

Los Angeles Audubon Society | laudubon.org

WESTERN Tanager

January-February 2017 | Volume 83, Number 3



Burrowing Owl at Esperanza Elementary | Photo by Brad Rumble



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The *Western Tanager* is the chapter newsletter of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, published online bi-monthly in PDF format, Sept/Oct, Nov/Dec, Jan/Feb, Mar/Apr, May/June, July/Aug. Articles, letters drawings and photographs concerning conservation, birding, chapter activities, and articles of interest to the membership are welcome for submission. Please send copy as Microsoft Word, RTF documents, or plain text files to westernanager@laudubon.org. Photos should be high resolution (300ppi) .jpg or .tif files. **Submissions are due the 1st of the month to be included in the following issue.** All rights reserved. All photographs are used by permission and are copyrighted material of the credited photographers.

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On The Cover

Burrowing Owl at Esperanza Elementary



This image was taken on December 9, 2016 when the bird was perched in a jacaranda tree adjacent to the student lunch pavilion. I took the shot with a Canon EOS Rebel t2i camera using a 55mm-250mm lens.

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER:

My interest in native birds developed during my first decade working at a school near downtown Los Angeles. It was the absence of biodiversity due to poor urban planning which really got me interested in the subject. I started photographing birds to memorialize what I was seeing out in the field.

As an elementary school principal, I see how students are fascinated with the local natural history. Given the opportunity, they truly become stewards of their campus and neighborhood.

Brad Rumble

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A New Schoolyard Habitat at Esperanza Elementary School

Margot Griswold, President Los Angeles Audubon



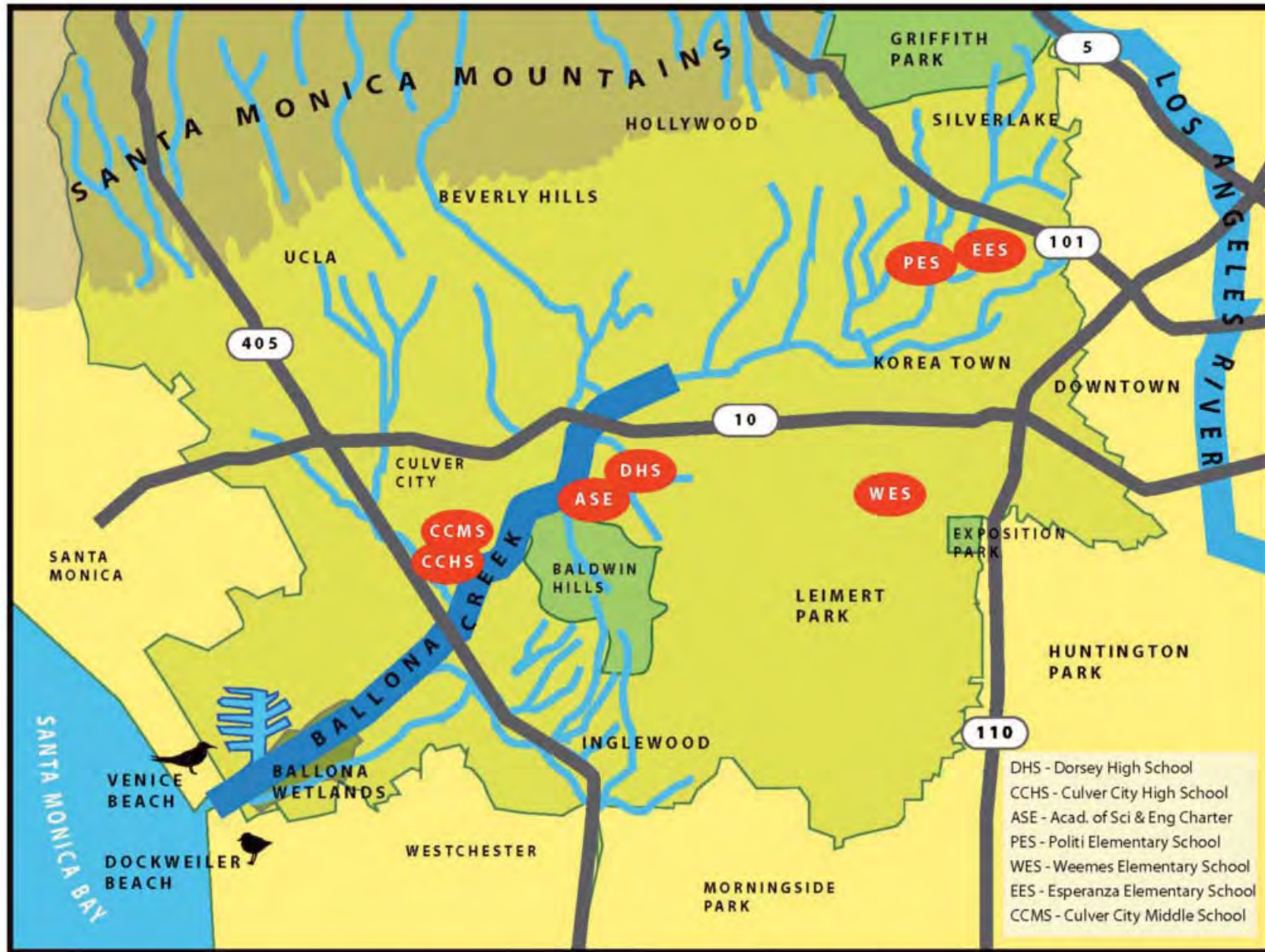
Birders surveying new habitat. | Photo by Brad Rumble

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY (LAAS) HAS EMBARKED ON OUR SECOND SCHOOLYARD HABITAT, A COLLABORATION AT Esperanza Elementary School. This new Schoolyard Habitat is based on our success at Leo Politi Elementary School. We used our experience to build an ecologically appropriate outdoor learning hub at Esperanza Elementary, a Title 1 school, located along Wilshire Blvd near MacArthur Park. There are 773 students attending grades K-Fifth.

In 2009, LAAS and Leo Politi Elementary School, another Title I school near downtown Los Angeles, collaborated with US Fish and Wildlife Service to install a native habitat on 6,000 square feet of under-utilized schoolyard. This collaboration was first schoolyard habitat project in downtown Los Angeles to receive a grant. LAAS, worked successfully with students, parents, and teachers to replace an under-utilized area of schoolyard at Leo Politi Elementary with an outdoor learning area now filled with native plants, insects, and birds.

We transformed the schoolyard habitat concept at Leo Politi by having our high school Restoration Leaders from the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program create and teach curricula using the Politi habitat. This innovation, using intergenerational learning, is an important part of our success in fostering stewardship with both age groups and within the urban core of Los Angeles. We are growing environmental stewards who understand the importance of urban ecology. We call our intergenerational learning the 'School-shed', and it links all of our environmental education programs. Our 'School-shed' is located within the Ballona Creek Watershed of Los Angeles.

(See schools within Ballona Creek Watershed map next page)



Schools within the Ballona Creek Watershed that Los Angeles Audubon has engaged in Baldwin Hills Greenhouse programming, almost all of them on a multi-year basis. Numerous additional schools, both within and outside of the watershed, have been engaged in the Kenneth Hahn, Ballona Wetlands, and Snowy Plover education programs.

While the Politi habitat is self-sufficient now, LAAS continues to work with our Restoration Leaders, sponsoring an annual workday where our students work with parents and Politi students to trim and spruce up the native plants. The schoolyard habitat continues to be essential in engaging students, teachers, and community in hands-on nature activities in a neighborhood largely devoid of parks. LAAS staff also engage students each fall and spring in an after-school science illustration program, culminating in a Science+Art evening program that engages the whole school with performances, student exhibits, and science games.

Similarly, the overall goal of Esperanza Schoolyard Habitat project is to create a natural habitat within an urban school-yard that will serve as an outdoor classroom, filled with native plants, insects, pollinators, lizards and birds, that teachers and students will observe and study to enhance their classroom/textbook experience.

In 2015, LAAS worked with Esperanza principal Brad Rumble and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to identify a 5,227 square foot area of the schoolyard in the southwest corner that was under-used. LAUSD has contributed to the schoolyard habitat project with the removal of asphalt from the site, as well as safety soil testing. While the soil was being tested, LAAS undertook to seed the site with native erosion control species in December, 2015 in advance of the potential el Niño rains. Pathways were installed in October 2016 and planting and seeding was accomplished in early November 2016.

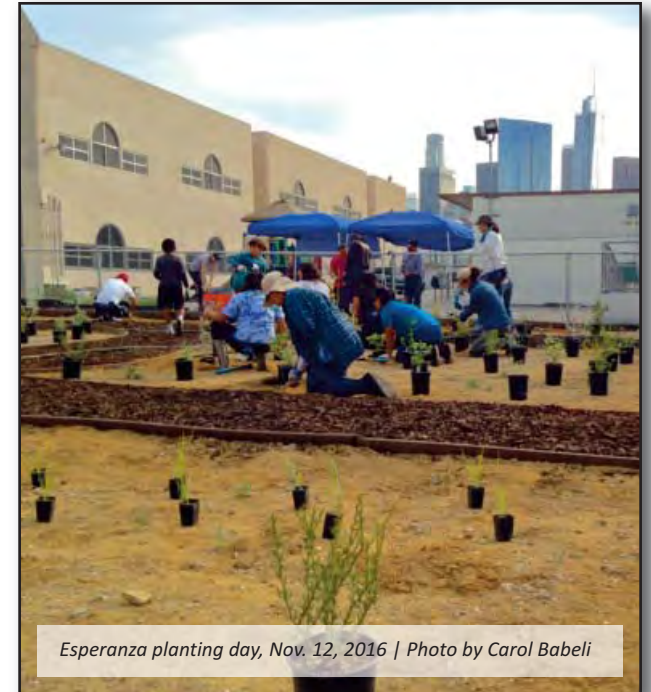
Our Restoration Leaders began developing curricula this past summer and engaged with Esperanza students from the beginning of the process. Restoration Leaders are focusing the curricula on urban water management and water conservation based on the location and slight slope of the habitat area. We used the slight slope of the site to capture

runoff from the adjacent hardscape in a series of native plant bioswales.

The Esperanza habitat will be evaluated and measured over time factoring plant & habitat development, growth, species count, etc. The schoolyard habitat program is directly tied to the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Restoration Leaders program, so curricula development, student mentoring, and data tracking development of the habitat will be ongoing. Under the Restoration Leaders' mentorship, Esperanza students will create a record of work to be shared year to year. It is important to note that one of our current Restoration Leaders became interested in ecology as a 3rd grader at Leo Politi Elementary. As a high school student, he applied to the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program based on his earlier experiences. He is being mentored by former Restoration Leaders who are now LAAS staff, having returned to Los Angeles after college. We are very fortunate to have home-grown urban ecologists working in our education and conservation programs.

LAAS will track program success by documenting plant establishment and resiliency, based on photo documentation of the site and annual maintenance hours. This metric is considered successful when maintenance is only required once per year with a parents/students workday. Our first schoolyard habitat reached this metric within year 5. Based on native habitat restoration timelines, five years is the earliest that most sites can be considered established and resilient.

We will also track the number of curricula developed by Restoration Leaders based on state science education standards, Common Core, and Next Generation Science Standards to teach elementary school students in the habitat. We have established that between 2 – 4 new curricula modules can be developed and implemented each year.



Esperanza planting day, Nov. 12, 2016 | Photo by Carol Babeli



Esperanza planting day, Dec. 16, 2016 | Photo by Carol Babeli

We rely on the school administration to provide the proficiency levels on the State science test scores (measured at fifth grade level) that can be an indirect indication of success of a school-yard habitat. The science test scores at Leo Politi Elementary were at 9% in 2009, prior to the school-yard habitat implementation, and since implementation the scores showed a three year running average at 50% proficient.

UCLA's Philanthropy as Civic Engagement class provided funding for our Restoration Leaders and staff to work with teachers, students and parents to design and initiate the creation of the habitat, and to develop specific curricula designed especially for the habitat as it is created and develops. A grant from US Fish and Wildlife Service provided funding for materials, including pathway boarders and mulch, plants, and the temporary irrigation system.

Update: On November 12, 2016, our high school Restoration Leaders, working with Principal Rumble, brought together students, parents and community to complete the installation of native plants at the new schoolyard habitat at Esperanza. Just weeks later, an Esperanza Elementary student spotted a Burrowing Owl examining the new habitat! Creating habitat for wildlife and utilizing that space for experiential learning is what our schoolyard habitat program is all about!

Read more about the Esperanza owl in the SoCal Wild article by Brenda Rees: <http://www.socalwild.com/2016/12/burrowing-owl-delights-students-staff-at-urban-school/1816/> 🦉



Burrowing Owl at Esperanza Elementary School, Photo by Brad Rumble

YOUNG BIRDERS

Lost Migrants in Los Angeles County — Highlights of my 2016 Birding Year

Dessi Sieburth

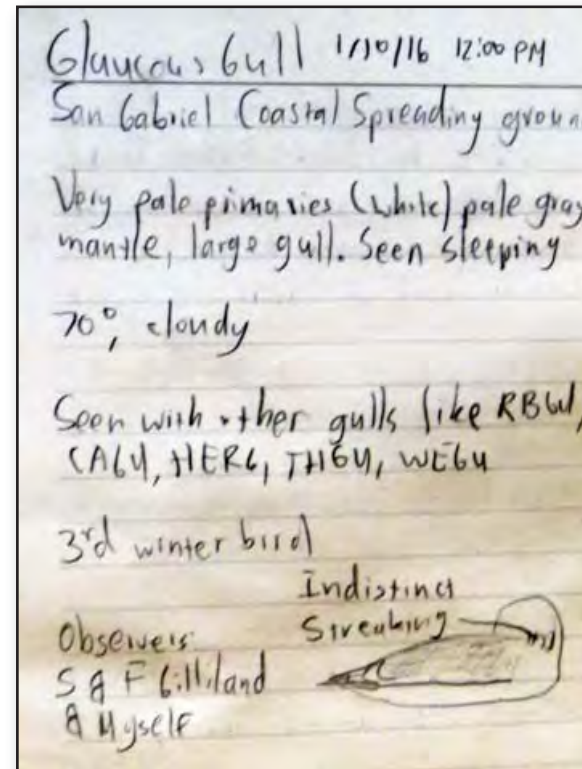
MANY BIRDS MIGRATE HUNDREDS OR EVEN THOUSANDS OF MILES. THEY MIGRATE FROM AREAS WITH low food supply and harsh weather to areas where food and nesting sites are available. Scientists believe birds use the sun, the stars, and the earth's magnetic field to navigate, but exactly how birds find their way remains a mystery. Occasionally, migrating birds can lose their way and can be found outside their normal range. These "rarities" delight many birders, as it gives them the opportunity to observe birds they typically do not see in their region. A variety of interesting and unusual birds who lose their way or wander from their usual areas show up in Los Angeles County every year. This year, the best hotspots for those rarities were the San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers, Piute

Ponds in Lancaster, DeForest Park in Long Beach, and Madrona Marsh in Torrance.

This year, the San Gabriel Spreading Grounds in Pico Rivera was a particularly interesting place, where many unexpected birds, especially gulls, showed up. In January, a third-year Glaucous Gull was spotted at the spreading grounds. When I saw it, it was mixed in with hundreds of other gulls. Although it was sleeping, it could be identified by its overall paleness, especially on the mantle and the primaries. Glaucous Gulls are usually found in winter in the Northwestern United States, and in summer, they are found in the high arctic. An even more rare gull was found at the Spreading Grounds in March, an adult Yellow-footed Gull. It was the first Yellow-footed Gull seen in Los Angeles County.



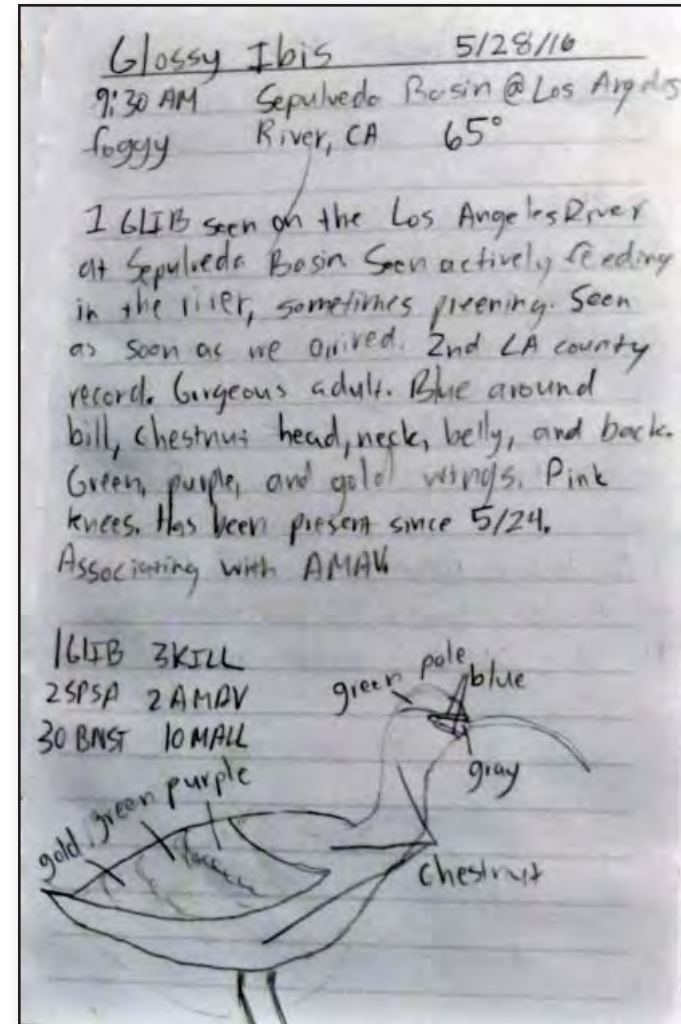
A Stilt Sandpiper was one of the lost migrants that showed up in Los Angeles County this year



Field notes of the Glaucous Gull



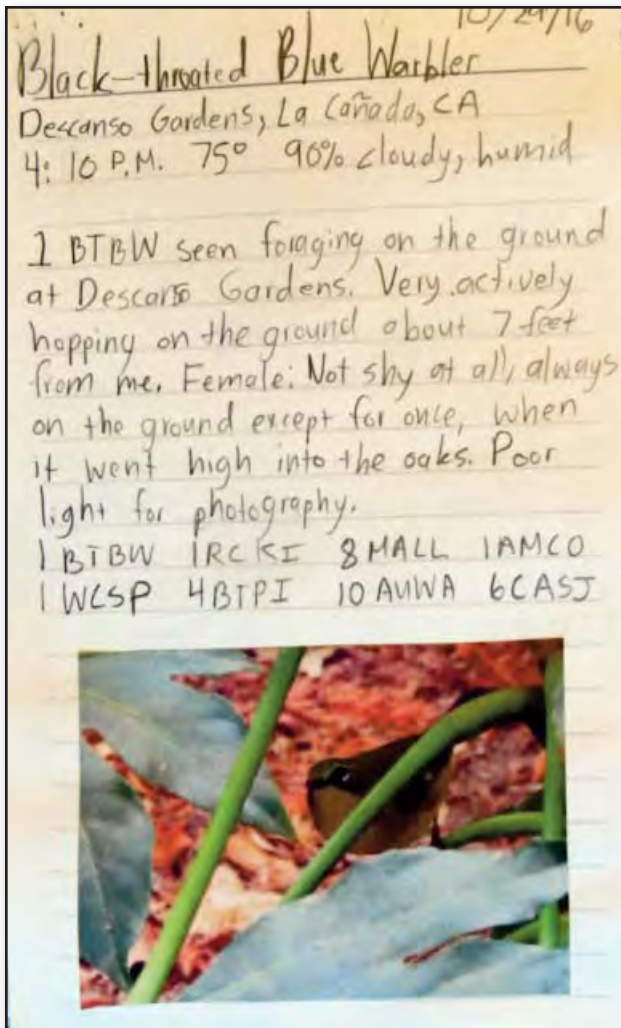
Glossy Ibis at the Los Angeles River at the Sepulveda Basin on May 28th, 2016



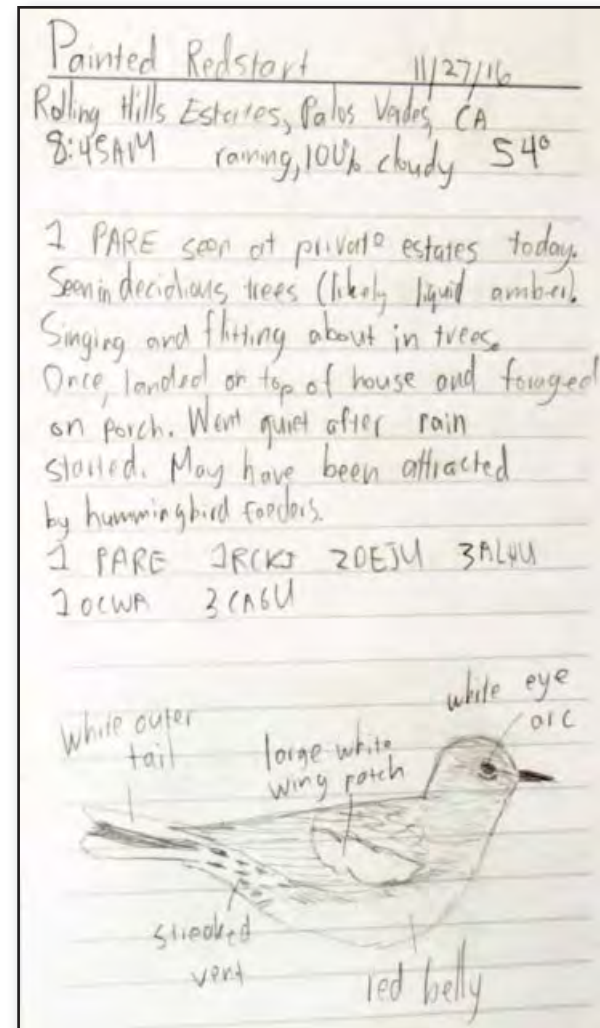
Field notes of the Glossy Ibis

Even though it was surrounded by thousands of other gulls, I found the large size and yellow feet distinctive compared to the other gulls. The Yellow-footed Gull is usually found at the Salton Sea and at the Gulf of California. One reason that Yellow-footed Gulls are so rare in Los Angeles County may be that they only migrate a short distance between the Salton Sea and the Gulf of California, and therefore, they are less likely to get lost during migration.

In May, a beautiful Glossy Ibis in full breeding plumage was spotted along the Los Angeles River at the Sepulveda Basin. When I saw it, it was feeding on small mussels in the river. At a first glance, it looked like a White-faced Ibis, but then I noticed the pale blue lines between the eye and the bill, which are field marks of the Glossy Ibis. This bird is normally found along the Gulf Coast, and there are only two records for Los Angeles County.



Field notes of Black-throated Blue Warbler



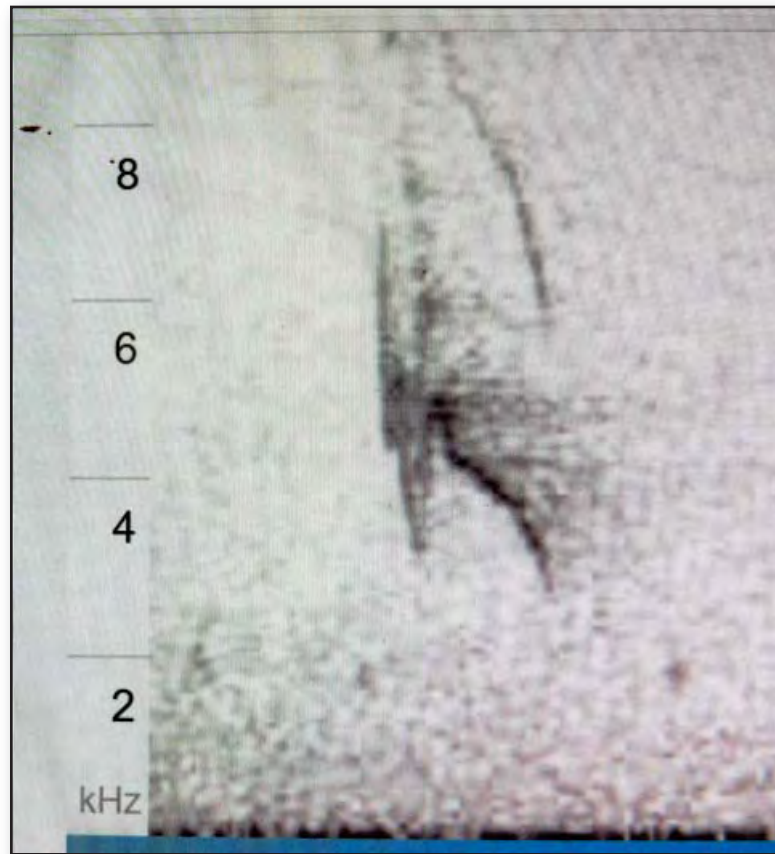
Field notes of Painted Redstart

This fall, many rare eastern warblers were found in Los Angeles County, including Prairie Warbler at Madrona Marsh in Torrance, Blackpoll Warbler at Deforest Park in Long Beach, Tennessee Warbler at the Hahamongna Watershed Park in La Canada Flintridge, Chestnut-sided Warbler at Tierra Bonita Park in Lancaster, and Magnolia Warbler at Monte Verde Park in Lakewood. My favorite warbler was a female Black-throated Blue Warbler that was reported in October at Descanso Gardens in La Canada Flintridge. It stayed at Descanso Gardens for a week, where it delighted many birders. When I located the bird it was foraging on the ground looking for insects. I was able to get a very good look at this bird, as it was not shy at all and stayed about seven feet from me. I identified it by its white wing patch and white supercilium. The Black-throated Blue Warbler can be usually found in the eastern United States in the summer, and it migrates down to the Caribbean in winter. In November, a Painted Redstart was reported at a private residence in Palos Verdes. When I was looking for this bird, it was calling, which made it easy to locate. Since it was vocalizing, I was able to get a recording. It was also easily identifiable by its red belly and its large white wing patch. The warbler was foraging for insects in a tree and on the porch of a building. The Painted Redstart breeds in Arizona and winters in western Mexico. Interestingly, many of the rare warblers are juvenile birds and are found in the fall. These birds are more likely to get lost, as this is their first migration.

During August, a breeding plumage adult Stilt Sandpiper was reported at Piute Ponds in Lancaster. When I saw it, it was preening in the water and hiding among 150 dowitchers. I identified it by its dark barring on the belly and decurved bill. This species breeds in the Arctic and migrates down to Mexico for the winter, passing through the Midwest. In November a juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was reported along the Los Angeles River at Willow Street in Long Beach. It was only the second Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in the county in over 30 years. When I saw this bird it was sleeping in some vegetation and I had to be patient to get a good look at this bird. Eventually it flew off near a large group of dowitchers, and I was able to see its field marks. I identified it by its buffy, streaky breast. This bird breeds in the Russian Far East and winters in Australia and New Zealand.

Interestingly, many of the rare birds found in the fall are juveniles. Juvenile birds are more likely to get lost, as this is their first migration. However, some adult birds get lost as well. Birds might get confused because of poor weather conditions. Storms and fog might obscure the moon and stars, which birds use to navigate. Birds might also use habitat as a clue to find their way. Much habitat is altered or destroyed, which may contribute to birds getting lost. Our knowledge of bird migration is still very limited, and much research on why birds get lost on their migration journey is needed.

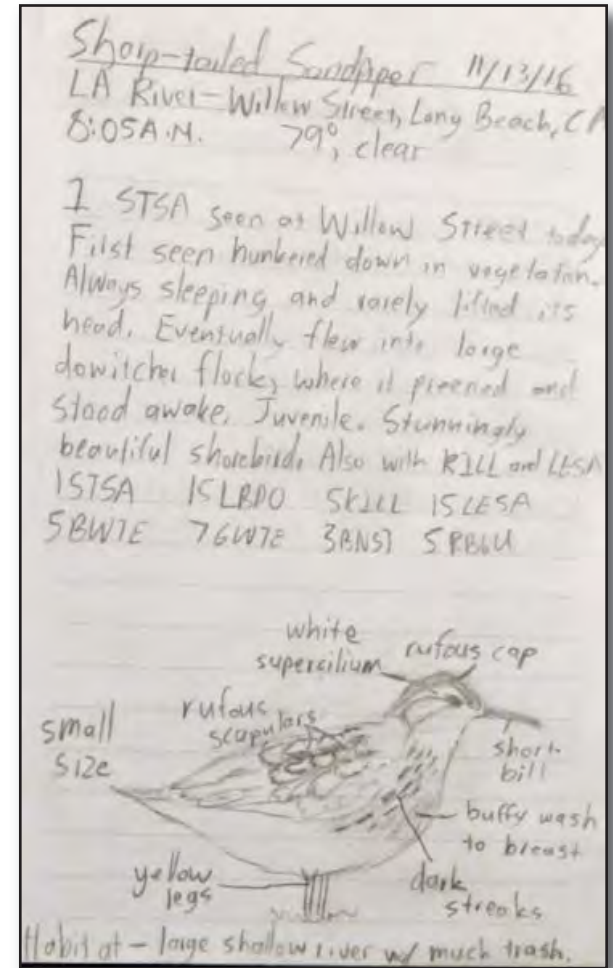
It is always exciting to see and study rare birds. Birders can be part of citizen science and submit their sightings to eBird, an online data base used by scientists to study birds. Thousands of birders across the continent enter their sightings every year.



Sonogram of Painted Redstart call, to listen go to <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checkList/S32755333>

These data help to monitor birds and changes in bird populations. eBird also helps conservationists, who can use the data to identify which species need help and determine whether their efforts are successful. I submit my sightings to eBird, but I also keep my field note book, where I record more detailed information about the birds. Recording bird sounds is also important because scientist can use the recordings to study birds. Birders can upload recordings on eBird as well. The more we learn about birds, the better we can protect them.

Drawings, photo and field notes by Dessi Sieburth,
<http://protectingourbirds.my-free.website/>



Field notes about the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

BIRDS OF THE SEASON

December 2016

by Jon Fisher



WHAT IS IT THAT MOTIVATES BIRDERS TO rise before dawn, drive many miles and brave all kinds of weather to look for feathered creatures? The answer isn't a short one. Birds are aesthetically pleasing, their behavior is fascinating, the chance of finding a vagrant is tantalizing and they offer a very real connection to nature... there are many reasons.

Another is that while some things remain the same, every season offers something different. With that in mind, it's hard to deny the appeal of spring and fall migration. Now as autumn comes to a close, we can look back at a very respectable list of birds. The sheer volume of notes to be transcribed for this month's column attested to this having been a productive period.

A wide variety of vagrants in the low to mid-range were recorded, with a couple of high end rarities adding some excitement. Irruptive species have essentially been absent this fall, although a few Lewis's Woodpeckers and Varied Thrushes were noted as were an above average number of Mountain Bluebirds on the coastal slope.

Although the unfortunate fact is that birds in general are declining, it seems we continue to detect more vagrants and add new county birds. In most cases this is due to the increased number of observers and coverage in Los Angeles County, rather than an actual increase in the numbers of rare birds.

It's hard to imagine that not all that long ago a once weekly recorded RBA tape was the only link many birders had to finding out about rarities. There's been little to match the revolutionary effects that the internet and mobile devices have had on birding. Today dozens of birders can converge on a newly discovered vagrant within hours or even minutes. Other advances in technology meant that most rarities were also documented with photos... rare is the birder today who does not carry a camera.

A **Tundra Swan** was at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB from December 9-12 (Jon Feenstra) and three more presumed **Tundra Swans**—not seen well enough to conclusively eliminate other species—were at Quail Lake near Gorman on December 11 (David Bell).

Unusual inland were five **Surf Scoters** at Castaic Lagoon on October 22 (Yvonne Burch-Hartley). Up to four female **Black Scoters** were off Dockweiler State Beach in El Segundo from November 18-December 9 (Richard Barth) and two **White-winged Scoters** were there on December 9, with three there on December 13 (all Richard Barth).

Rare inland was a **Long-tailed Duck** at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB from December 9-12 (Jon Feenstra), with two present there on December 10 (Mark & Janet Scheel).

Common Ground-Doves were in Long Beach on October 23 (Becky Turley) and at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on October 28, while **White-**

winged Doves were in San Pedro from November 27-30 (David Ellsworth) and in Mission Hills on November 28 (Rachel MacNutt).

Very unusual in the county was a **Sandhill Crane** in the east Antelope Valley on November 19 (Jun Wu, Bin Cao). Those that do occur are typically lone individuals that do not linger.

A **Mountain Plover**—expected in the Antelope Valley in fall and winter but rare coastally—turned up at Malibu Lagoon on October 23 (Jon Fisher).

Hansen Dam near Lake View Terrace hosted a **Solitary Sandpiper** on October 16 (Kimball Garrett).

A great find was a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** on the Los Angeles River in Long Beach from November 15-21 (Bob Schallman). This species, which breeds in coastal Siberia and winters in the South Pacific, has occurred over two dozen times in the state, but very few of those have occurred in LA County. In fact this was the first solidly documented record for the county in thirty-four years, although a probable Sharp-tailed was at Malibu Lagoon in September, 2015.

Adding to the above average number of reports of **Sabine's Gulls** this fall was one at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB on October 31 (multiple observers). The San Gabriel Coastal Basin Spreading Grounds in Pico Rivera has been very productive for gulls both

common and rare the past few winters. Kicking things off this season was a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** there from December 4-7 (Andrew Lee).

Scarce in LA County waters was a **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** at Thirty Mile Bank on October 21 (Laura Keene).

American Bitterns were at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on December 10 (Darren Dowell) and at the Piute Ponds on December 10 (Jim Moore). An immature **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** continued through November 1 at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh, one of several in that general area over the past year and a half.

Late was a **Swainson's Hawk** at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on November 6 (Rod Higbie). Later still were two were at the West San Gabriel River Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood on November 18 (Linda LeRoy) and one at the Sepulveda Basin in Van Nuys on November 15 (Mike Stensvold, Kate Rogowski).

Pockets of habitat remain on the coastal slope that can support transient or wintering **Burrowing Owls**. Single birds were at the Rio Hondo Spreading Basins in Pico Rivera on October 16 (Larry Schmah), at LAX on October 29 and apparently present for several weeks prior (Alex Viduetsky), at the Ballona Salt Pan on November 4 (Jonathan Coffin) and at Esperanza Middle School in Los Angeles from November 29-December 2 (Brad Rumble).

A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles from November 19-December 10 was the only one recorded thus far (Bruce Aird, Jeff Bray, Steve Sosensky).

Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale had a **Prairie Falcon** on October 22 (Luke Tiller) and again on November 26 (Alex Viduetsky). A rare "Prairie" **Merlin** of the subspecies *richardsoni* was in the east Antelope Valley on November 20 (Luke Tiller).

Lingering and potentially wintering **Pacific-slope Flycatchers** were at William Andrews Clark Library in Los Angeles from November 22-30 (Rebecca Marshall), at the West SGR Parkway Nature Trail on December 3 (Andrew Lee) and at Creek Park in La Mirada on December 4 (Tom Miko).

Eastern Phoebes were recorded at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia on October 26 (Ed Stonick), at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas from November 12-December 13 (Michael San Miguel) and at Madrona Marsh in Torrance from November 15-December 13 (Tracy Drake).

Returning as of December 1 for its ninth winter at Creek Park in La Mirada was a **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** (Jonathan Rowley). It was reported through December 10.

Late **Ash-throated Flycatchers** were at Madrona Marsh in Torrance through December 13, at the Rancho Sierra Golf Club on October 30 (David Bell) and along the San Gabriel River in Pico Rivera on November 25 (Larry Schmah).

Tropical Kingbirds were at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh from October 22-23 (Dean Schaff, Barbara Johnson), at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on October 29 (Kathy Duret) and at the Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area in Willowbrook from November 6-December 5 (Richard Barth).

Horsethief Canyon Park in San Dimas hosted a **Thick-billed Kingbird** back for its third winter as of October 31 (Eric Smith Jr.). It was reported through November 21, but has at times proved difficult to find. Vagrants of this species in California have been noteworthy for their fidelity to wintering sites and for the number of years they've returned to those locations.

Late or potentially wintering **Western Kingbirds** were at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas through November 6 and at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on November 6 (Candice Byers).

Rather scarce on the coastal slope were thirty-eight **Horned Larks** at Brackett Field in La Verne on December 11 (Michael San Miguel Jr.)

The county's second ever **Cave Swallow** was found at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on November 30 and seen again on December 1 (Jon Feenstra), almost a year to the day after the first was recorded. Just one record in 1987 and two from 1995 had been accepted for the state until recently. There have been over a dozen found in the last decade, with nearly all of these being from the south end of the Salton Sea. Bearing in mind that Cliff Swallows are quite rare after September, any *Petrochelidon* swallow from October to early January should be carefully scrutinized.

Noteworthy was a **Verdin** found at White Point Nature Preserve in San Pedro on October 16, where it continued through November 25 (Jun Wu, Bin Cao). There are a very few records of this desert species on the coastal slope.

Pacific Wrens were found near the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in Claremont on October 19 (Dan Guthrie) and in Big Santa Anita Canyon above Arcadia on November 23 (Darren Dowell).

Greater than average number of **Mountain Bluebirds** were found on the coastal slope, but thirteen at Brackett Field in La Verne on December 11 (Martha Estes, Michael San Miguel Jr.) and thirty-eight there the following day (Rod Higbie) were notable high counts. Rather late was a **Swainson's Thrush** found at Arcadia County Park on October 20 (Luke Tiller).

A **Gray Catbird** was at the Piute Ponds on October 25 (Joe Lepisto). Another returned for a second winter to the WSGR Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood as of November 2, with an apparent second bird found at the south end of the park that same day (Cuyler Staplemann, Joyce Brady, Sandy Remley). While the second was not seen again, the returning bird remained around the north end of the park through December 12.

A likely continuing **Red-throated Pipit** was on San Clemente Island through October 14 (Justyn Stahl).

Single **Lapland Longspurs** were in the east Antelope Valley from October 22-23 (Andrew Lee) and again from November 11-13 (Tom Miko, Rick Fisher). A **Chestnut-collared Longspur** was at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on October 22 (Luke Tiller), where they have been almost regular in the past few years. Longspurs are certainly scarce in the county, but an aggressive census of suitable habitat would likely reveal they are more plentiful than records suggest.

Warblers were well represented. A **Northern Waterthrush** at the Wilmington Drain in Harbor City on October 25 was the only one reported for the period (Philip Carnehl).

About ten **Black-and-white Warblers** recorded from mid-October through mid-December was an expected number.

Tennessee Warblers included one at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on October 20, with either the same individual or a new one there on October 27 (Jun Wu, Bin Cao) and one on San Clemente Island on October 27 (Joel Throckmorton).

A **Lucy's Warbler** was at DeForest Park in Long Beach on November 5 (Jun Wu, Bin Cao) and several late **Nashville Warblers** were found on the coastal slope from November 2 and 25.

A **Northern Parula** was on San Clemente Island on October 20 (Justyn Stahl) and **Magnolia Warblers** were at the West SGR Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood from October 22-November 7 (Becky Turley) and on San Clemente Island from October 23-November 2 (Nicole DesNoyers).

Also on San Clemente Island was a **Black-burnian Warbler** on October 25 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole DesNoyers). **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were in San Gabriel on November 8 (Norm Vargas) and at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles from November 13-26 (Don Sterba).

Descanso Gardens in La Canada hosted a **Black-throated Blue Warbler** from October 27-November 11 (Kathy Duret) and about a dozen **Palm Warblers**—one of our more regular "vagrant" warblers—were recorded over the

period, all on the coastal slope.

Always a nice find in the county was a **Yellow-throated Warbler** at the Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area in Willowbrook from December 3-6 (Chris Dean).

A rare **Prairie Warbler** was at Madrona Marsh in Torrance from November 3-10 (Mark Rubke) and a **Black-throated Green Warbler** was in the east Antelope Valley near 117th Street East and Ave. I on October 30 (Mark & Janet Scheel, Luke Tiller, David Bell).

Ever productive San Clemente Island produced a very rare **Canada Warbler** on October 26 (Joel Throckmorton), the second recorded in the county this fall.

A **Painted Redstart** was found in Palos Verdes Estates from November 25-29, and was reportedly present since at least November 18 (Joe Usiewicz).

Green-tailed Towhees were at the West SGR Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood from October 21-December 12 (Joyce Brady), at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on November 1 (Darren Dowell) and in Santa Monica on November 20 (Conley Day).

The only **Black-throated Sparrow** reported on the coastal slope was on San Clemente Island on October 22 (Nicole DesNoyers).

A **Lark Bunting** was at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale from November 25-27 was a nice find (Jun Wu, Bin Cao).

Grasshopper Sparrows, rare as migrants and winter visitors, were at Vina Vieja Park in Pasadena from November 8-10 (Luke Tiller) and at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on November 28 (Brittany O'Connor, Becky & Steve Turley).

“**Red**” **Fox Sparrows** were at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on November 12 (Bill Figueroa) and at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on November 27 (Darren Dowell).

Swamp Sparrows turned up at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas from November 12-December 3 (Michael San Miguel), at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on November 26 (Tom Miko, Chris Dean) and along the Playa Vista Riparian Corridor on December 12 (Kevin Lapp).

Clay-colored Sparrows were at Vina Vieja Park in Pasadena from October 12-13 (Luke Tiller), continuing at Madrona Marsh in Torrance through November 21, at Oak Park Cemetery in Claremont from November 1-December 9 (Michael San Miguel Jr.) at Peck Road WCP in Arcadia on November 4 (Darren Dowell) and at the West SGR Parkway Nature Trail on December 3 (Andrew Lee).

Eleven **White-throated Sparrows** were recorded during the period while a rare **Harris’s Sparrow** was at a residence in Rolling Hills on the Palos Verdes Peninsula from November 15-17 (Jim Aichele, Kathy Nichols).

Expected on the deserts in spring but rare elsewhere in the county were dark-lore

White-crowned Sparrows at Vina Vieja Park in Pasadena on October 31 (Luke Tiller) and at the Rancho Sierra Golf Club in the east Antelope Valley on November 20 (David Bell).

Identifiable subspecies- particularly rare ones- are always worth identifying. Falling into both of those categories were **Dark-eyed “Gray-headed” Juncos** at Sunset Peak Saddle north of Claremont on October 29 (Catherine McFadden) and at Grassy Hollow Picnic

Area near Wrightwood on November 6 (Vern Benhart, Mark & Janet Scheel).

Summer Tanagers were at the Bette Davis Picnic Area in Glendale on October 25 (Richard Barth), on San Clemente Island from October 25-26 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole DesNoyers), at Malaga Dunes on the PVP on October 27 (Philip Carnehl) and at American Gold Star Manor in Long Beach on November 22 (Richard Barth).

Late Cardinalids included a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** in the Los Feliz area on December 8 (Andy Birch), **Black-headed Grosbeaks** in Pasadena on October 15 and at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on October 26 (both Darren Dowell) and a **Blue Grosbeak** at the WSGR Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood on November 13 (Tom Wurster). Also late were **Lazuli Buntings** at Vina Vieja Park in Pasadena from October 12-18 (Luke Tiller) and in La Canada on October 22. Of greater interest to county listers was a **Dickcissel** at the West SGR Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood from October 23-24 (Mark & Janet Scheel).

A late **Bobolink**—probably a lingering bird—was at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia through November 4 (Darren Dowell).

Several late and potentially wintering **Hooded Orioles** were found on the coastal slope. **Baltimore Orioles** included one at Chavez Ravine in Elysian Park in Los Angeles on October 15 (Ron Cyger), one at Holmby Park on October 23 (Rebecca Marshall) and two at Creek Park in La Mirada on December 11 (Julie Szabo, Cathy Wisel). Rounding this group out was an adult male **Scott’s Oriole** in Glendora on December 4 (Michael Peralez).

Autumn comes late to southern California. We’re well into December and trees are still dropping their leaves. Winter has hardly begun when the start of spring migration us upon us. Early spring arrivals will start moving through in January, but occupying our time until then shouldn’t be difficult.

Coastal spots offer a wide variety, from winter waterfowl, a mix of shore and land birds and the opportunity to spot pelagic species that wander close to shore. Our many parks and recreation areas host plenty of common resident and wintering birds and always the chance for a rare one or two.

The Antelope Valley and environs are worth a visit any time of year, although wintering specialties—Mountain Plovers, Ferruginous Hawks, Mountain Bluebirds and possible longspurs—are especially appealing.

Quail Lake and other interior deep water reservoirs such as Pyramid Lake and Castaic Lake and Lagoon are deserving of coverage. Also, where accessible, the LA Aqueduct in the Antelope Valley hosts wintering waterfowl and is little birded.

Though getting to them may sometimes be problematic, a shortage of places to bird is not an issue in LA County. Even close to home, birders have proven that small local patches are deserving of attention. Finding your own nearby spot or “patch” and covering it regularly has many rewards, in addition to saving gas and driving time. 🐦

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON'S BALLONA WETLANDS DOCENT RECEIVES DISNEY CONSERVATION HERO AWARD



Los Angeles Audubon is excited to share the news that Emily Reed has been honored with a Conservation Hero Award from the Disney Conservation Fund. This award recognizes local people for their commitment to reversing the decline of wildlife and engaging communities in conservation.. Recipients from around the world were nominated by nonprofit environmental organizations, and each honoree and his or her nominating organization will share a \$1,500 award from the fund.

Los Angeles Audubon Education Director, Cindy Hardin said, "Emily Reed first visited the Ballona Wetlands on a school field trip as a teacher with El Rancho School District. While on this trip she saw firsthand that it was an important and relevant learning experience for her second grade students. After retiring from a 30-year teaching career, Emily enrolled in Los Angeles Audubon's docent training program at Ballona. Emily's teaching experience gives her unique insight to the needs and challenges of the teachers who bring more than 2500 students to Ballona each year. Emily is an exemplary nature docent educating students about the importance of

wetlands as habitat, migratory bird resting areas, and the environmental services that wetlands provide. We are so grateful to Emily and to all of our volunteer docents who are connecting underserved youth to the wonders of nature."

The Disney Conservation Fund focuses on reversing the decline of wildlife and increasing the time kids spend in nature. Since 2004, Disney has honored more than 100 Conservation Heroes from around the world for their extraordinary conservation efforts.

For information on Disney's commitment to conserve nature and a complete list of 2016 Conservation Hero Award recipients, visit Disney.com/Conservation.

For more information about Los Angeles Audubon and ways to get involved in environmental stewardship, visit www.laaudubon.org 🐾

HUMMINGBIRD RESCUE: A TRUE STORY

Cindy Hardin, Director of Outdoor Education & Volunteer Coordinator

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD HAS ABUNDANT TREE CANOPY, AND IS ADJACENT TO LOTS OF OPEN, undeveloped spaces, including the Ballona Wetlands. We see all kinds of bird species, raccoons, possums and the occasional coyote on a regular basis. This “urban wildlife” is a constant source of fascination for me and my husband, Jonathan. Large trees can be seen through every window of our home. And each spring, the view from our kitchen is a veritable wildlife show, as we have a hummingbird that nests in a tree around six feet from the window near our breakfast table. We start watching for her to return at the beginning of February. We love to observe her busily flitting about, making repairs and improvements to last year’s nest.

Soon, she is perched on her masterpiece, and we know that another clutch will be poking tiny little beaks upward, waiting for a meal. We peer into the nest from the window, watching as their bald little bodies start to sprout feathers, and their eyes begin to open. A little more time passes, and the nest suddenly seems impossibly small for two birds. This is when things start to get dicey. The two siblings start to vie for space, shifting and nudging each other. Jonathan is always particularly concerned that one will fall from the nest at this stage. I assure him that they will be fine. This year I was proved wrong.

Our little hummer sometimes manages to produce two rounds of offspring, as was the case this year. All went well with the first pair of chicks, and we watched them fledge in March. Then, in early May, she was on the nest again. By the end of the month, two more chicks were rapidly maturing, and things began looking a little crowded. Early on Sunday morning of Memorial Day weekend, I looked out the window and saw only one chick! I held my breath and looked to the concrete sidewalk below. Jonathan’s worst fears were realized; the other chick was down on the ground. I ran out to assess the situation, and found her to be inert. I picked her up, and still no movement. She was resting in the palm of my hand, and could not have weighed more than a gram. I remembered reading that hummingbirds can go into a torpor state when it is cold, so I cupped my hands and breathed on the little creature. She started moving! I called to Jonathan to come around and bring our step ladder. As he is much taller than I, I handed the chick to



Hummingbird on nest

him. He clambered up the stepladder and positioned her on the nest, but was unable to get her in there securely. Her sibling had taken advantage of the sudden expansion of his home, and our stepladder was just a little too short to fit her into the nest. Bam-she fell to the ground again! Now it was my turn to try. With Jonathan acting as my spotter, I stood on tippy toes and managed to get her a little more securely on the nest, but things were still precarious.

We went back into the house to observe through the window, as by this time the mother hummingbird was frantically buzzing around us as we were bumbling about with her progeny. I turned to Jonathan and said “We need a ladder”. He agreed, but pointed out that as it was 7 am on the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend, our chances of finding a neighbor available to lend us a ladder were slim to none. Meanwhile,

the poor little nestling was laid out on the edge of the nest, in danger of tumbling down once again.

I refused to be deterred in my quest for a ladder. I knew that a neighbor down the way was a handyman; surely he would have a ladder. The catch was that I would need to wake him in order to borrow said ladder. Then I remembered: the vacant condo across the alley was being remodeled, and their balcony was low enough for me to “access” the unit. Perhaps the sliding glass door would be open! And yes, I was contemplating breaking and entering, but for a good cause . . .

I approached the balcony, and lo and behold, the sliding glass door was open, and the construction workers were on the job! I explained the crisis in my broken Spanish, and before I stumbled through my story a ladder was being handed down to me. Back down the side of the building I went, and to my disbelieving husband I said “I got a ladder!”. I climbed up to the nest, and carefully positioned the chick more securely, greatly upsetting her sibling. Once again, the mother hummingbird was frantically flying about, observing my ministrations.

I returned the ladder, and hustled back inside in hopes of calming down the mother. We watched with bated breath all through breakfast. Within an hour, the parent was back, and trying to feed the chicks. They both responded, and by mid-day the little tumbler had made her way back into the interior of the nest. Within a week, the two were perched on the sides of their now way too small home, practicing with all their might the wing movements needed for flying. And then . . . they were gone.

Interestingly, after this dramatic morning, the behavior of the female changed markedly. In previous years, she has completely ignored us. After Operation Hummingbird Rescue, she would fly right up to window and flutter her wings every time that she saw me. She would actually come to my eye level and look directly at me! And last week, after not seeing her all summer and fall, she was outside the kitchen window, looking at me again.

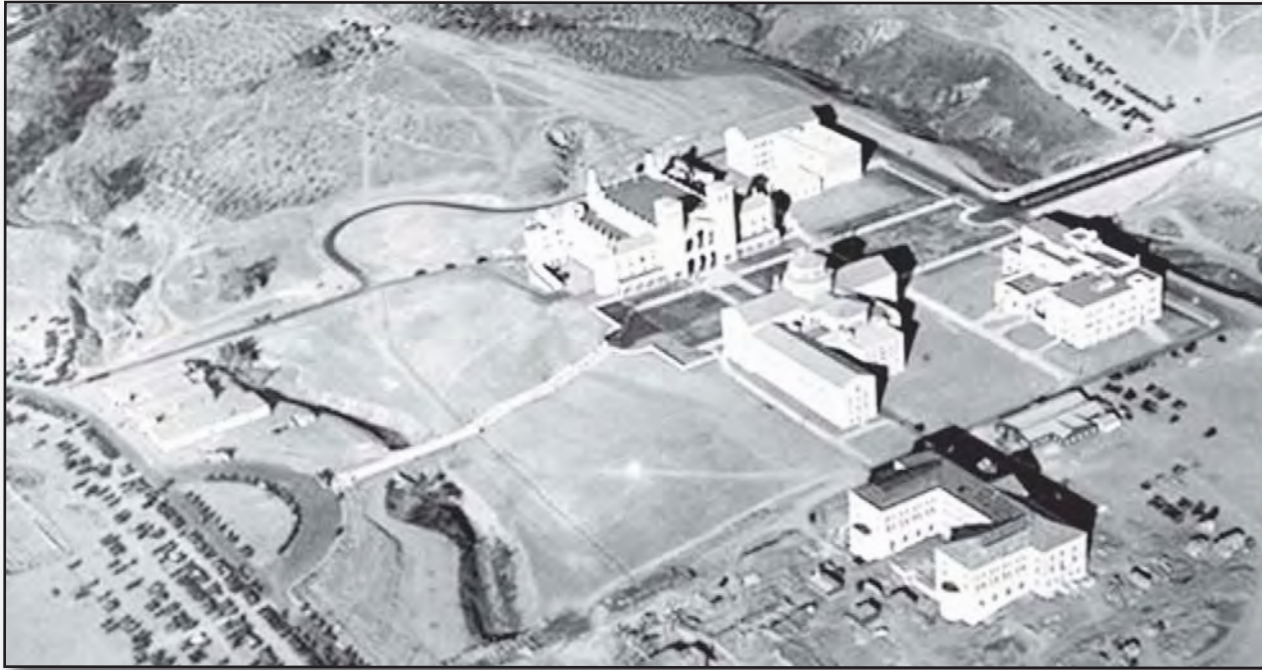
We are hopeful that she will choose to re-build the nest and bear another brood in the next few months. I like to think that she knows we are supportive of her efforts!



I know that many of you have probably heard that if you touch the young of a nesting bird she will abandon the nest. Prior to last year's nesting season I had read that this is false, and that if one finds a fallen nestling one should try to return it to the nest. Had I not read this article, I would have been more hesitant to attempt to save this tiny little creature. With nesting season fast approaching, I encourage all to be aware of possible new life in your neighborhood. If you do run across a situation where a baby bird has fallen, make the attempt to return it to its nest if you can do so safely. Who knows-you might make a new friend in the form of a mother bird! 🐦

NINETY YEARS OF CHANGE IN THE BIRD COMMUNITY OF THE UCLA CAMPUS

Richard W. Hedley, Samuel A. Bressler, Sidhaant Shah, Jeffrey G-H. Lee, Ryan J. Harrigan



UCLA Campus in 1929

ON OCTOBER 25, 1926, DR. LOYE MILLER gazed skyward, his eyes straining to make out the pale figure slicing effortlessly through the air overhead. Miller was quick to identify the bird as a Prairie Falcon as he sat amongst the crowd at the dedication ceremony for the new UCLA campus. Not only was he an avid birder, Miller would soon begin as a biology professor at the Westwood campus, where he would quickly establish himself as an expert on birds of the Pleistocene era. Though his primary research subjects were extinct, Miller also took great interest in the living inhabitants – what he liked to call the “wild folk” – of campus. He eventually published a book documenting the bird species he

had seen on campus over the course of his tenure – one that began when the campus was nothing more than an island of four buildings amidst a vast ocean of agricultural fields and coastal chaparral.

“The Birds of Campus”, now out-of-print but available for free online, was published by the University of California Press in 1947. In it, Miller documented the avifauna of the campus with a poeticism absent from today’s scientific writings, providing insights into not only the occurrence of a species, but also its abundance on campus. Using this work as impetus, a team of bird enthusiasts – including several UCLA undergraduate students, graduate stu-

dents and staff – has re-surveyed the birds of UCLA over the course of the past year and a half, referring to Miller’s book to identify the most notable changes in the bird community over the decades.

What we found was striking. Changes to the campus avifauna have been both significant and numerous. The most obvious difference between the current and historical bird communities has been the complete disappearance of many chaparral-specialist birds over the past 90 years. For instance, Miller recounted the experience of watching a Greater Roadrunner saunter across the hood of a parked car (likely a full-bodied Pontiac or Mercury!), remarking that this member of the cuckoo family surprised him by its “high degree of adaptability” to human presence, and noting that they appeared to have increased in number since his arrival on campus. This apparent adaptation was temporary, however, as this charismatic species soon vanished from campus. Gone, too, are the California Quails, Wrentits, California Thrashers, and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers that once thrived in the tangled shrubbery that was characteristic of the chaparral vegetation on campus. Gone are the Horned Larks, Burrowing Owls, American Kestrels, and Loggerhead Shrikes that scoured the open agricultural fields for food.

In total, our surveys identified more than a dozen species of birds that were previously common and have since vanished altogether from campus (Box 1). Several others have declined to a fraction of their former abundance. A single flock of Mourning Doves seen in 1944,

Species that have changed in abundance on UCLA campus, 1926-2016



Box 1

for instance, was estimated to contain 370 birds – today, a walk around campus may reveal fewer than five individuals of this species. White-crowned Sparrows, too, were once numerous, their arrival from migration in September being so abrupt that “by October, they are everywhere about the campus – wherever a little massed shrubbery offers them retreat if danger threatens”. In stark contrast to Miller’s observations, this species was represented by only a handful of individuals in our surveys.

Though these declines are certainly alarming, not all species have suffered concomitantly with campus development – some, in fact, have flourished (Box 1). Above the bustling crowds of students, the harsh caws of American Crows and the croaks of Common Ravens now fill the skies on a daily basis,

whereas before these species were only occasionally heard. Similarly, Dark-eyed Juncos have exploded in number, increasing from their previous status as a rare vagrant to become one of the most abundant species on campus. Miller himself foresaw the arrival of Cliff Swallows on campus, which now plaster their urn-shaped mud nests beneath the eaves of Kaufman Hall each spring. And whether we like it or not, a variety of introduced species have moved in as well: European Starlings and House Sparrows both nest on campus, and Yellow-chevroned Parakeets can often be seen feasting on the ovoid fruits of the large Silk Floss Tree at the corner of Hilgard and Le Conte Avenues. In all, our surveys identified 75 species of birds on campus – well short of the 115 listed in Miller’s book, but still a species-rich bird community worthy of appreciation.

When faced with such dramatic transformations to a natural community in such a short period of time, it is natural to seek out the underlying causes. Climate change and invasive species may have had a role to play, but there is little doubt that the primary driver has been habitat alteration. Of the campus’s 419-acre area, only 12 acres of native vegetation remain.

It is surely no coincidence that the loss of several obligate chaparral species was concurrent with the near complete elimination of the chaparral itself from campus. Nor is it unexpected that the grassland birds departed with the loss of the campus’ agricultural fields and grasslands.

No part of campus characterizes these landscape-level shifts better than the arroyo, which Miller listed among his favorite locations for watching birds on campus. The arroyo was a deep and vast valley, dropping off steeply to the east of the original campus buildings. For 20 years, it was spanned by a bridge, and students traversing the bridge each morning were serenaded by the elaborate songs of wrens and thrashers reverberating through the flora. In 1947, the very year that Miller’s book was published, the arroyo was filled in with dirt, burying the breeding territories of the resident birds along with the countless species of plants, insects and other organisms with which they coexisted. Today, the arroyo has become a mere footnote of campus history, buried below what is now Dickson court, a fact unbeknownst to most current students.

Elsewhere, the construction of buildings has slowly chiseled away at any remaining suitable habitat. The original footprint of four buildings present in 1927 has grown to over 160 today, with more added each year. The manicured lawns that fill the gaps between these buildings have also done little to encourage natural flora and fauna. Today, just a few corners of campus harbor the vast majority of the remaining bird diversity. The Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden is one of these, home to the greatest number and diversity of birds, but remains under threat due to expansion of the medical school.

Sage Hill, at the extreme northwestern corner of campus, is another hidden gem. Representing the last remaining tract of native chaparral on campus, this is where California Scrub Jays, Northern Flickers, or White-crowned Sparrows are most likely to be encountered these days. Largely unknown and underutilized by students on campus, how much longer will Sage Hill withstand the persistent tread of the campus footprint?

Then again, why should we care about loss of biodiversity on a university campus? After all, the area represents a small fraction of Southern California, and all of the species that have vanished from campus can still be found in the nearby mountains and deserts. Hopefully we can understand the fallacy of this thought process. Endangerment and extinction are rarely, if ever, caused by single, sweeping megaprojects. Population loss happens in nibbles, not gulps. Tens or hundreds of developments, each fairly benign in their own right, can erode an initially large population into smaller, more fragmented populations, which are individually and collectively more prone to extinction.

Another consideration, perhaps equally important in the grand scheme of things, is the ever-dwindling connection between urban residents and the natural world. Students making the trek across the UCLA campus in its early days would have traversed the same natural ecosystems that today are restricted to the nearby Santa Monica Mountains, which require at least a half-day commitment to visit. Many residents of Los Angeles rarely explore these natural areas – indeed many can't afford to – making California's native flora and fauna a peculiarity in the minds of many Los Angelenos,



UCLA Ariel Photo

vaguely familiar from high school textbooks but never experienced firsthand. This growing disconnect with nature presents one of the greatest challenges for conservation efforts in the increasingly urban 21st-century civilization, because people that do not regularly interact with nature are unlikely to appreciate its wonders, and even less likely to fight for its protection.

But hope may be on the horizon for the plants and animals of the UCLA campus. A growing recognition of the need for sustainability – spearheaded by various forward-thinking and dedicated Bruins on campus and further necessitated by the severe drought of the past few years – has begun to transform the campus landscape. Native, drought-tolerant vegetation is being planted around campus at an accelerated rate, and efforts are being made to preserve and appreciate the few remaining green spaces on campus. With foresight, UCLA's goal of reducing water use while simultaneously increasing biodiversity can be achieved, all the while challenging the notion of what a prestigious university campus is "supposed" to look like. If all goes well, students and faculty alike may once again hear the cooing of doves alongside the ringing of cell-phones, observe the hunting forays of shrikes alongside a world-class medical facility, and marvel at the agile flight of the Prairie Falcon – as Dr. Miller once did – all on the way to class. 🗺️

INTERPRETING NATURE

The Green Gift Workshop — creativity, discovery, and duct tape.

Stacey Vigallon, Director of Environmental Education

THE GREEN GIFT WORKSHOP IS AN ANNUAL WINTER tradition in the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program. It's an opportunity for students to make items by hand using inexpensive, re-purposed, or recycled materials. Items can be customized and personalized, with everyone leaving the event with one-of-a-kind gifts.

The Green Gift Workshop might seem like just a fun diversion for students (and it is fun), but there are some important life skills wrapped up in these activities too. For many of the participating students, the Green Gift Workshop is the first time they've ever used a saw or a drill, and learning how to use tools to create something of your own boosts confidence and makes students more open-minded about creating something on their own in the future. With limited access to art instruction or opportunities to make things by hand, many of our students are missing out on the chance to discover new interests and talents and the personal satisfaction that comes from making something unique. We hope the Green Gift Workshop provides an entry to that path.

Amelia Earhart said, "The more one does, the more one can do." There is much overlap among the lessons learned by spending time in nature and the lessons learned through hands-on art activities - self-reliance, problem-solving, patience, and creative inspiration, to name just a few. We hope these photos inspire you to take up (or continue!) some creative endeavors of your own. If you need help making a duct tape wallet, we've got you covered.



The Green Gift Workshop typically draws a big crowd! The location shifts from year to year from classroom settings to the greenhouse work area at Baldwin Hills Scenic OverLook State Park.



Jewelry from items found at the hardware store and junk drawer – items like cotter pins, snap rings, washers, and old mismatched buttons are repurposed into necklaces and bracelets.



Notebooks out of recycled paper products – calendars, wrapping paper, and old magazines are combined with copier paper slated for the recycle bin and stitched together using Japanese book-binding techniques.



Duct tape wallets – useful, durable, waterproof, and they can be spruced up and repaired indefinitely.



Yard waste key chains – old branches trimmed from the backyard are converted to key-chain charms.

Monthly Program Presentations

January 2017 – There will NOT be the regularly scheduled (2nd Wednesday) Los Angeles Audubon Society monthly program presentation. Please join Pasadena Audubon Society on Jan. 18th, 2017 for a presentation by Audubon California's Chapter Network Director, Garry George.

BREAKING POINT: THE SALTON SEA

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18
7:30 PM-9:00 PM

EATON CANYON NATURE CENTER
1750 N. ALTADENA DRIVE
PASADENA, CA 91107

As California's largest lake, the 350-square-mile Salton Sea provides critical stopover, breeding, and wintering habitat for huge numbers of birds each year, including endangered species like Ridgway's Rail. A casualty of "water wars," it is, however, rapidly disappearing. During this meeting we will watch a special 40-minute long version of the acclaimed documentary "Breaking Point." This film will bring us all up to date on the history of the Sea both politically and ecologically.

Garry George, Audubon California's Chapter Network Director/Renewable Energy Director, will introduce the documentary and talk about Audubon's work at the Salton Sea.

This talk is sponsored the Pasadena Audubon Society; we at the Los Angeles Audubon are happy to publicize it to our members, and hope you all can make it!

<http://www.pasadenaaudubon.org/> | (626) 355-9412

117TH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS, LOS ANGELES REGION

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8
6:30 PM-8:30 PM

AUDUBON CENTER AT DEBS PARK
4700 NORTH GRIFFIN AVE.
LOS ANGELES, CA 90031

Join us to hear the results of this year's 117th annual Christmas Bird Count for the Los Angeles region. The Counts have a rich history, and there are now over 1,700 of them worldwide. Mr. Cooper will discuss the Los Angeles counts in particular, providing a brief recap of prior counts and their potential impacts on bird conservation. We will then see preliminary results of Los Angeles' count occurring on January 2 2017.

Mr. Daniel Cooper is the compiler for the Los Angeles Christmas Bird Count. He also is the founder of Cooper Ecological Monitoring, Inc., an organization that provides research and advisory services to protect natural resources.

<http://debspark.audubon.org/> | (323) 221-2255

National Audubon President, David Yarnold, presents the State of Our Audubon Union at Sea and Sage Audubon

Please join *Sea and Sage Audubon Society* at our March Annual Dinner speaker is our National Audubon President, David Yarnold—coming to us from his home in New York. He is an outspoken and eloquent advocate for birds and the environment. Mr. Yarnold became Audubon's 10th president in 2010, charged with leading a turnaround that would expand Audubon's effectiveness while building on the organization's strong conservation legacy. With 463 local Chapters, 22 state offices and 44 Audubon Centers across the country, Audubon connects nearly four million people using science, advocacy and education. "We are all Audubon," Yarnold says. "No other organization has our wingspan when it comes to being able to drive conservation action, whether in individual backyards or in Congress."

For information about reservations and pricing, please visit
www.seaandsageaudubon.org | nancykenyon@cox.net
Friday evening, March 17, 2017 at the Mile Square Park Banquet Center
We will also have a great silent auction. See you there!

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

Jan. 7 & Feb. 4

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

Jan. 1 & Feb. 5

Time: 8:00–11:30 a.m.

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

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

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area

3rd Saturday of the month

(Except for July and August)

Jan. 21 & Feb. 18

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 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

Jan. 8 & Feb. 12

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)

Jan. 15 & Feb. 19

Time: 8:00 a.m.–noon

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

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

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.

CARPOOLING

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

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

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.

Sunday, February 26

San Jacinto Valley

NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader: Mary and Nick Freeman. San Jacinto Valley is a stellar area for raptors of all sorts including Peregrine & Prairie falcons, perhaps a Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk, Bald & Golden eagles, Ferruginous Hawk, many Northern Harriers to study (that aren't as easy to age as we once thought!); and two Short-eared Owls as well as a Gyrfalcon and Iceland Gull making unprecedented visits just two years ago. The area has also produced sightings of Lesser Black-backed Gulls – even this year - at the nearby egg farm. Take the 10 or 60 Fwy E to the 215 Fwy S, exit E at Ramona Expressway, continue E just past Peris Blvd., and meet at the Farmer Boys Restaurant (145A Ramona Expwy) on the S side of the road. We will carpool from here at 8:00 a.m., and bird until about 3 p.m. or so. Bring lunch and warm clothing.

Saturday, March 4 (tentative)

Techniques for Better Bird Photography

Marina del Rey / Santa Monica

\$40 FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP OF 10

Your workshop host will be Christopher Taylor, an accomplished and published local photographer who has conducted similar workshops here and back East. While Christopher is most experienced with Canon equipment, he'll provide techniques that will enhance your ability to capture outstanding images of birds no matter what brand of digital SLR camera you're using, and should be able to help reproduce camera effects on other brands.

During the field lab, shorebirds and gulls should highlight. Christopher will be addressing a basic approach to one of the most difficult arenas of photography. Christopher does not typically use flash at all,

and he'll explain why, and how to compensate in various light and wind conditions. He'll also offer guidance on when it's best to hand-hold a shorter lens and when it is best to use a tripod and more magnification. He will discuss how to make your photographs more captivating by incorporating habitat into your frame. Learn how to use bokeh effects to help emphasize your subject. He will cover different aperture, lighting and metering techniques to help make your photographs POP! Meet at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot at 8:00 a.m. with your DSLR camera and telephoto lens (required). Take the Marina Fwy (90) to Culver Blvd and turn left for a mile. Turn right on Pacific Ave. Turn into the lot on the right. Early morning lot or street parking is usually not a problem.

After a nearby lunch (with Christopher if you wish), we will meet in a classroom setting at a Santa Monica office, where Christopher will review basic post-production Photoshop techniques, and tips to make good photos great and great photos truly eye-catching. A charged laptop with Photoshop loaded, and the day's photos downloaded, is useful but not required. Office directions will be provided before the lunch break. Finish up 3 or 4 p.m. Please register with Susan at membership@laaudubon.org, providing name(s), cell phone number, and e-mail; and mail a check for \$40 each.

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.