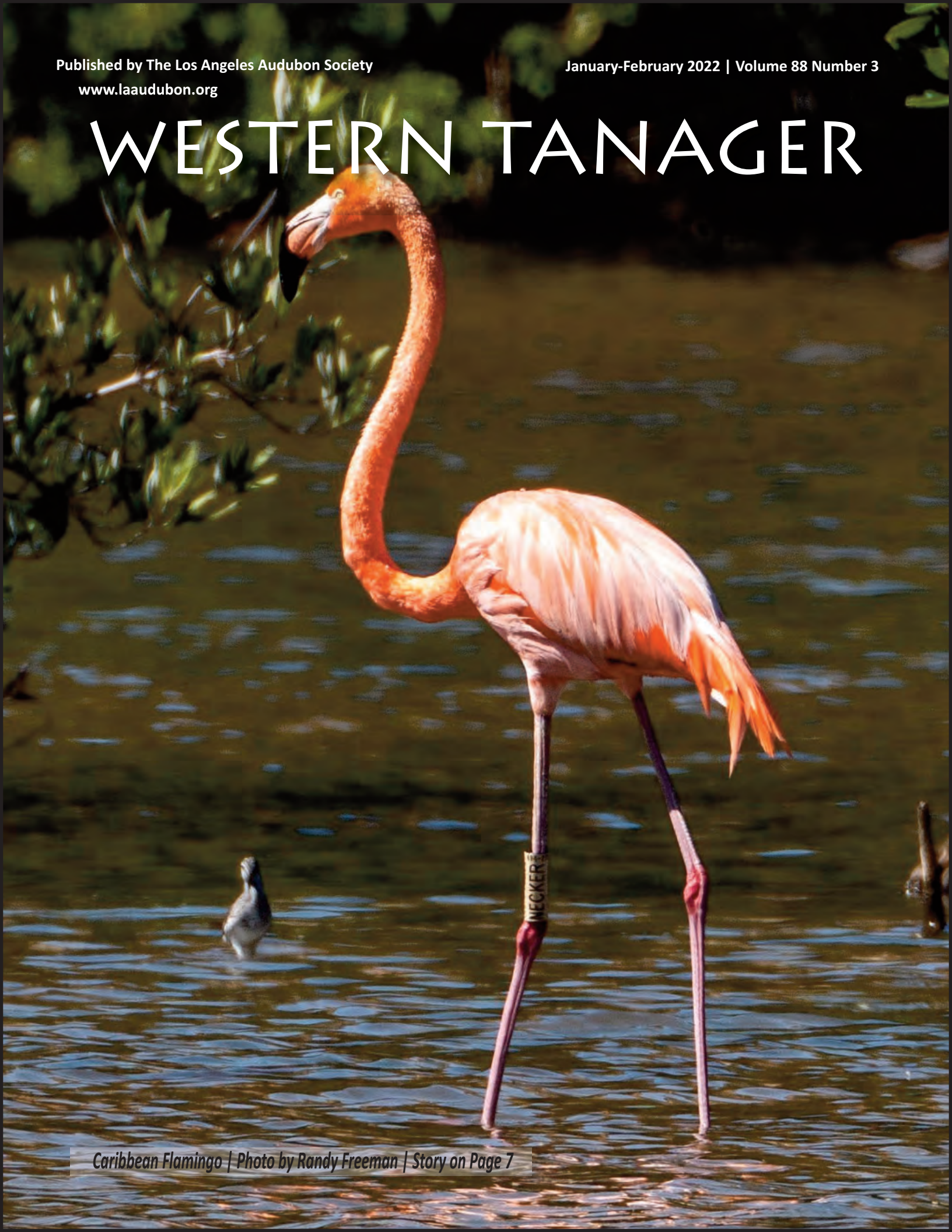


# WESTERN Tanager



*Caribbean Flamingo | Photo by Randy Freeman | Story on Page 7*



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

#### BOARD OFFICERS & DIRECTORS 2021–2022

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

#### STAFF AND SERVICES

Administrator Member Services  
Susan Castor [membership@laudubon.org](mailto:membership@laudubon.org)  
Online Subscriber Services  
Carol Babeli [carolbabeli@laudubon.org](mailto:carolbabeli@laudubon.org)

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**Editor** Linda Oberholtzer [editorwtanager@gmail.com](mailto:editorwtanager@gmail.com)  
**Design & Layout** Susan Castor [susancastor@laudubon.org](mailto:susancastor@laudubon.org)  
**Scientific Advisor** Kimball Garrett [kgarrett@nhm.org](mailto:kgarrett@nhm.org)

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## ON THE COVER



*Caribbean Flamingo, Benner Bay Salt Pond, St. Thomas-U.S. Virgin Islands, April 26, 2021 | Photo by Randy Freeman*

*Story begins page 7.*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

BIRDS OF THE SEASON — DECEMBER 2021, BY JON FISHER

ISLAND HOPPING: BIRDING THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS, PART 3: ST. THOMAS — GATEWAY TO THE CARIBBEAN, BY ROBBIE LISA FREEMAN

TRIAL WINTER BIRD ATLAS UNDERWAY, BY TRAVIS LONGCORE

FROM OUR READERS

UNTIL NEXT TIME ... GOODBYE SADIE, BY CLARA YOUNG, PH.D

A BOTANICAL COUNTY, BY JUDITH DEUTSCH

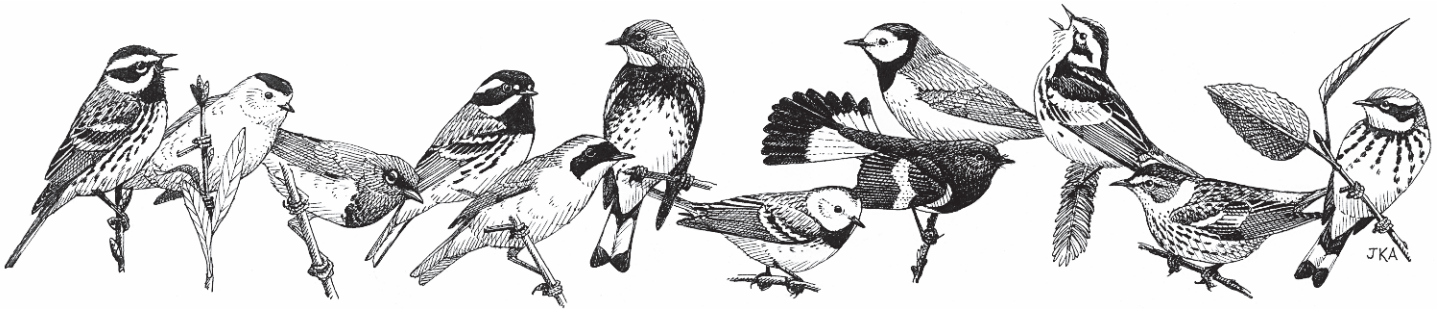
ON THE CALENDAR

MONTHLY PROGRAM PRESENTATIONS

BIRD WALKS



# BIRDS OF THE SEASON — December 2021 | By Jon Fisher



September and October of 2021 were indeed impressive for vagrants, but good birds continued to turn up through December, though admittedly at a less impressive pace. Los Angeles County's numerous active and diligent birders are a productive bunch.

As an extreme drought continues, natural habitats are looking beyond parched. Most of the western U.S. is suffering the same fate and concerns are many. There is a bit of good news— as of this writing it looks like December will end up delivering us a fair amount of rain. We can hope that trend continues.

One upside of human development are the numerous lush parks, yards, streams and rivers that benefit from our use of imported- and sometimes naturally occurring- water. These pockets and patches of habitat make life easier for many birds during these lean times and tend to attract vagrants as well. As one might expect, this is also where most birders tend to look for them.

Aside from Lewis's Woodpeckers, which have been present in above average numbers this fall, there hasn't been much evidence of any irruptive movements. White-breasted Nuthatches though have occurred more widely than usual away from breeding areas. All of these have been from the Pacific population, with no reports of birds from the interior race.

The area impacted by the 2020 Bobcat Fire is still closed to public access until at least April of 2022. If all goes as planned, these areas- though drastically altered- will again be open to birders.

A returning wintering "**Eurasian**" **Green-winged Teal** was along the San Gabriel River in Pico Rivera from November 22–December 12 (Luke Tiller).

Inland **Surf Scoters** were at Castaic Lagoon on No-

ember 2 (Hans Spiecker) and at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB on November 9 (Chris Dean, Ted Keyel). Up to three **White-winged Scoters** were off Dockweiler State Beach in El Segundo from November 1–December 8 and two **Black Scoters** were there from November 15–26 (Richard Barth).

A **Long-tailed Duck** was also in the vicinity of Dockweiler State Beach in El Segundo from November 1–December 8 with two present on the later date (Richard Barth)

A **White-winged Dove** was at Alta Vicente Reserve on the Palos Verdes Peninsula on October 29 (Jonathan Nakai) and three were at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on October 31 (Kaimipono Wenger).

Late was a **Lesser Nighthawk** at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB on October 29 (Ted Keyel).

**Vaux's Swifts** were present in generally small numbers during the period with a high count of fifty at Silver Lake Reservoir on November 26 (Andrew Birch).

A **Sandhill Crane** was seen flying over San Dimas on November 16 (Keith Condon) and five were near the Piute Ponds the same day (Ted Keyel).

The returning wintering **Pacific Golden-Plover** along lower Ballona Creek was reported through December 16. Up to twenty-five **Mountain Plovers** were in the Antelope Valley at the often reliable A&G Sod Farm from November 7–December 18 (Naresh Satyan).

A **Ruff** continued along the lower Los Angeles River in Long Beach through October 29 and up to two **Stilt Sandpipers** remained at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB through November 6.

Late or lingering **Solitary Sandpipers** were on the Los Angeles River in the Sepulveda Basin from November 14–December 12 and at Hansen Dam from November 27–December 12 (Jon Fisher). Also of note was a **Red Phalarope** at Piute on October 29 (Ted Keyel).

Two **Scripps's Murrelets** and a **Laysan Albatross** were spotted about ten miles off the Palos Verdes Peninsula on December 7 (Jon Feenstra).

The only gull of note was a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas from November 22–December 16 (Keith Condon).

Inland **Pacific Loons** were at Quail Lake near Gorman on October 31 (David Bell) and at Lake Palmdale on November 7 (Naresh Satyan, Ted Keyel).

A **Red-footed Booby** was at San Clemente Island on November 1 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole Desnoyers).

**Neotropic Cormorants** included continuing birds along the lower Los Angeles River in Long Beach through October 26 and at Westlake Lake in Westlake Village on November 22 (Carol Johnson).

A **Little Blue Heron** continued along the lower Los Angeles River in Long Beach through November 10 and a **Cattle Egret** was in the same area from October 31–November 12 (Jeff Boyd). Up to three **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** continued in the Ballona Wetlands area through December 7.

The occurrence of a small but above average number of **Harris's Hawks** in southern California — including one at Paramount Ranch in the Santa Monica Mountains from November 18–19 (Carl Jackson) — makes it unlikely that all were the result of escaped or lost falconer's birds. Also in its favor, the Paramount Ranch bird showed no signs of having been in captivity. Several other individuals reported in the county during the period may have been naturally occurring, but their provenance remains suspect; this species is quite popular with falconers.

Several **Zone-tailed Hawks** continued, with birds in Monrovia in the vicinity of Grand Ave. Park through December 18, one Altadena through October 26 and another in Glendora through December 18. A **Rough-legged Hawk** was at the Piute Ponds from November 20–December 15 (Mark Wilson).

**Short-eared Owls** were at Piute Ponds on November 5 (Ted Keyel) with possibly the same bird there on November 19, in Griffith Park at the Toyon Landfill on November 25 (Andrew Birch), at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh from November 27–December 11 (Derek Hameister) and at El Dorado Park in Long Beach on November 29 (Nancy Salem).

A **Williamson's Sapsucker** was at Grand Ave. Park in Monrovia from November 14–15 (Candice Byers) and a **Hairy Woodpecker** was away from usually areas of occurrence at Malibu Lagoon on November 28 (Femi Faminu).

An apparently returning "**Black**" **Merlin** of the subspecies *suckleyi* was at the Bette Davis Picnic Area in Glendale on November 24 (Andrew Birch).

Late and potentially wintering **Ash-throated Flycatchers** were at Ernie Howlett Park in Rolling Hills Estates on November 2 (Will Sweet), at the Sepulveda Basin from November 3–7 (Nurit Katz) and at Willow Springs Park in Long Beach from November 22–27 (Brad Dawson).

**Tropical Kingbirds** were definitely not in short supply, with sixteen present during the period and multiple birds at some near coastal locations. A few late **Western Kingbirds** were also recorded well into November.

A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was observed along the Los Angeles River in Long Beach from October 24–29 (Johnny Ivanov) and another was at the Piute Ponds on November 12 (Amy Worrell, Jane Stavert).

Quite late was a **Willow Flycatcher** in Zuma Canyon on November 6 (Sage Bylin, Amy Worrell, Aaron Gomperts). A late and likely continuing **Hammond's Flycatcher** was at Monte Cristo Campground in the San Gabriel Mountains on November 17 (Jeffrey Fenwick). Other Hammond's were at Valley Park in Burbank from November 21– (Andrew Birch), at the Bette Davis Picnic Area in Glendale on November 23 (Greg Slak), at Mountain View Cemetery in Pasadena on December 5 (Darren Dowell) and at Alondra Park Reservoir on December 12 (Naresh Satyan).

**Dusky Flycatchers** were at Zuma Canyon on December 4 (Amy Worell, Sage Bylin) and at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia from December 4–12 (Darren Dowell). **Pacific-slope Flycatchers** were at Wardlow Park in Long Beach

from November 28–December 3 (Christine Jacobs) and at El Dorado Park in Long Beach on December 8 (Kim Moore).

The **Eastern Phoebe** that spent the last two winters along the Los Angeles River in Glendale had returned as of November 3 (Jon Fisher). It was reported through December 15. Another was at Echo Park in Los Angeles from November 17–19 (Candice Byers).

**Cassin's Vireos** were at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia on November 18 (Steven Kurniawidjaja) and at the San Gabriel Coastal Basin Spreading Grounds in Pico Rivera on December 12 (Sarah Ngo).

A flock of twelve **Swinhoe's White-eyes** on San Clemente Island on November 15 was a first island record for this rapidly increasing non-native (Justyn Stahl, Nicole Desnoyers). This non-native is already well-established throughout much of Orange County and has made inroads into southern Los Angeles County, with records as far north and west as Point Dume. Clearly it is to be watched for throughout the remainder of the coastal slope.

The *japonicus* or Siberian subspecies **American Pipit** returned to the Ferraro Soccer Fields in Glendale for a second winter as of November 5 and reported there through December 13 (Andrew Birch).

A **Grasshopper Sparrow** continued at Colorado Lagoon in Long Beach through October 26 and at least eight **Clay-colored Sparrows** were encountered over the period.

Six **Dark-eyed "Gray-headed" Juncos** were found during the period, while **Dark-eyed "Pink-sided" Juncos** were at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas from November 1–December 9 (Keith Condon), at Grassy Hollow Picnic Area in the east San Gabriel Mountains on November 7 (Mark & Janet Scheel) and on Santa Catalina Island on November 20 (Will Black).

Quite rare in the county was a **Harris's Sparrow** was at the Piute Ponds from November 18–22 (Chris Dean). About a dozen **White-throated Sparrows** were recorded as well.

A **Swamp Sparrow** continued in the Sepulveda Basin in Van Nuys through November 4. Others were at Malibu Lagoon on October 29 (Graham Montgomery), at the Earvin Magic Johnson Recre-

ation Area in Willowbrook on November 3 (Chris Dean), at the Piute Ponds from November 19–20 (Ted Keyel) and at the San Gabriel Coastal Basin Spreading Grounds in Pico Rivera on November 26 (Larry Schmahl).

**Green-tailed Towhees** were at the West San Gabriel River Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood through December 8, at Pelona Vista Park in Palmdale on October 31 (Vern Benhart) and in Signal Hill on December 2 (Kim Moore).

An **Orchard Oriole** was at Satellite Park in Cerritos on November 9 (Thomas Lopez, Charles Lopez). A late and likely wintering **Scott's Oriole** was at Crystallaire in Llano from November 23–27 (Ruth Gravance).

An **Ovenbird** was on San Clemente Island from November 1–4 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole Desnoyers). Nine **Black-and-white Warblers** were recorded. A rare **Prothonotary Warbler** was at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on October 30, but reportedly was present at least a day earlier (Will Sweet, Ynez Dias, Alex Bartolo).

A **Lucy's Warbler** was at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Pasadena on October 24 (Judy Hwa) and a well above average twelve **Nashville Warblers** turned up between November 24 and December 8.

**American Redstarts** were along the Los Angeles River in Glendale from October 28–December 15 (Dan Cooper), on Santa Catalina Island on October 30 (Van Pierszalowski) and in the Sepulveda Basin in Van Nuys from November 28–December 15 (Jon Fisher), with two individuals confirmed there on the latter date.

A **Bay-breasted Warbler** was at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park in Harbor City from November 5–8 (Chris Hinkle) and a **Blackburnian Warbler** was at Legg Lake in South El Monte from October 30–31 (Larry Schmahl). A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was at Wardlow Park in Long Beach from November 26–December 7 (Eddie Monson), while a half dozen **Palm Warblers** were found during the period.

Four **Pine Warblers** turned up in rapid succession. After one on October 17 on Santa Catalina Island, birds were found at Woodley Lakes Golf Course in the Sepulveda Basin on October 30 (Jon Fisher), at Legg Lake in South El Monte also on October 30 and on San Clemente Island— for their first record and

only the second for the Channel Islands— on November 3 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole Desnoyers).

A continuing **Magnolia Warbler** was at the Bette Davis Picnic Area in Glendale through October 27 and the returning wintering **Painted Redstart** at Inglewood Park Cemetery continued through December 15.

Six **Summer Tanagers** were present during the period.


**Black-headed Grosbeaks** were at The William Clark Library in Los Angeles from November 29– (Rebecca Marschall) and in Pasadena from December 8–10 (Frank & Susan Gilliland).

An **Indigo Bunting** continued at Woodley Creek in the Sepulveda Basin in Van Nuys through October 23 and one was on Santa Catalina Island on October 30 (Van Pierszalowski). A **Painted Bunting** remained along Woodley Creek in the Sepulveda Basin in Van Nuys through November 4 and one was at a residence in Manhattan Beach from November 5–7 (Kelly Fogarty).

As we head into winter, Christmas Bird Counts are well underway if not already completed. These should turn up additional birds of interest. While a number of counts were suspended for the 2020–2021 event due to the Covid pandemic, most are being conducted in the 2021–2022 period as conditions seem to change more than they outright improve.

If you're already missing migration, January and February will bring the earliest of northbound spring migrants. Turkey Vultures and *Selasphorus* hummingbirds will be heading north and some waterfowl will begin their trek to higher latitudes.

But in the meantime, local parks and patches of green on the coastal slope are undoubtedly harboring as yet undetected wintering oddities. There are many opportunities for finding new birds, chasing continuing vagrants and just enjoying our winter birds.

As always, the Antelope Valley offers interesting birding with its winter specialties and the potential for something unusual. Even the chilly higher San Gabriels have the potential for good birds. Last winter's flocks of Evening Grosbeaks and previous records of Grace's Warblers are evidence of that. 

## MONTHLY PROGRAM PRESENTATIONS

As soon as each of these Speaker Series are confirmed, the complete details about our monthly program presentations are published online at [www.laudubon.org/events](http://www.laudubon.org/events) with start times and how to be an online participant.

These are what are tentatively scheduled.

**Wed., February 9** — Professor Eric Wood, of Cal State Los Angeles, on the influence of past land use policies on current urban bird diversity.

**Wed., March 9** — Bill Wilson, of Birds & Beans Coffee, on advances in bird-friendly coffee cultivation.

**Wed., April 13** — Dr. Amy Collins, of Colorado State University, will present the latest research on light pollution attracting birds during migration and how to predict and mitigate those impacts.



# ISLAND HOPPING: BIRDING THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS PART 3: ST. THOMAS

By Robbie Lisa Freeman

*This is the third in a series of three articles on birding in the U.S. Virgin Islands. I headed there recently to learn about the birds on St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas, and the ecosystems that nurture them.*

## St. Thomas: Gateway to the Caribbean

The car ferry from St. John, USVI to St. Thomas chug-chugs along across a two-mile stretch of sun-drenched azure waters that sparkle and shimmer as if draped in diamonds. Above us, cotton candy clouds dot a corn blue sky. It's a picture postcard moment. But I'm not looking at the scenery. I'm staring at the small spec of a bird floating a few miles off our starboard bow near the Red Hook ferry landing. I grab my binoculars for a close-up, holding my breath. Bingo! As the barge draws closer to land the speck grows larger, materializing into a giant pterodactyl of a bird — the Magnificent Frigatebird! I'm excited to see this bird flying so low, as we'll be coming here to take photos tomorrow. I make a mental note of the bird's location as the car ferry docks and we prepare to disembark. Then I turn my attention to the island before us.

St. Thomas is the second-largest of the U.S. Virgin Islands, at 32-square miles. Its major city, Charlotte Amalie, plays host to a cruise ship industry that carts in 1.5 million visitors a year, earning the island the moniker "the Gateway to the Caribbean."



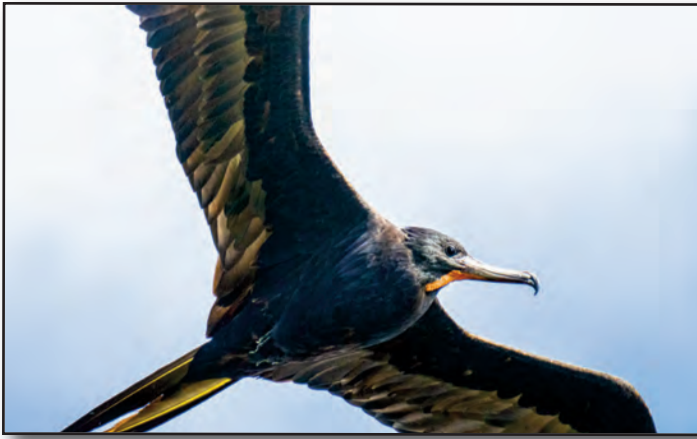
*A frigatebird has the ability to glide over thousands of miles of water during months-long transoceanic migrations. And though they look like they're slowly soaring, frigatebirds are fast flyers, speeding across the oceans at an estimated 95 mph and at altitudes upward of 12,000 feet, or as high as the Rocky Mountains, where freezing conditions exist. No other bird has been found to fly so high relative to sea surface. | Photo by Robbie Lisa Freeman.*

But we've chosen to visit at a quiet time. With pandemic travel bans, Charlotte Amalie is almost deserted compared to most years. That won't crimp our style. We've come to spend time in the forests, parks, ponds, coves, and reefs, hoping to see visitors of the winged, scaled, and shell-backed variety. Fingers crossed.

The next day we're up at 6 AM, on the prowl for breakfast and coffee. Luckily, we stumble upon Virgin Islands Coffee Roasters in Red Hook, just up from the ferry landing. It was the café's logo that attracted me to the place — a black, white, and yellow sign emblazoned with a Bananaquit, the official bird of the Virgin Islands. Somehow it feels like just the right spot to start our day on St. Thomas.

An hour later we've parked at the Red Hook Salt Pond and are following the 1,000-foot boardwalk that guides us around the perimeter of the pond habitat. Trees and brush block our view to the interior, but occasional breaks in the scrub allow us a glimpse to the pond, where we see egrets, herons, coots, and other birds roosting and foraging. There's no clear area to take photos so we continue around to the ferry parking area. Threading between cars with our cameras and binoculars, we must be a curiosity for the hundreds of travelers sitting in their idling autos waiting for the next ferry. I push that thought away as a shadow falls over me. Looking up, I see a soaring black frigatebird. So low! Excited, I accelerate my steps until I spy a small path off to the left. It drops down a bit and I see that it will take us to a thin strip of beach along the pond perimeter. There's still no clear access to the salt pond, but on the beach we can escape the idling autos and I can set up my tripod and mount my camera to get shots of the gliding birds. We have no shortage of opportunities. A half dozen or more birds oblige us with fly-overs and for the next 90 minutes we're shooting photos.

Because of the high shrubbery, our vision is mostly limited to birds flying directly overhead, so we're shooting with our necks craned uncomfortably far back, nearly touching our spines. Still, this is the closest I've ever been to these great birds. Some soar as low as 50 feet above us. With this proximity, for the first time I can actually distinguish between the males and females. Females have brownish-black plumage, a white belly patch and a white beak. Some also have a white head and collar. Males have black glossy plumage with a black beak, and sport a red neck pouch that plays an important role in mating. During breeding season, the males congregate in large colonies atop an area of mangrove trees. The



*Despite transoceanic migrations, frigatebirds cannot rest on the surface of the sea when tired or dive into the water for fish, like pelicans and other sea-going birds. By a quirk of evolution, these birds are missing a uropygial gland, the oil gland just above the tail that allows most water birds to preen their feathers with oil to waterproof them. So how do they eat when migrating for months? The frigatebird dines on the fly, literally, grabbing jumping fish in midair, or skimming the sea's surface for tuna, herring, and other treats. | Photo by Robbie Lisa Freeman.*

males vie for prime nesting areas in preparation for conducting an elaborate mating ritual. During this ritual, they inflate their throat pouches like giant red balloons and tap on them with their slender beaks to produce drumming sounds. Additional wing flapping is used to attract the females, who do flyovers to select the male that they deem has chosen the best nesting site, and who also possesses that additional “je ne sais quoi” that only female frigatebirds understand.

When our necks can no longer tolerate the contortions, we set out to explore more of the island, including Brewers Bay, nestled alongside the St. Thomas Campus of the University of the Virgin Islands and the Maclean Marine Science Center. Here, the National Save The Sea Turtle Foundation has partnered with the University to study turtles. Juvenile turtles are tracked with acoustic tags, revealing high numbers of turtles in the bay, despite the major hurricanes of recent years. We're excited to explore this underworld trove and don our flippers, masks, and snorkels to see if we'll get lucky. Within minutes of diving in, I run across my first turtle foraging through the sea grass. The water is so clear that he's easy to spot in the distance. These gentle giants show no fear, nor do they bear a hasty retreat as I approach. I keep a respectful distance from him, observing the way he grabs at the grasses with his teeth and thoughtfully chews each bite. In all, during our hour in the water, we see about ten different turtles. Oh, happy day! So far, St. Thomas has not disappointed and we're looking forward to what tomorrow brings, when we meet up with our local bird guides Mario Francis and Don Spencer.

## The Bird Man of St. Thomas

Mario Francis, aka “The Bird Man,” is the kind of guy who literally stops traffic on the street. We're at the Nadir Bridge not far from Charlotte Amalie, leaning over a bridge rail to view the marsh below. Mario is pointing out a Green Heron, a Lesser Yellowlegs, and a lifer for us — a Tricolored Heron! While for me, these birds are the stars of the show, for the traffic on the bridge, Mario — dressed in full camouflage — is the star. Drivers honk their horns. Others lean out their windows to shout his name. And one woman literally stops her car to call to him. Traffic snarls and she moves on, parking just past the bridge to jump out of her car and run back towards us to give Mario a huge hug. I'm snapping photos of the heron rapid-fire, but I have to stop when this young woman breathlessly speaks to Mario. Her eyes shine with admiration for this man. Mario introduces us and tells us that she was a student of his for several years.

He taught science at the high school, junior high, and the elementary levels, and taught agricultural science at the Alternative Education Skills Center. In 1992, he started a program to educate kids ages 7 to 14 how to grow their own foods. He also taught forestry, ecology, biology, and conservation to instill in local residents a love for the outdoors. The animated young woman gushes over Mario for another ten minutes before sprinting back to her car.



*The Tricolored Heron sports plumage of blue-gray, maroon, and white. He can be distinguished from other herons by the white stripe down his sinuous neck and a white belly. Breeding birds have small white plumes extending from the back of the head, a blue patch of skin around the bill, and pink legs. Photo courtesy of Randy Freeman.*



Meanwhile, below us in the marsh, the Tricolored Heron hunts on with some amiable cattle egrets. Up in the treetops we hear and then see a noisy flock of Smooth-billed Anis cavorting around. Further down by the water we spy a Belted Kingfisher, a Little Blue Heron, Killdeers, and an immature Green Heron with a flapping fish in its bill. We watch with fascination as it expertly maneuvers the fish so that it can be swallowed head first. Then down the hatch it goes.... Or not. The fat fish is in the fight of its life and refuses to go down. I wince as I watch the heron's gullet contort to accommodate its writhing dinner and for far too many moments, it seems the fish might expel itself or choke the heron to death. Finally, the fish slides down the hatch, and we all look at each other with a sigh of relief. Every moment in the life of a bird can be fraught with peril, whether they're feeding, flying, or roosting. I marvel at these little miracles as I reflect on our morning with Mario and his co-guide, Don Spencer.

We had met Mario and Don at dawn in the parking lot at Magen's Bay on the north side of St. Thomas. We needn't have worried about not recognizing them. Dressed from head to toe in camouflage and birding gear, they looked prepared for some serious birding. We introduced ourselves and they gave us the lay of the land. Straight out from the parking lot was a one-mile strip of sandy white beach, lauded as one of the most beautiful beaches in the Virgin Islands. On the opposite side of the beach was more than 300 acres of tropical moist forest, dry forest, and mangroves. It was an impressive little park.

We first headed to the beach, where Mario had spotted a lifer for us — a Brown Booby perched on a buoy. Though he wasn't close, through my binoculars I could see his facial features — the long, pale-yellow beak and the characteristic eye spot in front of the eye. Though I was hoping to catch him in action — they're known for their swift aerial movements and 30–50-foot dives from the air to the sea when fishing — this bird sat still as a statue. Farther out, several other Brown Boobies languished on boat decks and other



*Of the three known species of Brown Boobies, the "Atlantic Booby" is the one that breeds in the Caribbean. Bearing the same brown and white plumage as other species of boobies, the Atlantic Booby can be distinguished by its mostly yellow-orange facial skin, a dark spot in front of the eye, a pale yellow or straw-yellow bill, and yellowish feet. | Photo courtesy of Randy Freeman.*

buoys. No diving displays for us. So, we'd moved on, heading towards the park.

At a small muddy pond, Mario had deftly pointed out my second lifer of the day, a Northern Waterthrush, foraging along the water's edge. I likely would not have noticed without the Bird Man's astute eye. "There," he'd said, pointing. "There by the log." The dark brown back helped to camouflage this small bird against the mud and leaves, but he had a



*Although the Northern Waterthrush breeds in Canada and the northern U.S., including Alaska, it winters in Central America, the West Indies and Florida, as well as in Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador. Judging from our siting, some skip over to St. Thomas too. | Photo courtesy of Frantz Delcroix, Presidente of AMAZONA, a Guadeloupe NGO. [www.amazona-guadeloupe.com](http://www.amazona-guadeloupe.com)*



*The Green Heron is one of the smallest herons. | Photo courtesy of Randy Freeman.*



*The Brown-throated Parakeet, also known as the St. Thomas conure or the brown-throated conure, is a species of parrot that is endemic to the U.S. Virgin Islands, some French Caribbean Islands, and other countries of South and Central America, and Mexico. They flourish in subtropical or tropical dry forests, moist lowland forests, and dry scrub. Here, they clamored about in the treetops, looking a bit soggy and bedraggled from the rain. | Photo courtesy of Randy Freeman.*

French Caribbean Islands, and on the island nation of St. Lucia. So, we were excited to see what this parrot of the Virgin Islands looked like. We couldn't miss them. These comical, colorful conures were having a post-rain party, flapping and squawking through the tall sea grape trees. Their bright yellow heads and bright green back plumage made them easy to spot. The tips of their long wing feathers and upper feathers were bright blue, while the breast was yellow green. They were a riot to watch, and they were also lifer number three in the first few hours of our morning.

Now, Mario and Don are guiding us around the island, hitting all of their favorite hot spots. We spy Common Moorhens (Gallinule), White-cheeked Pintail Ducks, Cattle Egrets, herons, Northern Mockingbirds, and many others. Don's ability to spot birds is astonishing. He knows these areas and exactly where the birds will be foraging. In addition to seeing birds, we're taking in the island's most beautiful sights, from hidden forest paths to sweeping sea views.

As Mario talks about the 295 species that have been recorded on the island, he casually mentions an Adelaide's Warbler. "Can we see it?" I ask. Then we're off to see the bird. Adelaide's Warblers are endemic to Puerto Rico, Vieques, and the Virgin Islands, so my chances of having the opportunity to see this bird again seem slim. At the top of a hilly road, Mario pulls off on the shoulder. This roadside area doesn't seem a likely spot for birding, but I trust this big man. We slowly comb the trees alongside the hilltop, looking for a bird that is very similar to the winsome St. Lucia Warbler we had seen in the French Caribbean a few years back. The markings of the two are known to be almost identical:



*Originally thought to only inhabit Puerto Rico, this tiny gray and yellow Adelaide's Warbler was spotted on St. Thomas in 2012 and on St. John in 2013, according to local records. It's "twin," the St. Lucia Warbler, which I had seen two years prior on St. Lucia, was at one time classified as an isolated subspecies of the Adelaide's. Photo courtesy of Frantz Delcroix, Presidente of AMAZONA, a Guadeloupe NGO. [www.amazona-guadeloupe.com](http://www.amazona-guadeloupe.com).*

beautiful buff-yellow chest, streaked with brown. I'd been surprised to learn that this long-legged bird was actually in the warbler family, as I think of warblers as tree-top dwellers who dart through leaves and limbs for insects. The waterthrush had continued on with its business and so had we, heading up to the forest trailhead.

The Magen's Bay trail is overseen by the Nature Conservancy, Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources, and Magen's Bay Authority. The trail is well-maintained and takes hikers through a number of forest ecosystems, then across a boardwalk through mangroves, before returning to the beach. For the next hour or so, we had seen and heard Yellow Warblers, Gray Kingbirds, Common Ground Doves, Green-throated Caribs, Pearly-eyed Thrashers, and other birds of the area. About the time we entered the tropical rainforest, ironically we'd been hit with a rainstorm. Not prepared for this sudden change in weather, we'd luckily located a stand of tall trees with broad green leaves that sheltered us from the rain.

In twenty minutes, the storm had passed, and we'd scampered down the trail following the raucous calls of parrots. In our travels we'd seen several unique parrots endemic to the



Soft gray plumage on the head, back and wing, with a bright yellow chest, two white wing bars, a short yellow eyebrow, and a striking crescent under the eye. I vividly remember the St. Lucia Warbler, so I'm excited to see its near-doppelganger. This bird is being difficult to spot, but Mario has no doubt he will find it. We amble on, checking out every square inch of the treetops. Then suddenly, there is a flash in the lower branches and the little sprite is there, so bright and .... quick! He doesn't sit still for a second, darting through the leaves, displaying that typical fast-foraging movement of most warblers. We watch with wonder for several more minutes. I attempt some photos – ha ha. This bird does not pose. But we're happy and a short time later we're back on the road, heading to one last hotspot, the salt pond at Compass Point.

The salt pond at Compass Point has been an area of controversy on St. Thomas for decades. Developers have engaged in an ongoing landgrab, chipping away at the mangroves and salt pond areas for a marina, homes, hotels and other development, and ignoring the ecological importance of the area. Like all salt ponds, this muddy, often smelly marsh serves as a critical catchment basin for storm water run-off and sediment collection. It's also an important feeding and nesting area for many species of birds, and a nursery for fish and other marine animals. These critical salt pond habitats, and the often-adjacent mangrove forests, have been degraded across the Virgin Islands, despite the Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Act, which specifically recommends these areas be protected from development. Fortunately, in 1992 the Compass Point/Benner Cove site was recognized as "one of the most important wildlife areas on the island of St. Thomas" by Roy Adams, then commissioner of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, and was designated a Marine Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary.

As we gaze at the large mud pot in front of us, it's easy to see how those not in touch with conservation might dismiss this with a shrug. It's not beautiful. And it looks a bit daunting.

"We're walking through this?" I ask Mario. He gives me a grin. "Are you game?" Don is already ahead of us, his shoes sucking through the muck. I follow. About 50 yards out, I hear a shout and look back towards the road. A guy is calling to us. "You going out to see the flamingo?" the stranger shouts. "He was spotted about an hour ago."

Did he say flamingo? We wave back at him, giving him a thumbs up. Hmm. I'm less squeamish about the mud now, with a possible flamingo in my future. As we trudge along, the mud gives way to firmer ground, thick with grasses and scrub. We literally need a machete to get through the dense vegetation. Yet we persist and the ground becomes firmer but rocky, and still dense with prickly brush that snags at our sleeves. At one point, Randy loses his footing and topples backwards into the scrub. As he attempts to clamor up, Mario shouts at him "Don't move." Randy freezes. So do I,

as I have no idea what the danger may be. Snake? Scorpion? Don backtracks and extends a hand down to Randy.

"Let me pull you forward," he commands. "Don't reach back." He pulls Randy up and we look to survey the massive, spiky cactus Randy had almost fallen onto. I imagine those inch-long thorns tearing into flesh — and a very unpleasant visit to a hospital. But we move on, choosing not to dwell on the near disaster. Ahead of us, Don keeps an eye out for other potential problems. After another 20 minutes of cautious plodding, we come to a clearing and a view of a large pond. Binoculars up, we spy wading birds and ducks on the glimmering water. Then Randy shouts, "Look! A Flamingo!" Sure enough, wading in the midst of the water is a lone, lanky Caribbean Flamingo. I'm a bit flabbergasted, given the only flamingo I'd ever seen was in a Miami zoo. But Mario and Don are quietly exultant — almost reverential about the sighting.

"In all my 40 years birding here, I have never seen a Caribbean Flamingo on the island," says Mario with a shimmer of tears in his eyes. Don shakes his head, admitting it's been four decades since he has seen one on St. Thomas. To understand their depth of feeling, one has to know the history of these birds. Caribbean flamingos were once abundant in the U.S. Virgin Islands, but were hunted to near extinction for their flamboyant pink feathers, their meat, and



*One of the highlights of our St. Thomas birding adventure was seeing a Caribbean Flamingo in the wild. | Photo courtesy of Randy Freeman.*



the pet trade. Today, this flamingo represents a rebirth of these birds in the wild in the Virgin Islands. Through our binoculars, Randy points out the large oblong tag around its leg, labeled "Necker." This flamingo is part of a breeding colony started on Necker Island in the British Virgin Islands. The birds were brought there in the 1980's by Sir Richard Branson in order to re-establish flamingos back in the wild. Further observing the bright salmon-pink bird, we high five each other all around. I'm touched beyond words to think that our birding adventure could result in such a thrilling and memorable sighting for these two local birders. Flamingos are said to symbolize beauty, balance, and grace. We all feel graced by this bird's presence, and more than a little thankful that this salt pond was saved for birds like this and the countless other species that will no doubt stop off here in the weeks, months, and years ahead for resting, refueling, and continuing the circle of life on St. Thomas. 🐦

*For information about birding on St. Thomas, contact Mario Francis of the St. Thomas Audubon at (340) 643-5060 or (340) 776-1610.*

*Robbie Lisa Freeman is a public relations professional in Los Angeles and a contributing writer for the Western Tanager. Follow her on Instagram @freebird2020lf*



*Guide Mario "Bird Man" Francis (r.) and co-guide Don Spencer (c.) spent an entire day with author Lisa Freeman, introducing her to the birding hot spots of St. Thomas. Mario is founder of the St. Thomas chapter of the USVI Audubon. | Photo courtesy of Randy Freeman.*

### **Mario Francis, the Bird Man of St. Thomas**

Mario Francis is a big man in stature and an even bigger man by reputation. Known throughout the islands as the Bird Man, he has been birding, teaching, and leading community efforts on the island for more than 40 years. His own love of nature started early. He studied forestry at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, and it was through a forestry internship at the Allegheny National Forest in Pennsylvania that he fell in love with birds.

"I recall the first time I really noticed birds," says Mario. "It was around 1989, and I was deep in the woods marking timber for cutting when I saw a bright florescent blue creature darting through the trees in front of me. So, I followed with great curiosity to see what it was. It was the most amazingly beautiful Indigo Bunting. I fell in love with that bird, and from that moment on I was hooked on birds."

That chance encounter with a bunting led Mario to a lifetime of birding adventures. After graduating college and working for a couple of years in Pennsylvania, he returned home to St. Thomas to work at the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture. He also joined the only local Virgin Islands Audubon Society, a chapter on St. John, a ferry ride away. He participated with the St. John chapter for more than three years and was elected to the Board of Directors and worked as chairman of the Education Committee.

"I encouraged local residents, children, and island visitors to get involved in this great science of Ornithology," says Mario. "My committee taught bird identification classes, bird conservation, and conducted lectures and bird-watching walks."

Wanting to inspire even more people with birding, Mario launched the St. Thomas chapter of Audubon, heading new bird walks, workshops, and bird conservation projects annually at schools.

"I would go to the schools and give lectures, conduct demonstrations, build bird houses and feeders, and teach other skills," says Mario. "It instilled a great joy and admiration for wild creatures into the local residents."

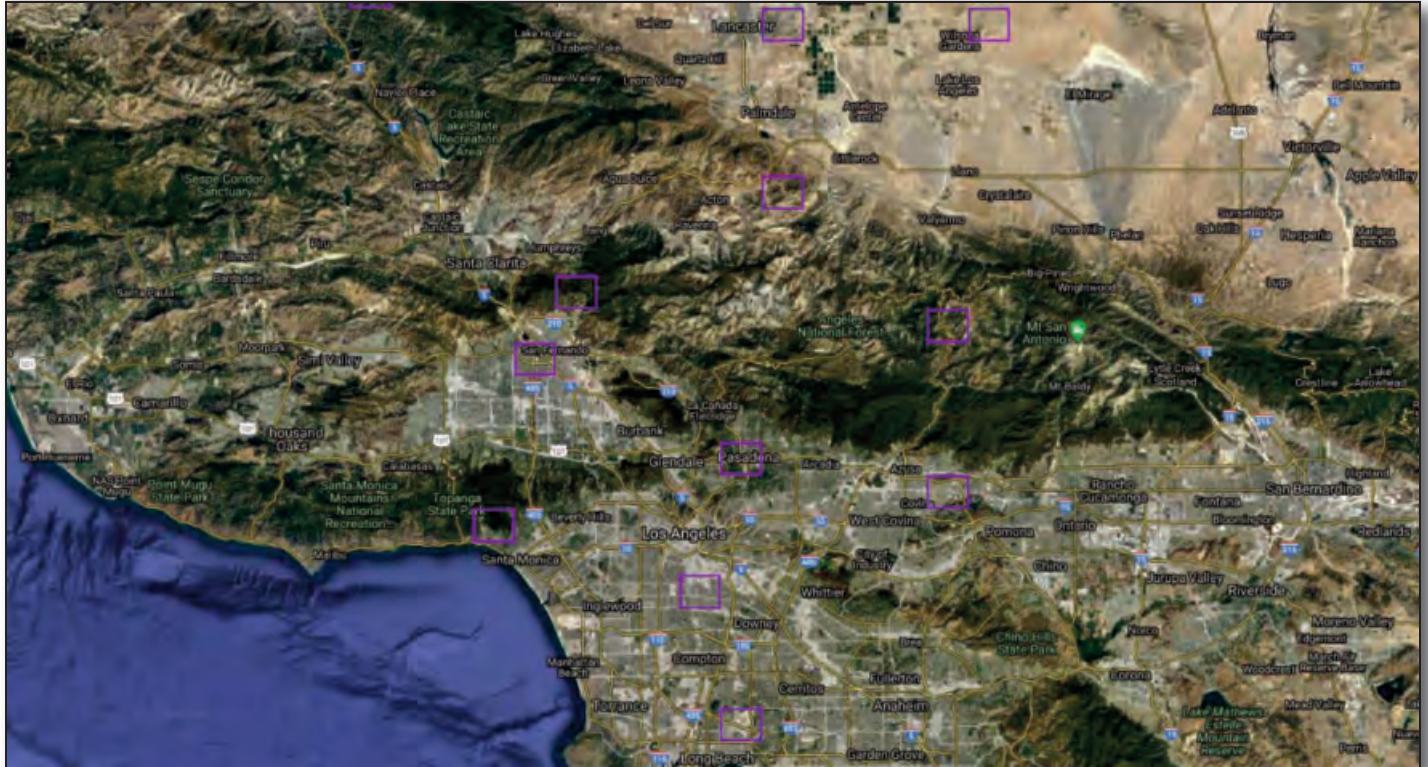
He was also chairman of Virgin Islands Urban and Community Forestry Council, served a six-year term as president of EAST, Environmental Association of St. Thomas, was Cofounder of Reef Rangers, and founded a landscape management company. No wonder everyone on the island knows this man. He is truly a man of the land, fiercely committed to nature and to training the island residents to be watchful keepers of the natural world.

As we had parted ways after a long day of birding and sightseeing, Mario had left us with the words that I imagine are his motto. "Keep on birding and acting for wildlife!" Good words to live by indeed.

# TRIAL WINTER BIRD ATLAS UNDERWAY

By Travis Longcore, President — Los Angeles Audubon Society

January 9, 2022



Longtime Los Angeles birders will remember the massive volunteer effort that went into the *Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas*. Fieldwork for that project was from 1995 to 1999, which will be 30 years ago in 2025. Given the time that has passed and the changes in the county, birders are thinking about an update of the Atlas.

The original *Bird Atlas* was for breeding birds only, but some bird atlases also incorporate wintering surveys. In contemplation that “round two” of the Los Angeles County atlas might include winter surveys, the relatively new group Los Angeles Birders, [www.labirders.org](http://www.labirders.org), has embarked on a trial effort for a winter bird atlas that is currently underway and continues until February 15, 2022.

The trial winter bird atlas uses *eBird* as a means to compile all bird observations in 12 census blocks from the original atlas. For those new to the atlas, a “block” is an area that is one-sixth of a standard USGS topographic quadrangle map. For the ongoing winter trial, one of those blocks is in Los Angeles Audubon Society territory (South Gate Northwest). (Our “territory” includes those zip codes assigned to us by National Audubon, as distinct from those

assigned to other LA County chapters.) The Pasadena Southeast block is also a trial location and looks to intersect LAAS territory in Northeast Los Angeles.

We encourage all birders to participate in the trial winter atlas by heading out to the hotspots within each of the trial atlas blocks, or birding within those blocks and reporting results using personal hotspots. Working out the logistics of using *eBird* for atlasing is one of the goals of this effort, so go for it. The blocks targeted for the winter atlas range from the urban to the wild, so there are many experiences to be had contributing to this effort.

A full description of the blocks, with an interactive map and atlas protocols is over at the Los Angeles Birders website:

[www.labirders.org/science\\_projects/winter\\_atlas\\_2021\\_2022.html](http://www.labirders.org/science_projects/winter_atlas_2021_2022.html)

Or, you can watch this presentation discussing the project on YouTube:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2DQKI8h8J8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2DQKI8h8J8)



## FROM OUR READERS

### UNTIL NEXT TIME ... GOODBYE SADIE

By Clara Young, Ph.D

December 9, 2021



**T**his past July has been a difficult and sad month for me as my dearest dog passed away in my arms. As many of you know, the heartache and the loss of a beloved pet can be absolutely devastating, and the grieving takes lots of time, as it cannot be rushed.

In order to honor her memory and life, and show my undying gratitude and love, I created a small garden in her favorite spot. I visit her daily to soothe my aching heart, as this world seems that much lonelier, emptier, and colder with one less loving creature by my side.

My little black dog was only 9 pounds, but everybody adored her big and feisty, but sweet personality, and unrelenting courage and loyalty. She never knew she was a small dog and she was the definite alpha in our pack. But above all else, and for mysterious reasons I will never understand, she made me her life, following and protecting me from all creatures, and believing that I was worthy of her unconditional love. She dedicated her one and only short life to me, as she followed me everywhere. I still expect to see her every time I turn around or open the door.

A few days after she left, as I was weeping in the garden, I saw a black butterfly come my way and it landed near me. I've never seen a black butterfly in my life. It waved its velvety wings softly, looking in my direction, and stayed by my side for a while, and then slowly flew away majestically and peacefully, and vanished into the blue sky.

It turns out that black butterflies are a rare sighting and it symbolizes death as well as rebirth. In some cultures, they are considered souls that come to say a final farewell before they journey into the next world.

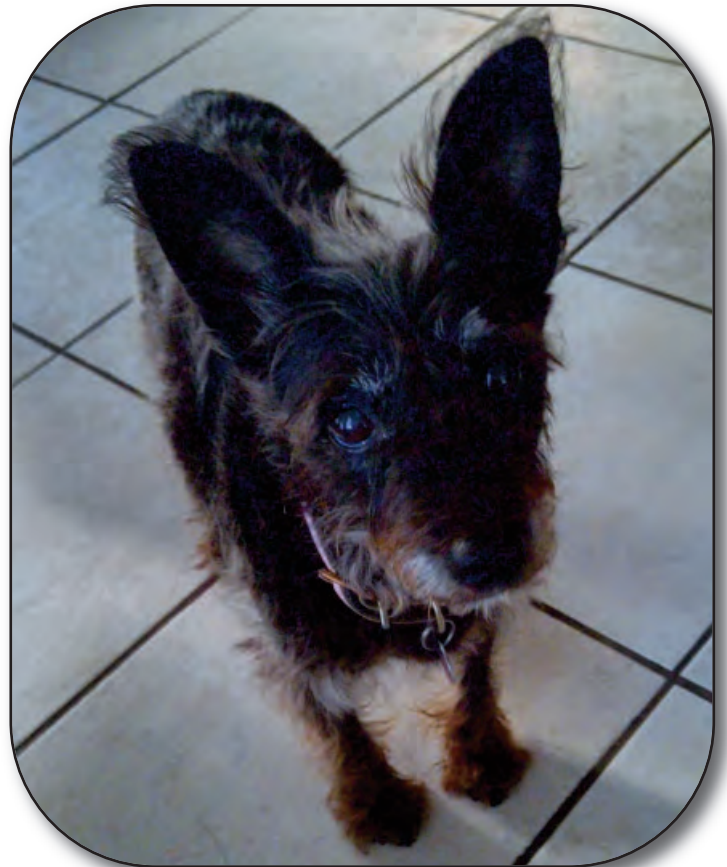
I'd like to think that was Sadie who came to say goodbye. It would be so like her to do that. I will miss her as long as I am alive, but I am truly elated that she is now free from earthly pain and is no longer anybody's pet or otherwise.

Life Always Goes On...

Death is part of life. So, hang onto those you love, and those who love you without question, as they do not belong to us, and they are here only for a short and precious visit.

Say "I love you and thank you," to them as often as you can. You can't say it enough in this mysterious lifetime.

Thank you. 🦋





# FROM OUR READERS

## A BOTANICAL COUNTY

By Judith Deutsch  
December 8, 2021



Chinese Garden at The Huntington | More information at: <https://www.huntington.org/>

Some of the best places to experience wildlife is in our own Los Angeles County botanic gardens. When I hear the words, “botanic gardens,” the first place to come to mind is The Huntington’s 130 acres in San Marino with 16 themed gardens, 27,000 types of living plants, and 16,000 species, where a coyote crossed my path in the Australian Garden, and the largest owl I have ever seen buzzed me for coming too close to her nest in a majestic tree across from the Museum’s Conservatory.

Next in line, would be the Los Angeles Arboretum, 127 acres of botanic wonders and migrating birds in Arcadia, and the perfect excuse to visit local Chinese restaurants and experience their afternoon dim sum carts!

The six-acre Virginia Robinson Gardens, [robinsongardens.org](http://robinsongardens.org), in Beverly Hills is a hidden botanic gem that includes a tour of the unpretentious Robinsons mansion. Yes, THAT Robinson family who had a store between Wilshire and Santa Monica Boulevards. Ms. Robinson was a nature lover who planted native and exotic plants and trees and kept monkeys on her property. Most people today are unaware that there was a Beverly Hills Speedway/Racetrack for automobile and motorcycle racing at Santa Monica and Wilshire, and equestrian trails going down major Beverly Hills streets from the 1920s to the 1960s promoting urban horsemanship. I remember buying my English riding gear at the Mayfair Equestrian Shop on Rodeo Drive as late as the 1970s.

Then we have the UCLA Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden outdoor classroom, research facility, and public garden on seven acres

of the UCLA Campus near Tiverton Drive in Westwood. It provides a safe urban haven for local and migrating birds in its Conifer, Cycad, Desert, Fern, Habitat (Hummingbird sage for the Allen’s hummingbird), Hawaiian Native Plant, Mediterranean Ecosystem, Palm, Subtropical Woodland, and Stream Gardens. It received the National Wildlife Federation Backyard Wildlife Habitat certification.

But few Los Angelinos are aware of our newest botanic garden, the former landfill, now South Coast Botanic Garden, on Crenshaw Boulevard in Palos Verdes Estates, [southcoastbotanicgarden.org](http://southcoastbotanicgarden.org). A remarkable achievement harboring 150,000 landscaped plants and trees representing 2,000 species organized into the Banyan Grove, Native California plants, a Mediterranean Garden, the Ficus Collection, the Children’s and Discovery Gardens, a Desert Garden, the Display Greenhouse, Rose and Dahlia Gardens, a Garden for the Senses, and Japanese Garden and Koi Pond. There is a seasonal GLOW evening celebration and a seasonal SOAR Butterfly Pavilion. At the entrance, we watched a very harried volunteer protect her cache of packaged people snacks from two, bold, rambunctious squirrels on a sugar high, who had already relieved her of a bag of Skittles and a Milky Way candy bar! We also tremendously enjoyed watching a Red-tailed hawk circle the gardens from above. Other birds of prey in Palos Verdes include the American Kestrel and Peregrine, Barn and Great Horned Owls, and the Red-tailed, Red-shouldered, Coopers, and Osprey Hawks. Peacocks rule the peninsula.

Start the year off right, grab your family and friends, and head for the County’s wide open botanic spaces!





*Cherry Blossoms at The Huntington*



*Chinese Gardens at The Huntington*



*South Coast Botanic Garden*



*South Coast Botanic Garden, SOAR exhibit/butterfly pavilion*



# BALLONA WETLANDS LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Interview with Ethan Greenberg, by Cindy Hardin, LAAS Director of Outdoor Education

January 14, 2022

*As Director of Outdoor Education for Los Angeles Audubon, I routinely see over 3,000 students a year on field trips to the Ballona Wetlands and Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. For the most part, we only see these students on one or two field trips, and then they are off to the next grade level and onward.*

*It is difficult to really quantify the impact of the students' experience from these trips, but occasionally a past attendee resurfaces, and we find that their field trip(s) really did have an impact on their lives and learning experiences. Ethan Greenberg is one such student, and I had the delightful experience of re-connecting with him last year as he worked on a special project for students deprived of a field trip due to the pandemic. Ethan graciously agreed to be interviewed about his experience at Ballona and the effect that it has had on his life. I am thrilled to share his thoughts with you, and to see that our mission to connect young people with wildlife can be quite substantive.*



**C.H.** — Can you tell me a little bit about your first trip to Ballona? How many years ago was that?

**E.G.** — My first trip to Ballona Wetlands was about nine years ago. I was in Mrs. Farris's third grade class at Grandview Elementary, and we went on a field trip to the Wetlands with the other third grade classes at my school. Grandview's third grade classes had been going on this field trip for many years. We explored the salt pan area behind the gate. We learned about the history of the area, the wetlands ecosystem, the plants, the animals, the butterflies, and (of course) the birds. I remember noticing some of the herons and egrets, and being fascinated by how they hunted. They could stand so still and then quickly "stab and grab" their prey. I was hooked.

**C.H.** — How did the field trip inspire your interest in birds, birding and the natural world?

**E.G.** — That was the day I started to fall in love with birds. I still have the "Birds of Ballona Wetlands" checklist from that trip. I remember being amazed by the sheer variety of birds in the wetlands. That day we saw all of the common herons and egrets, a variety of ducks

and shorebirds, a kingfisher, a pelican, and so much more. Before that trip, I don't think I noticed birds beyond the crows, pigeons, and sparrows in my neighborhood. But after that, I noticed the birds everywhere I went. My family is pretty outdoorsy to begin with; we always did a lot of hiking and camping. After Ballona, I started to incorporate birding into our travel. I'd research the birds that I might see, and I'd see how many I could find along the way. As I got older and started to study more biology, I also came to appreciate how the birds connect to their ecosystem and how important it was to protect different habitats.

**C.H.** — Any favorite outdoor spots, both locally and further afield?

**E.G.** — Locally, I still love visiting Ballona. And I also really enjoy Madrona Marsh and Polliwog Park, especially during spring migration. Some of my favorite birding excursions have been in Balcones Canyonlands, TX (near Austin), High Island, TX (near Houston), and Camp Colorado in Estes Park, CO (the week-long ABA camp for young birders).



C.H. — I know that we worked on a project last year that helped bring nature to students that were learning remotely. Could you please describe what motivated you to do this, and how that worked out?

E.G. — Some time around Thanksgiving of 2020, I realized that the pandemic had closed or cancelled so many things, it was probably limiting kids' field trips as well. And it just hit me: none of the Manhattan Beach third graders would get to go on the annual trip to Ballona Wetlands. I got really sad and upset, but I was determined to do something about it. I just couldn't bear the thought of those kids missing out on that trip and that chance to connect with nature. I started brainstorming ideas, and I came up with a plan to design a virtual field trip to Ballona Wetlands that I could present to kids on Zoom. I ran the idea by Mrs. Farris (my former third grade teacher), who connected me with a few other third grade teachers. She also connected me with you, which ensured I had a solid understanding of the Wetlands' history and the main points you teach in your actual tours. I built a draft presentation, with lots of photos and videos and games to keep the kids' attention. I rehearsed it with several elementary teachers I knew and tried to incorporate their feedback. In the end, I was able to present the hour-long session to nine different third grade classes — about 200 kids in total. A lot of them asked questions and seemed really engaged. When the pandemic calmed down in late Spring, 2021, I invited any interested kids and parents to join me for an in-person nature walk. We did it at Manhattan Beach Botanical Garden because Ballona was still closed. I taught the kids about some of the local plants, turtles, and butterflies, and I showed them how to identify some of the common birds. Fortunately, it was spring migration, so we saw a mother sparrow feeding her babies, and we saw a beautiful Western Tanager. I hope we can go back to in-person field trips to Ballona this spring. But if we can't, I plan to offer my virtual tours and local nature walks again to any of the third grade classes that may be interested.

C.H. — I know you are going away to college next Fall, and I think you mentioned your interest in birding on your application. Could you please tell me a little more about that?

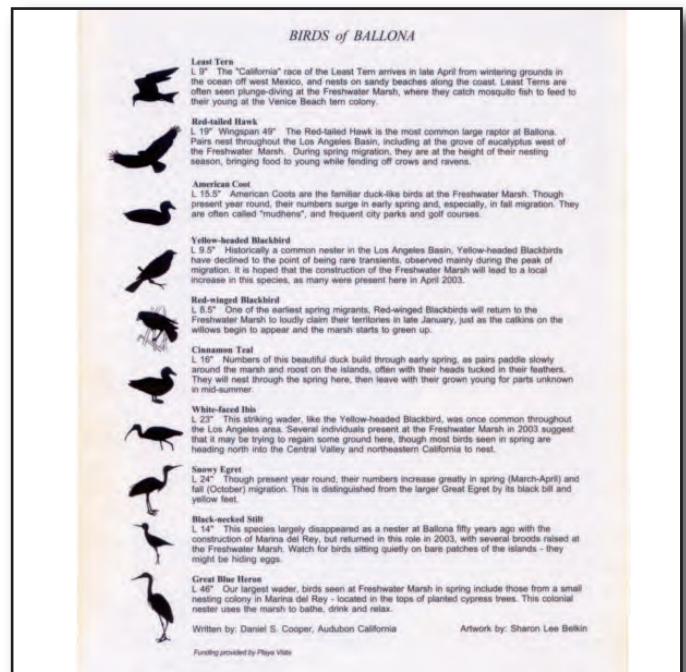
E.G. — For my personal statement (which I attached), I chose to write about my love of birds and birding. I talked about my connection to Ballona and my motivation to give back by creating the virtual field trip. I also talked about my internship this past summer in Sitka, AK. I spent a month working at the Alaska Raptor Center, where I helped diagnose and rehabilitate injured hawks, eagles, and owls. It was an amazing experience.

C.H. — You will be in a new part of the country this Fall—have you picked out any nature spots to visit on the other side of the country?

E.G. — I'll be headed to Dartmouth, in Hanover, New Hampshire. New Hampshire seems like it's one giant birding playground, especially since so many of the eastern species will be new to me. I'm really excited about spring migration and summer birding, since a lot of the beautiful eastern warblers don't just pass through New Hampshire, they actually nest and breed there for the summer. I also hope to get to Cape May, NJ some time during my four years on the East Coast. Everyone talks about what an amazing birding hotspot it is; I want to see it for myself.

C.H. — What would you say to a teacher that might be planning a trip to the Wetlands?

E.G. — Do it. And if you can get one kid to connect to nature, it's worth it. When I was leading my virtual field trips, that was my goal. If these presentations can spark one kid's interest in nature or butterflies or lizards, or if they could inspire one kid's passion for birding, then it will all have been worthwhile. Birding has brought me so much joy. Finding ways to get outside and connect to nature is so valuable. That connection lasts a lifetime. Anything a teacher can do to help kids see the wonders of nature and want to protect those natural spaces — that's a gift.



Birds of Ballona Laminated Field Guide to the Birds of Ballona | Written By Daniel S. Cooper, Audubon California Artwork by Sharon Lee Belkin

# JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2022 BIRD WALK CALENDAR

## 2nd Sunday–Open Wetlands at Ballona Salt Marsh

### Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve

Sunday, January 9, 2022 | 9:00 AM — 12:00 PM

#### Limited Participation | Call to RSVP

The second Sunday of every month (EXCEPT AUGUST), from 9 a.m. to noon, Los Angeles Audubon Society hosts the “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. To ensure social distancing, RSVPs are required and a limited number of slots are available. Please contact Cindy Hardin at [cindyhardin@laudubon.org](mailto:cindyhardin@laudubon.org) to reserve your time. Please call (310) 301-0050 if you have any questions.

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.

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## Franklin Canyon Bird Walk (with SFVAS)

Sunday, February 13, 2022

8:00 AM — 10:00 AM

#### Limited Participation | Call to RSVP

Paula Orlovich will lead this walk in one of L.A.’s hidden gems. Walk is limited to ten people due to narrow hiking trails. Contact Paula by text to reserve a spot: (818) 481-5605

Franklin Canyon Park rests on 605 acres near the center of Los Angeles between the San Fernando Valley and Beverly Hills. Within the park boundaries are chaparral, grasslands and oak woodlands, a three-acre lake, an ADA-accessible duck pond, expansive picnic grounds, and over five miles of hiking trails. The lake and pond serve as permanent and seasonal home for birds in the Pacific flyway, including the spectacular Mandarin Duck to the right. Park features include the Sooky Goldman Nature Center, the Sam Goldman Amphitheater, and the Eugene and Michael Rosenfeld Auditorium.

**Directions:** From the San Fernando Valley, take the Ventura Freeway (101) or Ventura Boulevard to Coldwater Canyon Boulevard. Head south to the intersection of Coldwater Canyon and Mulholland Drive. Make a 90-degree right turn onto Franklin Canyon Drive. (This means crossing Mulholland) Road signs read “Road Closed 800 Feet” “Sunset to Sunrise”; this is the park entrance. Observe speed limits and make a full stop at the stop sign — they’ll get you with a camera if you don’t. Meet in the parking lot on the left. The walk is on a trail.

For more information:  
<https://www.sfvaudubon.org/birding-spots/franklin-canyon/>

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## 3rd Saturday–Bird Walk at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area

Saturday, February 19, 2022

8:00 AM — 12:00 PM

Leaders: Ann and Eric Brooks

This walk covers landscaped parkland, an artificial creek, and lake and natural and restored areas of Coastal Sage Scrub habitats within the Baldwin Hills. We are likely to see many of the resident birds such as Black Phoebe, Cassin’s Kingbird, California and Spotted Towhee, Song Sparrow, Red-tailed, Red-shoulder and Cooper’s Hawk.

The park entrance is off of La Cienega Blvd. between Rodeo Rd. and Stocker St. After passing the entrance kiosk (\$6.00 parking fee) turn left (leading to the “Olympic Forest”) and park in the first available spaces. (4100 S. La Cienega Blvd, Los Angeles 90056). Binoculars provided.

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## Beginner’s Bird Walk - Will Rogers State Historic Park

Sunday, February 16 (& March 20)

9:00 AM — 11:00 AM

#### RSVP Required | Limit 10

Join leaders Julie Hanson and Jane Klein for a beginners bird walk at this beautiful coastal location. Leaders will cover the basics of binocular use, bird identification, and common Los Angeles birds. Experienced birders welcome too. Some binoculars available to borrow.

Children ages 8 and up welcome with parent. Please RSVP in advance by text to (310) 922-8153; limited to 10.

Meet at the picnic tables next to the parking lot at Will Rogers State Historic Park at: 1501 Will Rogers State Park Road in Pacific Palisades 90272.

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## 3RD SATURDAY COMMUNITY BIRD WALK AUDUBON CENTER AT DEBS PARK

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2022

8:00AM - 10:00AM PACIFIC

**WHERE:** THE CENTER IS LOCATED AT 4700 N GRIFFIN AVE. MEET IN THE CENTER COURTYARD (STRAIGHT AHEAD AS YOU WALK THROUGH THE BLACK DECORATIVE GATES). FREE PARKING IS AVAILABLE IN THE LOT OR ALONG GRIFFIN AVE.

#### WHAT TO BRING:

- HAT AND/OR SUNSCREEN
- REUSABLE WATER BOTTLE
- COMFORTABLE WALKING SHOES
- BINOCULARS AND/OR FIELD GUIDES IF YOU HAVE THEM. IF NOT, NO WORRIES! WE HAVE BINOCULARS AVAILABLE TO BORROW ONSITE.

#### PLEASE KEEP IN MIND:

*MASKS ARE REQUIRED REGARDLESS OF VACCINATION STATUS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING WILL BE MAINTAINED.*

NO PREVIOUS BIRDING EXPERIENCE REQUIRED!

#### ATTENDEES MUST RSVP BEFOREHAND.

ALL AGES ARE WELCOME, HOWEVER THESE WALKS ARE BEST SUITED FOR ADULTS AND KIDS AGES 9 AND UP.

ATTENDEES SHOULD EXPECT TO BE WALKING FOR ABOUT AN HOUR AND A HALF. PLEASE PLAN ACCORDINGLY.

CENTER BINOCULARS WILL BE SANITIZED AFTER EACH USE.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[HTTPS://DEBSPARK.AUDUBON.ORG/EVENTS/COMMUNITY-BIRD-WALK-7](https://debspark.audubon.org/events/community-bird-walk-7)

OR

[HTTPS://DEBSPARK.AUDUBON.ORG/EVENTS/COMMUNITY-BIRD-WALK-3](https://debspark.audubon.org/events/community-bird-walk-3)