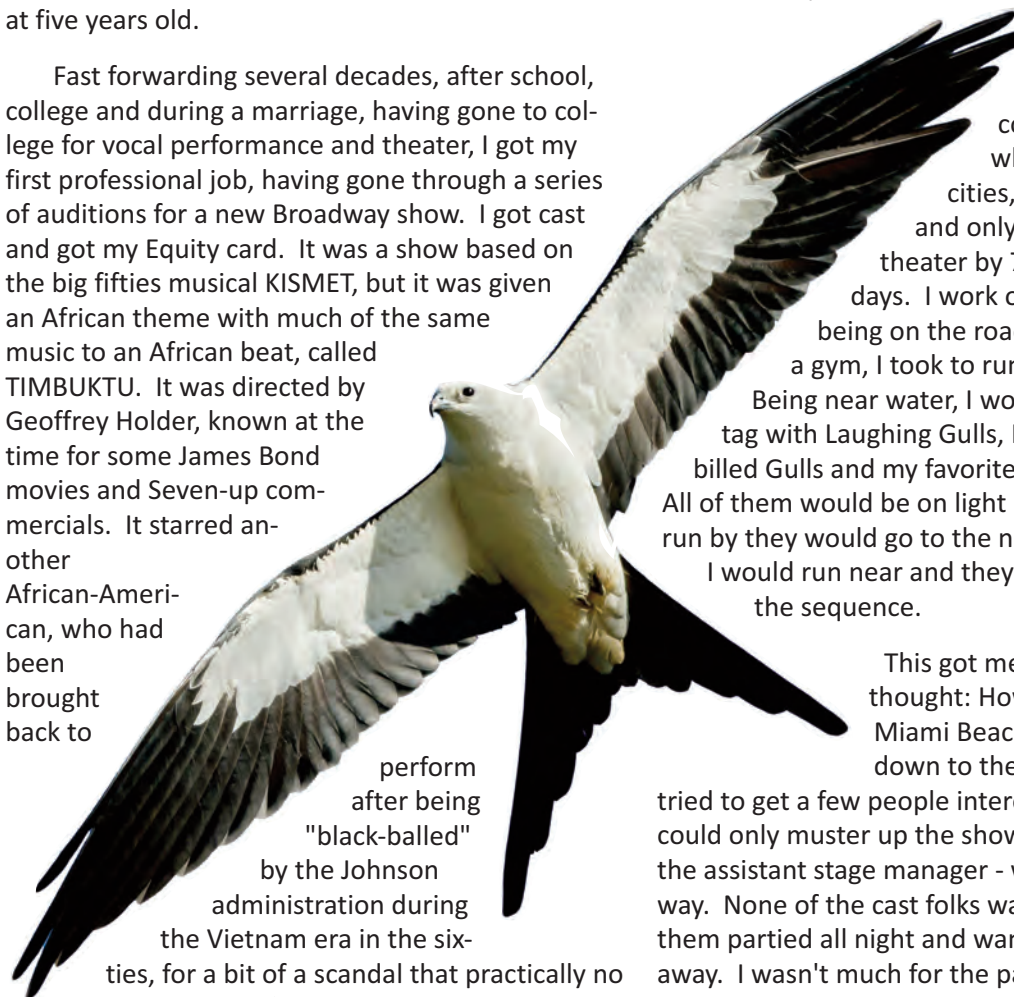
Fast forwarding several decades, after school, college and during a marriage, having gone to college for vocal performance and theater, I got my first professional job, having gone through a series of auditions for a new Broadway show. I got cast and got my Equity card. It was a show based on the big fifties musical KISMET, but it was given an African theme with much of the same music to an African beat, called TIMBUKTU. It was directed by Geoffrey Holder, known at the time for some James Bond movies and Seven-up commercials. It starred another African-American, who had been brought back to perform after being "black-balled" by the Johnson administration during the Vietnam era in the sixties, for a bit of a scandal that practically no one ever heard of: Eartha Kitt, who had made a sensation during the fifties as one of the bright stars of the entertainment business.

The show opened at the Mark Hellinger Theater, on Broadway and 49th Street. It was pretty ex-

citing to be in that element, with that being your first professional job. Yikes! We were on Broadway for almost a year, and did a national tour in 1979.

The first stop was south Florida. Being "on the road" could drive one crazy when you're in strange cities, with your days free and only having to be at the theater by 7:30 at night most days. I work out a lot, however, being on the road and maybe not near a gym, I took to running to stay in shape. Being near water, I would play imaginary tag with Laughing Gulls, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls and my favorite: a couple of Ospreys. All of them would be on light posts and as I would run by they would go to the next available one until I would run near and they would fly and repeat the sequence.

This got me a little "antsy". My thought: How can you be in Miami Beach and not want to go down to the Everglades? So I tried to get a few people interested in this idea. I could only muster up the show's music director and the assistant stage manager - who were fun by the way. None of the cast folks wanted to go. Most of them partied all night and wanted to sleep the day away. I wasn't much for the party scene and basically went back to the hotel and was asleep by 11:30 pm. So, we rented a car and took off to the Everglades. We didn't have binoculars or any of the bird/nature watching paraphernalia. I didn't, at the



Swallow-tailed Kite, Photo by Andy Morffew

time, know what went into this thing which actually at the time wasn't a hobby yet. But, most of the creatures to see were incredibly close along the walkway: Anhingas, Great Blue Herons, American and Snowy Egrets, Tri-colored Herons, Gulls, Black Vultures and Ospreys. And, sunning themselves, the American Alligator. Seeing one of these dinosaurs for the first time, was filled with curiosity and wonder; because you hear of all of the horror tales about this reptile, and this big guy was just sunning himself out on the lawn right off of the path. And, we could get really close, without incident — or with a lot of stupidity.

We really just barely skimmed the surface of this magical place before we realized we had to return north. Leaving this park was when I was struck by the flight and nest building habits of a species that was so incredibly splendid - I got hooked. In this very tall tree was a pair of birds of prey that just took my breath away. Swallow-tailed Kites! Right then and there, I made the decision that I was going to bird watch, especially on this tour, when we had almost a year to go and many places to visit. The elegance of this pair, the lilting flight, and the meticulous way they were preparing this nest was fascinating. The beauty of them, as well, was astounding at first sight. What is so striking is that it is basically a two-colored bird: white and blue-black. The head, belly, nape, under-wing coverts and under-tail coverts are white. The back, mantle, wings - primaries and secondaries, and tail are blue-black. It's a beautiful, stunning, elegant sight to see; and it grabbed me huge.

I can't go through the show's itinerary, although we went to some fantastic cities in this country. I really got to see the U.S of A and so much of its beauty. And, I tried to get out to as many wild places as I could; seeing Wood Duck at Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge, in Round Oak, Georgia, south of Atlanta. I saw Scissor-tailed Flycatchers in

Texas. But, the bird watching buffet that was waiting for me was in the San Francisco Baylands, in Palo Alto, California. I was still totally green about bird ID's but, at the refuge there were some really knowledgeable people who helped. It was December and the highest tide of the year, so there were critters being flushed out into the open which normally try to stay hidden. Little did I know that there were several birds and a little critter that were endangered. One bird I missed entirely because I had no idea how special it was: Black Rail. I would correct that oversight about fourteen years later, when I moved to California. The other two I did manage to see was the California Clapper Rail (now known as the Ridgeway Rail) and the very tiny Salt-marsh Harvest Mouse. And the circumstance of this encounter was great for the rail and me; but, for the mouse - not so much. You see, the rail had just caught the mouse and then without much hesitation, gobbled it up. One endangered species being fed to another endangered species. "Ain't nature grand!?"

The tour came to a close in January of 1980. And, I returned to NYC with the excitement that I had picked up this wonderful new hobby; and it really had me. And, people would wonder: "Where can you possibly go bird watching in NYC?" The answer be-

comes crystal clear if you put your mind to it. Wherever there are trees and grass and bodies of water big or small. Heck! I got my life Brown Creeper, eating breakfast looking out the window, forty-two stories up, in my dining room, watching this little bird climbing the outside brick wall of the building, searching for insects. Crazy! A funny and delightful bit of serendipity. But, putting the hobby in action didn't prove very difficult at all. Central Park at any time of year is a treasure trove for feathered species: lots of trees, grass, a gigantic reservoir, and also a boat pond. Central Park is actually immense. And, in the spring and fall, birds on migration coming from long distances and flying over miles of concrete, see this green oasis and they just drop down and feed as much as they need to. I would get most all of my eastern warbler species there. And, in the winter, the reservoir and boat pond would be host to Scoter species and Tufted



© Brian E. Small

Black Rail, Photo by Brian Small, Courtesy of briansmallphoto.com

Duck, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck and both Scaup, among other waterfowl. That's not so shabby.

There are other places in NYC which are fantastic for birding. Possibly at the top of any east coast list would be Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge, which is reachable by subway from Manhattan to Queens. Other places reachable by subway are the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens and Prospect Park, Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx for example. And, if you are lucky enough to have a car, you can venture out to Long Island and check out some of the great places along Fire Island. One place in particular in the fall, Robert Moses State Beach, there is a great Hawk watch where you get a chance to see accipiter flights and in early October there is a falcon migration peek and you see Kestral, Merlin, and Peregrine regularly. It is a great place to see a lot of falcons barreling through going south.

It is at the western end of Fire Island that I did my first chase. I had made a number of friends on the Fire Island Hawk Watch. There are some really great people monitoring this watch. One of them, was a great deal of fun to be with: Bobby Kurtz. I have never met any birder more enthusiastic than Bobby. With each new exciting species, he was like a kid at Christmas. Well, this adventure starts out on Thanksgiving weekend 1984. That Friday, I was working out in the gym in my building. And, mid-bench press, my wife comes bursting in the gym, and she teases like no one else. "Uh, you got a very excited, crazy call upstairs." (Pause) She's smiling, very slyly. "Yes", I responded. "Some very overly enthusiastic birding friend of yours just called with some important information." "OK, who was it?" "A Bobby Kurtz?" "What did he say?" "There is some really rare bird down at Jones Beach". "What kind of rare bird?" (I really didn't know if she was pulling by leg or not. She had this sly smile on her face.) "Well, I think you should put the weights down and

go up stairs and give him a call - it's about some sort of falcon?" "Falcon?" "Yeah, a Gyrfalcon?" "WHAT?" "I think that's what he said." I cannot tell you how fast I got upstairs, because even running, I had to wait for some elevator to carry me to the 42nd floor.

"Hey Bobby!" "Hi, Lou!" "What's up?" "You gotta hop on the train tomorrow and meet me because we've got a Gyrfalcon out here, at Jones Beach!" "Wow, ABSOLUTELY!, what do I have to do?" "Get on the first train to Freeport, Long Island, I'll meet you and we'll drive down to the beach." Well, I wasn't going to be kept from having a good time. I knew that I had to get up at 4 am and take the subway down to Penn Station and catch a Long Island Rail Road train to Freeport. This also meant that I had to switch trains in Jamaica, Queens to continue this trip out to Freeport. I was so excited, I don't think I slept at all that night. So, when the alarm went off at 4, it barely rang before I shut it off so as to not disturb my wife that much. At that hour, in November, it was still pretty dark out. I got dressed for possible really cold weather, because of being at the beach in late autumn. It actually wasn't that cold out. And, the great thing about NYC is that the subways run at all hours. I bought a train ticket which left the station around five-ish. I met Bobby at the station in Freeport, who was having a hard time containing himself with his excitement, which only made me more crazy.

It was a relatively short ride from Freeport, zipping down the Meadowbrook State Parkway to Jones Beach. And as you enter

the park itself, there is what could be described as a replica of the Washington Monument in the traffic circle. So we parked the car and walked around as the day was getting sun. And, looking up at this structure, near the top, before all the sides come to a point, there are open windows. It had been reported that the bird was using that as a roost. When we started to look at one of the windows which was for a second empty, the falcon flew in and perched on the sill. Yikes! Bobby and I were jumping around the parking lot like a couple of six year olds. We were looking at a bird which seemed to be very robust and stocky in build. It was not nearly as streamlined as the Peregrine. We got such great looks, as it was extremely cooperative just perched there. So, we could analyze what we were watching. It was a juvenile grey race bird. It didn't have the clear head and mustache pattern that Peregrines, Prairies and Kestrels have. The breast and belly was heavily streaked, the mantle was grey and the long tail was banded. It did that



Gyrfalcon, Courtesy of Audubon.org

head bobbing thing that I've come to see falcons do. We just starred in awe for a long time.

And then it took off over the water to the north. The pigeons, gulls, ducks, Canada Geese and Brant were pretty nervous. It seemed to have strong, steady, measured wing beats - slower than a Peregrine and seemingly much more powerful. And, it turned around and flew back into the tower, where, a few seconds later, it was met by its smaller cousin, a Peregrine. Now, this was really fun to watch. A rather short territorial match. There was a bit of an aerial dog fight with neither bird getting the upper hand and then it was over. The Peregrine, however, did hang around on a different side of the tower. It was really neat to compare the two birds, and there is no question as to which is bigger and more powerful. The Peregrine is just faster. We spent the entire morning watching this northern visitor. We would see it fly out over the inlet to the north of Jones Beach and make attempts to pick up a Brant. This seemed more like an intimidation tactic than anything else. I will say that on subsequent visits, it did hunt Brant, Coots, Canada Geese, ducks and pigeons. This bird had a huge smorgasbord of bird varieties to feast on.

So much to feast on, that the falcon spent the entire winter of '84-'85 in that tower eating whatever it caught. Previous to this run to try and see this special treat, I had become a member of the NYC Audubon chapter. And, I got on the field trip committee. And, several times that winter, I took people out to see their first Gyrfalcon. And, each time we went, within minutes that bird would be in that tower. On one occasion, there were about one hundred people around that traffic circle looking up at that bird. The day Bobby and I went, we were the only ones. That Gyrfalcon was so cooperative all winter. If it was out foraging, it would always return to that tower. It was a big sensation that stayed until the end of March 1985. No one harrassed it,

because the perch was more than one hundred feet up in the air. I actually didn't realize, at the time, I was doing a "chase". I initially thought that I was going out to find a new species for my life list. I did realize that it was a rare find. And, in the short time that I had been seriously birding, birds of prey were my weak spot. I had to see them. I did go after this because I thought it might be a once in a lifetime bird species for me. Little did I know that I would see four more years later.

What this did do for me, in any case, it started a fervor to go and track down as much as I can, any doable rare bird. So, at one point, especially when I moved to California, it became an obsession. When I first moved here, I met a few birders who were gung-ho about chasing and we would burn up the roads in the south-west and the west. It's exciting and depending on who you do it with, it can be a lot of fun. Most of the folks I used to do this with, have moved to the east coast, so I don't do it much anymore. Not that I don't want to - it's just that my truck is older now, and it's hard to rustle up folks who would be interested in perhaps driving long distances. I try to convince people that I have a really good track record doing chases. Since those days in NYC, and about thirty years of doing chases, I've only missed two target birds. That may put me at 98 percent.

Chases have their own particular type of adrenalin rush: the excitement of planning one, whether the chase is immediate or a few days away. There is a bit of individual antsyness, while driving in the car, depending on your temperament. Not to mention the possibility of tossing and turning the night before, depending on where you rank in your head the species you are going to see. Sometimes a long trip may not seem to take as long for you, if you tend to get a little crazy about these things. And, then again, a long trip may seem to be incredibly long and never ending, if you tend to get a little crazy about these things. Personally, when I arrive at the designated area for the bird, I don't like to dally around. I want to go directly to find the bird. I get tunnel vision and super focused. Leisurely birding can take place after the target bird is found. Sometimes, if you get sidetracked, you can miss your target altogether. I've seen that happen (which is possibly a subject for another article).



Ridgeway's Rail, Photo by Kirsten Wahlquist, Courtesy of smbasmlog.com

The other point is that it can be loads of fun and tremendously rewarding. And, a great excuse for celebration. I've done some crazy chases with friends. And, if I hadn't, I would have missed a Northern Hawk-Owl in Spokane, Washington, a Falcated Duck at the Colusa National Wildlife Refuge, a Blue Mockingbird and Eared Quetzal in south-east Arizona, Fork-tailed Flycatcher in Jenner, California, on the Russian River. I caught the first year of "Al" the Laysan Albatross in Point Arena, a Little Bunting in San Diego, a Rustic Bunting in Hoopa, an Ivory Gull at Grover Beach, a Common Cuckoo in Watsonville, and a Siberian Accentor in a snow storm in a yard in Hailey, Idaho. That's just a sample of my fun ride, chasing.

That gyrfalcon became my favorite bird, and remains my favorite species. I've had some wonderful chases and seen birds I never thought I would get a chance to see. And, that's what's so great about it. A rare duck can be someone's treasure, as some little sparrow may be. Whatever you find dear to you, is dear to you and no one can take that away. It'll put a smile on your face, and brighten up your countenance; and, you have the right to do with it as you wish. You can share your excitement with others or keep it to yourself. Whatever you decide, it's up to you. I'll tell you this, everyone should at least try one chase. See and feel what it does for you. There's a chance that some bird may thrill you. Another little word about my friend, Bobby Kurtz: I believe that everyone needs a birding friend like Bobby. His enthusiasm is so child like. It's infectious in the best possible way. With him each outing became an exciting adventure, whether it's at Montauk Point, while you're freezing looking at beautiful sea ducks and gannets in the winter. Or, you're at Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania watching migrating flights of so many of the eastern bird of prey species. Or, down at beautiful Cape May, New Jersey watching so many different types of birds migrate through the Atlantic flyway. With Bobby, it's a lot of fun.

For me it proved that birding can really be exciting. Each species has its charm, allure, and its own special beauty; whether it's a Wood Duck or a Vesper Sparrow. Watch them. Take it all in. Don't just tick it off your list. Watch their behavior (if it will let you). Sometimes when some bird flits about, it can be hard; but, that's part of the process. Sometimes, they make you work, and at other times, they cooperate. And, when you've had your fill, you walk or drive away from it. My life "Gyr" was very cooperative that winter of '84-'85. And, each time, watching it, was thrilling and unlike any other - always something new about it to observe. Cheers! 🦉



Falcated Duck, Photo Courtesy Audubon.org

INTERPRETING NATURE

Celebrating Shorebirds

Joyce Realgeno, Education and Restoration Staff, and Stacey Vigallon, Director of Environmental Education

WE WELCOME BACK GUEST COLUMNIST, JOYCE REALEGENO. A graduate of the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program in 2011, Joyce has continued to work with Los Angeles Audubon on plover and tern projects, habitat restoration, and environmental education. This past spring and summer, Joyce served as an Environment for the Americas Celebrate Shorebirds Intern. Environment for the Americas (EftA) focuses on partnering with communities throughout the Western Hemisphere to support migratory bird conservation efforts. Since 2014, Los Angeles Audubon has collaborated with EftA to host 1-2 paid interns each year, providing them with opportunities to gain experience with conservation fieldwork and community outreach. In this issue's Interpreting Nature column, Joyce talks about her experience as an EftA Intern...

Migratory shorebird awareness is a term that I've grown very comfortable with these last six months. Having the opportunity to work with Los Angeles Audubon through Environment for the Americas (EftA) has truly been an enlightening experience. I've had the opportunity to speak to different audiences throughout Los Angeles about migrating shorebirds, I've been able to help restore natural spaces at local state parks, and even survey beaches for Snowy Plovers and Least Terns. I would not have been able to predict how incredibly variable and extremely rewarding each task with LA Audubon would be.

I first heard about Environment for the Americas about two years ago from the first LA Audubon intern. After learning about the program, I continued to hear high praise after another colleague successfully com-

pleted the internship the following year. My supervisor, Stacey Vigallon, encouraged me to apply, and given all of the positive feedback that I heard, I wanted to see what EftA was all about first hand. Before I knew it (and after applications and interviews were done) I was on my way to San Diego for the week-long training. I met other interns who were going to work in different areas of the country and with different government agencies. During the training we learned about a wide variety of concepts ranging from shorebird identification and surveying protocols to engaging historically disadvantaged communities on the importance of utilizing natural spaces. I learned a lot during the training and I used every bit of what I learned when working with LA Audubon.

One of my first responsibilities for EftA was to survey along the Ballona Creek bike path for shorebirds and predator bird species. I can honestly say that I was very surprised at not only the abundance but the diversity of birds that I saw during my surveys. At first glance, I didn't think the creek had the adequate food resources for over 300 Western and Least Sandpipers and Surfbirds. But I was proven wrong time and time again when large flocks of shorebirds would comfortably forage alongside the banks of the creek.



Assisting with Least Tern banding in Orange County.

During my internship I also surveyed beaches for Snowy Plovers and Least Terns. Learning more about the different regulations that come with a protected status from the government was as interesting as it was overwhelming at times.

One aspect about working with a non-profit like Los Angeles Audubon was that staff members seem to

be involved in a little bit of everything at all times. If I wasn't helping with surveys, education programs, or on a data entry project, I was at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook removing invasive plant species or helping to prepare pots and flats for seeding. Being able to be a part of such varying activities is something I will always appreciate. I don't think it's especially common to be able to see the development of a project from its very roots (for lack of a better term). From the clearing of invasive plants on a hillside, to planting the natives that were seeded and then transplanted earlier in the season, to teaching high school and elementary school students of the process, and finally to speaking to community members of the importance of the work. Being a part of all of this has definitely made me feel more well-rounded as a person as well as an EftA intern.

Although previous to this internship I understood the importance of outreach events during the start of a project, I never really grasped how important it is to have a constant rapport with community members throughout. Speaking to different groups about LA Audubon, EftA, and all of their different projects, it was really exciting to see how many people showed interest. Whether or not they were able to become members of Audubon or purchase something from EftA, just being able to get the word out on some level makes a significant difference. Growing up in Los Angeles, something that I've found to have in common with a lot of people is that we aren't really aware of what is going on in the city. Online articles and public radio segments on political news aside, the amount of outreach that targets historically underserved communities is minimal, especially when it comes to environmental issues. Being a part of this internship showed me many outlets that can be used to help change that.

These last few months I have learned a tremendous amount. About shorebirds, networking, being an environmental educator, proper surveying techniques, being a good communicator, and so much more. But not only that, I've also learned a lot about myself and my own abilities. And now knowing what I need to work on, I'll hopefully be able to continue working in the environmental field as a much stronger candidate.



Representing Los Angeles Audubon at West LA College's Earth Day Festival.



Installing the Least Tern and Snowy Plover enclosure at Malibu Lagoon State Beach.

Field Trip Listings

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

For more information: (323) 876-0202 or 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
Phone: (323) 876-0202

Thursday, November 3 OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE BIRD COLLECTION TOUR NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP

Our host will be *John McCormack*, Director and Curator of the massive Bird and Mammal Collection at the Moore Laboratory of Zoology, and Assistant Professor of Biology at Occidental College. This includes the most extensive collection of Mexican bird specimens in the world. The McCormack Lab has pioneered the use of new DNA sequencing technologies to better resolve the avian taxonomy of birds in Mexico and adjacent countries. A number of U.S. bird species cannot be safely separated without an understanding of their congeners to the south. Not that birds from Mexico don't have a flair of their own! John may pull out an Imperial Woodpecker, as assortment of "King / Clapper" rails, a flight of "scrub-type" jays, or maybe a pair of Greater and Lesser Roadrunners! And he will probably be open to suggestion, and very open to questions about the great importance of maintaining specimen collections, and what exactly makes for a good species.

We will meet in front of the Moore Lab of Zoology building at Occidental College at 7:30 p.m., and probably clear out before 9:30 p.m. Exit the 2 Fwy at York Blvd E, continue well past Eagle Rock Blvd., and turn Lt. on Armadale Ave. Navigate to the corner of Armadale Ave. and Campus Rd. (GPS or phone: 34.125017, -118.211361 or use the address 1501 Campus Rd. 90042), and park here on Campus Rd., adjacent to the campus. Enter campus on Armadale/American Way and head uphill to Moore Lab: Right on Weller Rd., Left on Bird Rd., curving to the right and up to the Lab (5 min. walk from car to Lab). Limited to 10 participants, due to logistical limitations. No fee.

Sign up by phone (323) 876-0202 or email membership@laaudubon.org and await email confirmation.

Sunday, November 13, (Fully Booked) SEAL BEACH NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SIGN-UP REQUIRED, NO FEE

Nick Freeman, biologist *Rick Nye* and volunteer *Carolyn Vance* 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 send ZIP Code, first, middle-initial & last names, DOB, e-mail and home phone number, cell ph# optional but helpful; by November 6. Only LAAS-confirmed individuals of U.S. citizenship with photo ID allowed on base. No weapons, but 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 Forrester 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.

Saturday, December 3

PIUTE PONDS, EDWARDS AFB

**NO FEE, 20 MAX SIGN UP BEFORE NOV. 22,
PERSONAL EAFB PASS REQUIRED!**

Leader: *Jim Moore*. Chance of LeConte's Thrasher, and occasionally Vermilion Flycatcher. Some of the finest desert birding in LA County! Some amazing birds have been seen here over the years! Continue to Apollo Park and possibly elsewhere afterwards. Meet at the Avenue C gate at 7:30 a.m. To get here, take Hwy 14 N to Avenue D, head E to Sierra Hwy, head N to Avenue C, and go a block E to the gate at the end. Lunch and finish at Apollo Park. Bring lunch, sunblock and lots of water. Likely hot weather, and possible afternoon wind. High clearance vehicles may be a plus.

Email or call LAAS to sign up after you have the required annual pass. ***Talk with Misty Hailstone on the base by phone at (661) 275-2435 between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. **before Nov 22** to arrange a required annual pass ***. Tell her your personal information (legal name, driver's license number and state issued, social security number, date of birth, email address, and phone number). Please do not e-mail or leave a message. Access for foreign nationals is trickier but still possible. Cameras O.K.

**Saturday, January 7 or 21 ???
(date still being arranged)**

TEJON RANCH

NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP REQUIRED

Leader: *Louis Tucker*. Watch website for firm date (hopefully before December 1). Visits to the Ranch are by special arrangement with escort only, as one could easily get lost on the web of gated dirt roads covering this huge working ranch. Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk all likely in the rolling hills of the ranch. California Condor and Lewis' Woodpecker also possible. Bring lunch, as we will be out most of the day. Take the 5 Fwy. north to the Roxford St. turnoff, and meet at the Denny's in Sylmar visible off the east side of the freeway (12861 Encinitas Ave., Sylmar). Be pre-

22 *Western Tanager* November-December 2016

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 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 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: lathrotriccus@gmail.com to be matched up with a team or survey area.

pared to depart from here at 7:00 a.m. High clearance vehicles recommended, as we will carpool into these and ranch vehicles at the ranch. Rain cancels. Limit: 12 participants only. Please register with LA Audubon by phone (323) 876-0202, and provide phone number, e-mail, high clearance Y/N, #spare passenger seats. FRS radios and scopes useful.

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.

January 28 & 29 Weekend

CARRIZO PLAIN

FEE: \$20, LIMIT: 16

Leaders: *Mary and Nick Freeman*. Meet at 8 a.m. in Maricopa. Spectacular scenery. We will see Ferruginous Hawks, Prairie Falcons, Golden Eagles, LeConte's Thrasher, Merlin and pronghorn; with possible Rough-legged Hawk, Mountain Plover and Sage Thrasher. We will meet in Maricopa (vacant lot at 800 Stanislaus St., west of Shell station on south side of Hwy 166), drive around the Plain all weekend, then leave the Plain heading north via Bitterwater Road on Sunday before we away to LA. If possible, please carpool or avail your vehicle to others when you reserve. Your phone number will be released for carpooling un-

less you request otherwise. Mail name, phone number, \$20 per person, and e-mail address for exact directions and further information. Net profits go to the Schreiber Grant Fund. Reserve your own room in Buttonwillow for Saturday night. Motel 6 is one option here. FRS radios & 'scopes helpful. Limit: 16.

Friday, February 3

GULL STUDY WORKSHOP — LECTURE LIMITED SIGN-UP 20 Max.

TO REGISTER FOR THIS WORKSHOP

This workshop is a *Ralph Schreiber Grant* fundraiser. Mail \$20 fee to: Los Angeles Audubon, PO Box 411301, Los Angeles CA 90041-8301. Please provide names, phone numbers and email addresses for each participant. The full workshop fee is \$20, you get both the lecture & field trip which are **not offered separately**. *Sign-up is limited to the first 20 paid participants*. We will send a confirmation e-mailer with directions to the lecture and any further details. If you want your confirmation by U.S. Mail, please provide a S.A.S.E. with your payment

Workshop speaker, *Larry Allen*, will discuss most gulls that have appeared in North America – the majority of which have made it to California. So, you've been avoiding gulls for the last decade (if that's possible), hoping that they would migrate out of the Southern California region. Well, that's not going to happen. But Larry has a kind touch when it comes to Gull I.D., and will rapidly get you up to speed with how to evaluate and identify our gulls. Larry will specifically address general aspects of gull topography, the confusing (but orderly) logic of molt sequences, and the finer aspects of identification to age and species. Slides, study skins and handouts will be used. Lecture to be held at a private residence in Altadena, from 7:30 - 10:00 p.m., with one refreshment break. 20 maximum.

Sunday, February 5

GULL STUDY WORKSHOP — FIELD TRIP \$20 FULL WORKSHOP FEE LIMITED SIGN-UP

Leader: *Larry Allen*. Put your new knowledge to use in the field, perhaps even identifying immature California & Ring-billed gulls as they fly overhead! Meet in the field at 8:00 a.m. and ogle the gulls until we're all gull identification experts! *Location will be confirmed during the lecture*. We often go to Doheny State Beach in Orange County (34422 Park Lantern, Dana Point; then turn right into the main lot, and meet in the SW corner by San Juan Creek). It is a fair drive to Doheny, but we have had large numbers of gulls on our workshops here, including Glaucous Gull twice, and a Lesser Black-backed Gull once! Doheny Beach parking fee. If goodly numbers of gulls are present around the Los Angeles Basin, we will assemble there instead. Bring a lunch. Maximum of 20 participants. See above to reserve lecture & field trip.

February 11 & 12 Weekend

SALTON SEA SOUTH FEE: \$10, SIGN-UP REQUIRED

Leaders *Nick and Mary Freeman*. Large to huge flocks of Snow & Ross' geese, White-faced Ibis and Sandhill Cranes. Stilt Sandpiper, Lesser Black-backed Gull and Gila Woodpecker all possible to certain. This is the only place in the U.S. to see the impressive Yellow-footed Gull (likely)! No Limit, but sign up by phone, and send e-mail and cell ph# for more details. Meet at 7:00 a.m. Saturday at Cattle Call Park south of Brawley (just downhill from 550 Cattle Call Drive, Brawley). Calipatria Inn 800/830-1113, Brawley Inn 760/344-1199, and Americas Best Value Inn in Westmorland 760/351-7100 are recommended. Arrive fed with full tanks, and bring lunches and snacks. Those who wish will eat together Saturday night. FRS radios & 'scopes helpful. Mail \$20 fee to: Los Angeles Audubon, PO Box

411301, Los Angeles CA 90041-8301. With name, e-mail, and cell phone.

Saturday, February 18

CHASING PARROTS IN PASADENA NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader: *Larry Allen*. The famous "Temple City" parrots have moved to Pasadena! Join Larry as we follow the evening flock as it gathers members and moves to roosting sites in suburban Pasadena. Study and compare the looks and vocalizations of Red-crowned, Lilac-crowned, Red-lored, and Yellow-headed Parrots and perhaps other parrot and parakeet species as well. Bring scopes if you have them. We will meet at 5:00 p.m. and bird until fully dark (about 6:15 p.m.). Meet at La Pintoresca Park at 45 E Washington Blvd. in Pasadena, at the northeast corner of Fair Oaks Ave. and Washington Blvd. Exit the 210 Freeway at Fair Oaks and proceed north about 1¼ miles. Park on the surrounding streets and gather around the small parking lot on the east side. If you don't find the group there, look on the west side of the park. Depending on the location of the roosts, we will either walk or drive from the park.

March 18 & 19, 2017 Weekend

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

Leader: *Kurt Leuschner*. Peak time for both wildflowers and Swainson's Hawk migration! Caravan from the Colorado Desert up to Julian, with short forays to take in the sights and the wildlife. Kurt is a professor of desert ecology, and knows all of our deserts very well. Reserve your accommodations at Hacienda del Sol, Stanlund Motel or others in Borrego Springs months early! Meet at the Anza-Borrego Desert Natural History Association (652 Palm Canyon Drive, Borrego Springs). Reserve the trip by mail with \$20 LAAS / \$40 non-LAAS fee; cell #, and E-mail address to LAAS. More details later.

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

Nov. 5 & Dec. 3

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 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 Chris: (310) 455-1270

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area

3rd Saturday of the month

(Except for July and August)

Nov. 19 & Dec. 17

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 Phoebe, Cassin Kingbirds, California and Spotted Towhee, Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper’s Hawk. We will also look for wintering birds such as Merlin, Rufous-crowned, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Western Meadowlarks, Ring-billed Ducks and American Wigeons among others.

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

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.

left (leading to the “Olympic Forest”) and park in the first available spaces. |

Binoculars provided.

Upper Franklin Canyon

Sooky Goldman Nature Center

2nd Sunday of the month

Nov. 13 & Dec. 11

Time: 8:30 a.m.–12:00 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. Winter birds have arrived; we will look for Ring-billed Duck, Hooded Mergansers, Merlin, White-crowned Sparrow, and fox Sparrow among others.

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)

November 20

Time: 8:00 a.m.–noon

Leaders: *Bob Shanman and Friends*. Join us for a walk through L.A.’s only remaining saltwater marsh and the adjacent rocky jetty. MEET AT THE DEL REY LAGOON PARKING LOT.

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

Monthly Program Presentations

Wednesday, November 9, 2016

7:00 PM–9:00 PM

Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook, Theater

Speaker: Robert de Groot

“ON THE MOVE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA: HOW EARTHQUAKES HAVE SHAPED OUR ENVIRONMENT AND HOW CREATURES SMALL AND LARGE GET AROUND”

Migrations both large and small for creatures small and large is quite a production in Southern California. We live by the ebb and flow of daily traffic and the occasional weather system mixes things up a bit.

Punctuating the diurnal activities of the region's wide variety of critters (including over 22 million of us) are twenty to thirty earthquakes. Once in a while a shaker is big enough to damage the built environment and over the very long term forces in the Earth through the process of plate tectonics, has built hills, valleys, and influenced the course of rivers. The paths we use to travel to Las Vegas and Bakersfield are also traversed by birds in their journeys.

During this presentation you will learn things about earthquakes that you can use immediately. You will leave with some new ways to interpret the land as you sit idle on the 405 in the Sepulveda pass or while enjoying a day of birdwatching on the Los Angeles River along the Glendale Narrows.

Robert de Groot is the Coordinator for Communication, Education, and Outreach for the ShakeAlert Earthquake Early Warning Program at the U.S. Geological Survey Earthquake Science Center in Pasadena, CA. He also is one of the co-directors of the Quake Catcher Network (QCN) citizen science program. QCN is a collaborative initiative for developing the world's largest, low-cost strong-motion seismic network by utilizing motion sensors in and attached to internet-connected computers. From 1999 - 2016 he worked at the University of Southern California as the Director for Education, Experiential.

LAAS program presentations for the 2016/2017 season have begun. Our new program chair, Nicole Lannoy, has lined up the following programs for November & December.

Please note that the November program will take place in the theater at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park, and December's program will be announced soon. We also have an earlier start time of 7:00 PM.

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.



*Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook
6300 Hetzler Rd
Culver City CA 90232*

Contact Carol Babeli: 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.

**December 2016 Program
Date and Time: To be announced**

Presenter: Edward Craven

“THE STATUS OF THE IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER”