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# WESTERN TANAGER



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*From Mt. Wilson Observatory looking east to Mt. Baldy, by Mary Freeman*



## Marsh Madness at Ballona

By Don Sterba

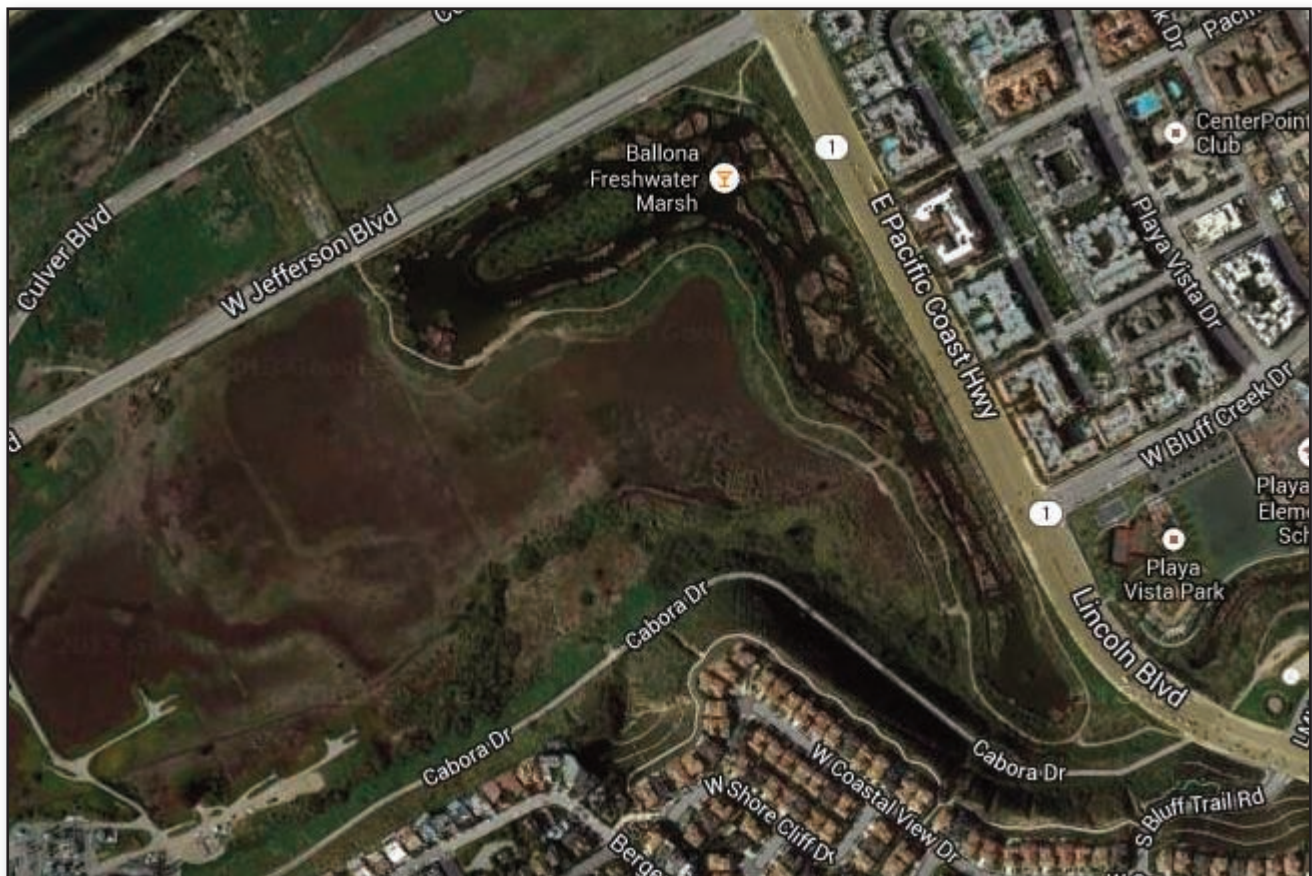
*There once was a Ballona coot  
That said "I just don't give a hoot  
To migrate away  
And then come back some day  
While wearing this stifling black suit!*

**T**HE BALLONA FRESHWATER MARSH (BFM), CLOSE to Marina del Rey and about 4 miles from my home in Culver City, is ideally located for my low-mileage birding activities, and I've been traversing its paths regularly ever since its public opening in 2003. This L-shaped marsh occupies roughly 27 acres of land in the southwest corner of the Lincoln Blvd-Jefferson Blvd intersection, and a public path lies between these streets and the water (a gated interior path is off-limits). Visitors may park only along the southern side of Jefferson Blvd. In the following notes I give a chronological synopsis of a few events that have made BFM a very special eBird Hotspot for me.

**Nov 28, 2002:** While birding along Cabora Dr, an access road carved into the side of the Playa del Rey bluffs just west of Lincoln Blvd, I found 6 American White Pelicans patrolling a small patch of water in what would become BFM a few months later. It would be 6 more years until the next AMWP showed up here on eBird. April 19, 2003: Jeannie Tamaki and I attended an opening-day public tour of BFM, and at the south end was an alternate plumaged Red-throated Loon – still the only one ever reported here.

**Oct 4, 2003:** In the distance I saw two birds on the ground in back of some sparse vegetation, and initially I thought they might be Savannah Sparrows with distinct, pale streaks on their backs, but as I approached I realized – Yikes!! - they were Red-throated Pipits. Bruce Broadbooks and Barbara Elliott, nearby residents, came over to confirm the sighting.

**Nov 8, 2003:** Richard Barth found an American Tree Sparrow and called me at home. I hurried (to put it mildly) over and joined Kevin Larson for a brief spotting scope view of the rarity before it disappeared. We all thought what a magical birding spot this marsh has been during its first seven months.



*Bird's eye view of the Ballona Freshwater Marsh (from a Google Map)*



*“...Fire burn and cauldron bubble.: Jan. 9, 2008*

**Aug 23, 2005:** On this day I had my first views of a juvenile Least Bittern, sort of a signature bird for BFM, and LEBI now nest here annually. The public path is quite close to the water and reeds, and it’s fairly easy (but not guaranteed) in spring and early summer to hear LEBI singing their soft, delicate coo-coo-coo song that is in sharp contrast to their loud, harsh contact or alarm call.

**Sep 19, 2007:** “Double, double, toil and trouble...” A peculiar sight on this day was a witches’ brew of odd, haze-spewing bubbles that were rising and erupting in water near the elbow (where the marsh changes direction at the Lincoln-Jefferson Blvd intersection). Here’s my email to Dr. Edith Read, BFM preserve manager...

“The bubbles were white (or very pale gray) in color, and usually remained intact on the surface of the water for several seconds. When they burst, smoke-like fumes escaped into the air. The fumes seemed to dissipate after a few seconds and not linger in the air. After a few minutes bubble formation gradually died out, and the water was calm again.”

Edith, too, was baffled, and we both forgot about the incident until Jan 9, 2008, when I again saw similar bubbles in a slightly different location, and I had visions of a major ecological scandal that begged for some detective work. I sent Edith a photo of the presumed noxious bubbles, and the next day she reported back with an explanation. Vector Control of LA Co. was (and still does) monitoring the Ballona area for mosquitoes in connection with the West Nile virus, and since mosquitoes are attracted to concentrations of carbon dioxide in the air, traps set out for the insects were baited with dry ice (frozen CO<sub>2</sub>). After replenishing their traps with dry ice, Vector Control staff would sometimes toss any excess into the marsh to watch it bubble and “steam”. After being informed that such dumping of dry ice causes localized kill of aquatic organisms, Vector Control staff ceased that particular means of disposal and amusement.



**Jan 11, 2008:** For about 3 winters the extreme southern end of BFM was a reliable collection point for Wilson’s Snipe, and on this day I had my all-time high count of 71 WISN mostly within a narrow stretch of shoreline only about 100 ft long. Several months later a maintenance crew cleared some vegetation out of this area, and the local winter snipe population decreased to low single digits or none at all.

**May 17, 2008:** Kevin Larson called me at home about a juvenile Little Blue Heron he found at the marsh, and I rushed over to take photos. This bird stayed past mid-July when it displayed attractive mottled colors in transition to adult plumage, and this remains the only well-documented LBHE at BFM on eBird.

**June 6, 2008:** While on a monthly bird survey for Edith, I heard a loud, repetitive song coming from the north-end willows. “Sweet sweet sweet sweet” could be from an odd-sounding Wilson’s Warbler, I thought, but I kept searching for the well-hidden songster, and persistence paid off with a Prothonotary Warbler, the first live spring migrant PROW recorded in LA Co. (an earlier one was found deceased in a Lancaster backyard).



*Black-necked Stilt female with three young, June 13, 2012*

**Sep 17, 2008:** I often get lazy near the end of a walk, and I thought the small bird moving around in reeds about 50 yards away had to be either a Common Yellowthroat or a Marsh Wren, so why bother checking it out – but I was glad I did, as it was my only BFM Northern Waterthrush.

**Sep 22, 2009:** An Eastern Phoebe showed up along the Lincoln leg of BFM to become the 2nd earliest fall record in LA Co. Kimball Garrett mentioned that since the earlier bird was a sight record, mine was the earliest “strongly-documented” record because I had photos. It pays to carry a camera!



*Anna’s Hummingbird male, April 27, 2010*



*“Least” Bell’s Vireo male, April 20, 2010*

**April 20, 2010:** In the past, a few “Least” Bell’s Vireos were recorded passing through BFM during migration, but the persistent singer I found on this day attracted a mate, and together they fledged two young to establish the first successful BEVI breeding record in the Ballona area.

**June 24, 2012:** “John be nimble, John be quick...” My email to Edith:

“This morning at around 7 AM a group of people (men & women) with Huskie type dogs and bicycles made fairly fast “mushing” runs along the public path. They had about 4 bicycles pulled by 2 or 3 dogs each at speeds of roughly 10 to 15 mph. I was talking to another birder, John Ivanov, when he barely managed to avoid being tripped by a dog leash as the dog ran the wrong way around him, and John jumped into the air with perfect timing to avoid the leash.”

Of course this type of activity is inappropriate at an Ecological Reserve, with Killdeer sometimes nesting within a few feet of the path, but being non-confrontational by nature, especially when facing large dogs that do not know me, I let Edith determine who should deal with this group. The mushers continued their occasional early-morning runs until relevant authorities eventually caught them in the act on August 5.

If you use eBird.org to generate a list of all bird species recorded at BFM, beware of ill-documented data. Some BFM-labeled checklists I’ve scanned appear to be for other areas, such as Ballona Creek or even the beach, and not within the well-defined boundary of BFM. Also, some checklists include rarities without comments, so don’t believe everything you read.

Your best source for a reliable BFM species list is Edith Read’s compilation, a conservative list of 230+ species seen “using” the BFM area and omits pure flyovers. Copies of her list are available in a wooden box affixed to the fence near the large BFM welcome sign just west of the Jefferson-Lincoln Blvd intersection. For a detailed avian account, historic and fairly current, of the entire Ballona Wetlands, not just BFM, go to Dan Cooper’s website [cooperecological.com/BallonaBirds.htm](http://cooperecological.com/BallonaBirds.htm) and access his various Ballona links.

In addition to birds and bubbles, there are many other interesting things at BFM to look for such as snakes, mammals, butterflies, dragonflies etc. And one last note for anyone visiting this area, the “Fresh” in BFM refers to street runoff, so don’t drink the water!

Don Sterba  
Culver City 



*American Kestrel female, June 26, 2011*



# INTERPRETING NATURE

By Stacey Vigallon, Director of Interpretation

Los Angeles Audubon Youth Education Programs: Here's Why It's Worth the Effort...



A student in the first year of the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program teaches her peers about the watershed (January 2009).

**A**S A LOS ANGELES AUDUBON STAFF MEMBER, IT'S NOT unusual to be asked why we don't focus more on conservation, habitat restoration, and species monitoring? Given the scope of the very immediate problems facing biodiversity, don't education programs just draw from already limited funding and take time away from addressing important conservation goals? And, hey, don't kids get all the information they need in school anyway? The short answer is that youth environmental education is an essential tactic needed to address the biodiversity crisis. The long answer encompasses personal beliefs about conservation as well as long-term strategies for achieving conservation goals.

I am extremely indebted to the people in my life who helped me connect with nature. As a nature-nerd

kid who grew up to study science, I was fortunate to spend my childhood in an agricultural area with abundant open space, with parents who encouraged rock collections, backyard camping, and digging in the dirt. My time spent in front of the TV was highly restricted, while my time reading, drawing, and running around outside was pretty much an unregulated market: laissez-faire access to nature and critical thinking activities. Given these circumstances, it is not particularly surprising that I became an adult who greatly values nature and sees the importance of its conservation. By contrast, kids growing up in Los Angeles reside in one of the most park-poor cities in the country, and most attend schools where very strong emphasis is placed on succeeding on standardized tests as opposed to hands-on outdoor activities. Youth in Los Angeles face serious obstacles that can prevent them from connecting with nature in a

meaningful way, from seeing how the science they learn in class relates to the actual world, from gaining an understanding of how social justice and environmental justice often overlap.

How are environmental education programs a good investment for an Audubon chapter? I would counter with a couple quick questions: Do you like birds? Would you like them to be around in the future? This will require actively teaching young people in urban centers how (and why) to care for nature – in both the here-and-now-local-park sense and the abstract concept of nature. People who grow up with the understanding and vision to think outside just themselves and the city they live in are able to think critically about the ramifications of how humans use land locally, nationally, and globally. Understanding what a watershed is, how a candy bar wrapper thrown on the ground in the middle of the city affects wildlife at the beach, having a sense of the cardinal directions without using a GPS system – these are all examples of very basic concepts that can help provide young people with a sense of place and a direct connection to the value of nature in daily life. You don't have to keep a life list to love birds, and you don't have to become a biologist to help with conservation. The environmental and social justice movements need compassionate critical thinkers from all professions – teachers, architects, engineers, farmers, fashion designers, filmmakers, park rangers, auto mechanics, solar panel installation technicians.

In terms of a bottom line for conservation, the connections that kids build now to nature and to their communities has the potential to profoundly affect how they vote as adults and how they raise their own kids. Some of the students that have graduated from our education programs ARE now parents. A current mom who was part of the very first class of our Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program told me that, "being in the Eco Club and the Greenhouse Program definitely changed the way I view the world...It made me appreciate more of what this planet has to offer from the smallest bug to the tallest tree. I will continue to teach [my son] all I know in hopes that he will be more aware of what's happening to our planet." Another high school student described her involvement in one of Los Angeles Audubon's education programs as "life-changing" after her first year, and her goal is to become a wildlife biologist in the future. And finally, one of our third-year interns clearly embraces the idea that a connection with nature can be seamlessly integrated into careers outside of science

saying, "not only do I want to study ecology, but I want to implement ecology in my future business career."

But what about right now? Do these programs result in ANY direct conservation actions? Based on what we've observed in the past several years, the answer is yes. Joyce Realegeno convinced her family to remove their lawn and replace it with native plants. Brian Young was asked by his church to help re-landscape using native plants. Andrea Ascencio, now a student at UC Merced, is integrating things she learned with Los Angeles Audubon into her university's ecoclub activities. Education program alumni routinely participate in species monitoring and habitat restoration volunteer activities when they're home on break from college. Dorsey High School is largely responsible for keeping invasive sea rocket at manageable levels at the California Least Tern colony on Venice beach, and for removing pampas grass from a restoration site at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. Signs created by elementary school students serve to educate beach-goers about Snowy Plovers at Malibu Lagoon and Least Terns at Venice Beach. And, native birds like the Ash-throated Flycatcher, Say's Phoebe, and Western Meadowlark are showing up at the Politi Schoolyard Habitat in the Pico-Union area. These are all small conservation victories worth celebrating. Now just imagine the collective impact of a thousand small victories moving into the future of conservation in Los Angeles.

Below you'll find a quick run-down of our current youth education programs...

### **Ballona Wetlands Education Program**

Established over 20 years ago through efforts by Los Angeles Audubon, Santa Monica Bay Audubon Society, and Audubon California, the Ballona Wetlands Education Program aims to introduce students in grades 3-5 to the wonders of the last functioning tidal wetland in Los Angeles. Last year 1,967 students from 27 different schools from all over Los Angeles, most of which were underserved inner-city schools, visited the wetlands. Viewing wildlife at the salt marsh, from Great Blue Herons to tiny aquatic invertebrates, is always a high light of the field trip for students.

### **Kenneth Hahn Education Program**

This program was established in the 2009-2010 school year at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area in the Baldwin Hills. It aims to compliment the Ballona Wetlands Education Program by introducing students to



upland coastal sage scrub habitat within the Ballona Creek Watershed, and its curriculum reach extends to sixth grade. Last year alone, about 1300 students explored the native plant and wildlife garden, observed first-hand the unique geology of the LA Basin, and learned about the importance of greenspace in urban areas for migratory birds.

### **Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program**

After collaborating with the Dorsey High School eco-club in the 2007-2008 school year for a habitat restoration event and a bird count, we established the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program the following year, starting with 12 students. This year, we accepted 65 students into this program. This program pays students from a highly impacted inner-city school to conduct scientific research at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park, develop and implement environmental curriculum for elementary school students, and lead community volunteers in habitat restoration projects. Through these endeavors, students actively engage and improve their communities and gain valuable work experience for their college and professional resumes. Students graduating from this program have gone on to some of the top universities in the country, including Brown University, UCLA, UC Berkeley, and Williams College. Many students continue to participate in Audubon conservation and education programs after graduation as well.

### **Science Illustration Program**

Serving 40-60 students each year, mostly at the elementary school level, the Science Illustration Program kicked off in 2010 when students created Snowy Plover conservation posters as part of Audubon California's Share the Shore grant program. Culminating each year in the Conservation Art Show, the Science Illustration program has steadily engaged students in projects that combine conservation and art, producing the Kill Your Lawn comic book, the Field Guide to Politi Elementary School, and nine online galleries of student work. Student illustrations have been featured in Audubon Magazine.

### **Politi Elementary Schoolyard Habitat**

In 2009, Los Angeles Audubon and Politi Elementary School in the Pico-Union neighborhood teamed up to install a native habitat on 6,000 square feet of underutilized school yard, with the help of a US Fish and Wildlife grant. The schoolyard habitat has been essential in engaging students, staff, parents, and the community in hands-on nature activities in a neighborhood largely de-

void of open space. On-campus programs have grown organically with the habitat, including lunch-time "field trips" to the habitat for students in first and second grades, as well as the very active Audubon Club, whose students' frequent visits to the habitat result in bird research projects and conservation-themed poetry. The project was featured on the front page of the Los Angeles Times in April of 2012.

### **Los Angeles Audubon Summer Camp**

This new program was launched during the summer of 2013, with a goal of engaging recent graduates from Politi Elementary who are headed to middle schools throughout Los Angeles. For more details (and photos!) of this program, check out the Interpreting Nature column from the Sept/Oct 2013 issue of the *Western Tanager*.

### **Snowy Plover and Least Tern Outreach**

Linking public school students to conservation efforts to protect Snowy Plovers and Least Terns has been underway at Los Angeles Audubon since 2007. Students from Dorsey High School's eco-club just completed their 13th visit to the Least Tern colony this past September, and students from 186th Street Elementary have joined them for the past several school years. Hundreds of public school students have participated in field trips to view Snowy Plovers since 2010, mainly at the protective enclosure at Dockweiler Beach. Thanks to a recent Whale Tail grant in collaboration with Audubon California and San Diego Audubon, hundreds more students will meet a Snowy Plover for the first time this school year as well.

Yes, it costs money to sustain existing programs, to reach out to new parts of the city, to provide bus transportation to highly impacted urban schools, to pay for staff time, volunteer training, and program materials. We are always hunting for new funding opportunities to keep these programs going. Financial support from organizations like Toyota TogetherGreen, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Audubon California, the Baldwin Hills Conservancy, Johnny Mercer Foundation, Santa Monica Bay Audubon Society, SONY, Southern California Edison, the Whale Tail grant program, an extremely generous donation from an anonymous donor, and small donations from many donors have supported various programs throughout the years. It's a good investment in the future of conservation. 🐦



Dear Friends of Los Angeles Audubon:

Please consider a donation to LA Audubon as the year draws to a close. If you are a member, please consider an additional gift. If you are not a member, please take this opportunity to join. Why? Because we need you.

This year, we continue to focus on our elementary, middle, and high school environmental education programs and we once again have an anonymous donor who will match any donations made as part of this campaign. These programs touch the lives of thousands of children and young men and women each year, and help them connect to birds and nature. They are the future of conservation, and with your help, we can do more.

Here is how we would put your donation to work:

<b>\$10</b> One training packet containing essential science and conservation reading for a Greenhouse Program student	<b>\$100</b> Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program t-shirts for 12 students (we need 40 shirts)
<b>\$15</b> Replace a broken compass for a student to navigate with during a field trip	<b>\$120</b> A portable EZ-up shade tent for use during field ecology classes
<b>\$20</b> Rite-in-the-rain© field notebooks for 3 Greenhouse Interns	<b>\$250</b> Provide the feast for the “Food Ecology” session of the Greenhouse Program summer boot camp for 40 students
<b>\$30</b> Color media art kits for 12 young science illustrators in training	<b>\$400</b> A bus for 65 students to attend a field trip at Debs Park or Ballona Wetlands
<b>\$35</b> Black and white media art kits for 12 young science illustrators in training	<b>\$500</b> Stipend for one Greenhouse Program Restoration Leader for one academic year
<b>\$80</b> Replace a broken pair of binoculars	<b>\$1000</b> Stipend for one Greenhouse Program Intern for one academic year
<b>\$80</b> Production cost of one mounted research poster created by a Greenhouse Intern	<b>\$2000</b> One 5-week science illustration workshop for 40 elementary school students
<b>\$90</b> Provide one dissecting microscope to the science illustration program or Kenneth Hahn Program	

Our many active volunteers, staff, and board share a vision that Los Angeles Audubon can continue to grow as a leader for education and conservation, restoration and birding in Los Angeles and the greater region.

We cannot do this without your continued support.

No matter where you live, or how much you can give, please join in our work by making a year-end donation by following the link below. If you have never given before we pledge to find a matching donation to cover a full membership no matter how much you give.

To make a donation to Los Angeles Audubon visit [www.laaudubon.org](http://www.laaudubon.org) and click the Donate button.

Los Angeles Audubon is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit and a certified chapter of the National Audubon Society. We work together as an Audubon Network to promote the enjoyment and conservation of birds around the world and to educate the next generation of birders and conservationists.

To support this work in Los Angeles and promote our cutting-edge urban education and citizen science programs, please become a Los Angeles Audubon member or send an additional donation today! And don't forget, any amount you give will be doubled by our matching donor.

For the birds,

Los Angeles Audubon Society Board of Directors

Travis Longcore  
Margot Griswold  
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Kara Donohue  
Bradley Rumble  
Lisa Fimiani

David De Lange  
and  
Carol Babeli, Development Director

## Ballona Docents Head North

By Cindy Hardin, Environmental Education, Photographs by Leslie Davidson

**T**HE BALLONA DOCENT CREW HEADED NORTH ON AUGUST 8TH TO VISIT THE WESTERN FOUNDATION OF VERTEBRATE ZOOLOGY, LOCATED in Camarillo. The field trip was suggested by long-time Los Angeles Audubon member Dexter Kelly, who spends much of his time volunteering at the Foundation. It is an amazing facility, and contains the largest collection of nests and eggs in the United States. They also have a huge number of mounted birds, skins and skeletons, which provided no end of fascination and intrigue for our group.

We were fortunate enough to be guided through the collection by staff researcher Rene Corado. Rene is incredibly knowledgeable about the avian world, and entertained our crowd with tales of field research in the jungles of the rainforest. His talents at storytelling and sharing information had the docents hanging on his every word! Following is some photographic documentation of our excursion.



Rene displays the tool used to drain specimen eggs. We have several eggs that we bring to our pre-field trip presentations which are displayed to students. One of the questions most frequently asked by the children is “what happened to the baby?”. We tell the students that the egg was drained before it became a chick; now we all know how!

Not only is the egg collection huge, some of the eggs are as well! Rene is displaying the egg of the long extinct Elephant Bird, a creature that resembled an ostrich on steroids.







Particularly fascinating and relevant to our group was the side by side display of the eggs of a healthy Brown Pelican compared to those of a Pelican that had been contaminated with DDT. We see these magnificent birds frequently on student field trips to Ballona, and also bring a Pelican skull to the schools when we visit. We take the time to tell the children of the environmental success story of the Brown Pelican's recovery after nearly forty years on the Endangered Species list. We like to inspire our future stewards of the environment!



Rene displays the skin of a Red Tailed Hawk, one of the many thousands housed by the Foundation.



This Osprey with lunch in his talons is one of the many mounted birds (or realia) that fills the Foundation's quite large building. Species from all over the world sit atop storage cabinets, hang from the ceiling, are displayed in glass cases and are mounted on the wall.

Dexter Kelly, chief instigator of our trip, displays a carcass found on the beach to Jane Beseda and Frances Sotcher. Those of you who know Dexter will not be surprised to know that he is involved in many citizen science projects to further our knowledge about birds. One of his interests is the collection of expired birds found on the beaches in an effort to discover what species are present not only directly on the coast but off-shore as well.



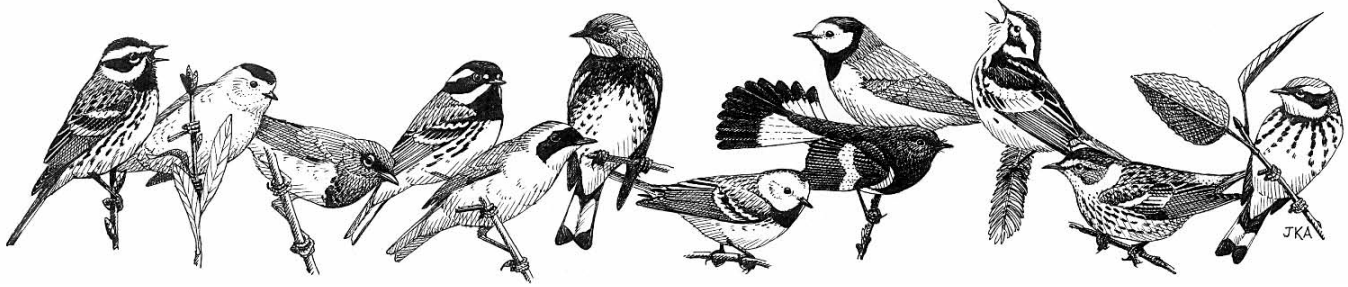




We continued our excursion to Hollywood Beach with Dexter in search of more avian fun and some Western Snowy Plovers. Apparently, these diminutive shorebirds have been spending time on the beaches of Oxnard and Point Hueneme, and sure enough we were able to spot a few. Dexter assists volunteer Rosaline Gould with the scope, as Emily Reed and Carol Babeli wait their turn to view the Plovers.

It was an informative and fun-filled day, and concluded with lunch at a local restaurant called Fisherman's Catch. The name of the eatery is quite appropriate, as it is actually owned by a local resident with a small commercial fishing operation, and run by his family—Mrs. Fisherman took our orders!

The Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology is primarily a research facility and mostly closed to the public. They do have a monthly open house day on the last Friday of the month, and anyone with the least amount of interest in birds would be well served to take a spin up Highway One to take a look at their collection. Nice staff, a terrific library, and all those specimens! Thanks to the Foundation and to Dexter for helping to make the trip happen—we loved it! 🐦



## BIRDS OF THE SEASON — OCTOBER 2013, BY JON FISHER

**W**ITHOUT MIGRATION BIRDING WOULD BE A relatively dull pursuit with few surprises. Fortunately most birds have evolved to take advantage of their ability to fly—exploiting the seasons by avoiding extreme conditions and going where resources are most abundant. Even better is that some move great distances to do so, occasionally causing them to end up far from where they ought to be. Autumn highlights these avian journeys and is an excellent time for birders in southern California.

As usual, most rare birds were found on the heavily urbanized coastal slope because of greater coverage, the concentrative effects of the coastline and simply more available habitat. Though it's naturally tempting to go where vagrants are most likely to be found—or where they have already been found—good birds can turn up almost anywhere and simple coverage is often the key.

The lower LA River—a part time garbage dump abused and misused by many entities—continued to be excellent for shorebirds. Though there were no spectacular vagrants found here after July's Red-necked Stint, a great many birds continued to use this area to feed and rest. As usual, the more pristine and more remote Piute Ponds were also good for shorebirds.

In contrast to last fall, there was little detectable movement of montane species into the lowlands. Red-breasted Nuthatches and Mountain Chickadees—both widespread on the coastal slope last fall—were largely absent.

Sparrows and other seedeaters were abundant where suitable habitat existed. It's remarkable what a good patch of weeds and grass can produce. To affirm this, one need look no further than Arcadia's Peck Road Water Conservation Park where decreasing water levels produced ideal conditions for such birds.

Waterfowl of interest included a summering **Redhead** on the LA River in Long Beach from July through at least August 21 (Jeff Boyd). Very unusual was a summering **Hooded Merganser** at Apollo Park near Lancaster through September 23 (John Birsner). Also at Apollo Park was an early **Common Merganser** present from August 23 through most of September (Lynda Elkin).

Anyone who wanted to see the **Arctic Loon** at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas was afforded plenty of time to do so. It continued through September 28, making for a four month overlay.

Very rare was a **Hawaiian Petrel** observed in LA County waters—albeit about 100 miles south of Long Beach—on September 5 (Jon Feenstra). This was only the fourth county record of “Dark-rumped” Petrel, which includes the difficult to separate Hawaiian and Galapagos Petrels. Increasingly recorded in the waters off northern California, Hawaiian Petrels remain very rare in LA County waters. To date, no Galapagos Petrel has been confirmed in California, though a few birds have not been resolved to species.

Other seabirds of note were a **Flesh-footed Shearwater** and a **Red-billed Tropicbird** over the San Clemente Basin on October 5 (Ken Walsh). Though it would seem counterintuitive, this location due west of Baja California is within LA County waters, as the nearest point of land is San Clemente Island.

A whale-watching trip on September 2 turned up the county's ninth **Masked Booby** (Darren Dowell) and a **Brown Booby** (John Garrett) a few miles south of Long Beach. On October 6, two **Masked Boobies**—one possibly the same bird seen a month earlier—were near the Long Beach Harbor entrance (Kurt Radamaker). Both continued through October 13.



As nice as those birds were, the big story centered around **Blue-footed Boobies**. The first report—a sight record of a bird over the 210 Freeway in Pasadena on September 11 (Janet Scheel)—might understandably have been viewed with some degree of skepticism were it not for the records that were soon to follow. In fact, the next three birds were found the following day—single birds were off Santa Monica Beach (Dan Cooper), at Legg Lake in South El Monte (Kevin & Ryan Long) and over the LA River in Long Beach (Karen Gilbert, Jeff Boyd). Another—likely one of the birds seen earlier in the area—was at Peck Water Conservation Park in Arcadia from September 16–23 (David Bell).

On September 14, seven Blue-footed Boobies were present at the Ballona Creek mouth (Darren Dowell, Frank & Susan Gilliland). At least five continued through October 11 with a high count of eleven birds. Elsewhere in the state, well over one hundred were at the Salton Sea, and others—mostly sightings of one to two birds—were from as far north as Bodega Bay.

There were also a handful of inland records away from the Salton Sea, all of these from Los Angeles County south. While one can only guess the total number of birds that were present in the state, this was the most significant flight year on record and the most notable since 1972 when fewer than fifty individuals were recorded.

Unusual more than a short distance from the immediate coast was a **Brown Pelican** at Lake Balboa on August 24 (Mike Stensvold). This sighting coincided with reports of several others well inland in southern California, but away from the Salton Sea where they are common.

Rare in the county was a probable immature **Little Blue Heron** along lower Ballona Creek from September 15–23 (John Oliver) and a **Reddish Egret** at Ballona Lagoon in Marina del Rey from September 22–24 (Mark & Janet Scheel, Frank & Susan Gilliland). Scarce but far less rare, a **Cattle Egret** was along lower Ballona Creek on September 27 (Becky & Steve Turley).

Raptors included a tagged **Bald Eagle** seen over Culver City on September 21 (Kevin Lapp), a **Broad-winged Hawk** over Claremont on September 29 (Tom Miko) and an early—and possibly returning—**Ferruginous Hawk** in Playa del Rey on September 22 (Mark & Janet Scheel).

While **Solitary Sandpipers** and **Pectoral Sandpipers** were moving through in about average numbers in August and September, **Baird's Sandpipers** were unusually scarce on the coastal slope with just a few reported there.

Extremely rare for us—and for only the fourth county record—was a **Hudsonian Godwit** at the Piute Ponds from September 16–18 (Jon Feenstra).

**Red Knots** were more common than usual, with four at the Lancaster Sewer Ponds on August 13 (Irwin Woldman, Judy Mastuoka), two on the LA River in Long Beach on August 15 (Mickey & Kevin Long), one at Del Rey Lagoon in Playa del Rey from August 24–26 (Christopher Taylor) and two more in the Ballona area on September 2 (Jonathan Coffin).

A **Ruff** on the LA River in Long Beach from September 7–9 (Bob Schallman, Julie Abraham) was the only one reported, likewise a lone **Stilt Sandpiper** at the Piute Ponds on September 3 (Kumaran Arul).

**Dunlins** are generally quite scarce as transients, but above average numbers were passing through from late September through mid October, most of these along the lower LA River.

Surprisingly, a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** on the LA River in Long Beach on September 7 was the only one reported during the period (Steve Sosensky).

While relatively common on the deserts in spring, a **Franklin's Gull** at the Piute Ponds from September 16–18 (Jon Feenstra) was the only fall bird recorded.

**Black Terns** were moving through the deserts with up to twenty at the Piute Ponds on August 15 (Jim Moore). On the coastal slope where they are unusual, one was at Harbor Park in Harbor City on September 22 (Martin Byhower).

Rather scarce as fall transients were three **Common Terns** at the Piute Ponds on September 3 (Kumaran Arul). Another was there on September 17 (David Bell) and one was at the Ballona Creek mouth on September 27 (Barbara Johnson, Irwin Woldman). Very rare away from offshore waters was an **Arctic Tern** at the Piute Ponds on September 7 (Mark & Janet Scheel).

**White-winged Doves** were at Point Dume in Malibu on September 4 (Cynthia Schotte), along the lower LA River in Long Beach on September 29 (Jon Fisher), at Cal State Dominguez Hills on October 1 (John Thomlinson) and over Long Beach on October 2 (David Bell).

A **Burrowing Owl** was on the jetty at the Ballona Creek mouth from October 10–11 (Bob Pann).

Rare but fairly regular in summer, a **Chimney Swift** was over the LA River near Elysian Park on October 15 (John Garrett) and up to three birds continued there through September 8. An unusual record for both the time and location was a one in the west Antelope Valley on October 2 (John Sterling). A significant push of the closely related and far more common **Vaux's Swifts** took place in the first half of October with small to medium-sized flocks being widely reported.

Portending a possible irruption this fall and winter, **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were at Mt. Wilson on October 5 (Luke Tiller, Catherine Hamilton), over Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on October 5 (Darren Dowell) and at Cheviot Hills Park in Los Angeles on October 11 (Jesse Ellis)

Rare on the coastal slope was a **Prairie Falcon** that overflowed the Sepulveda Basin in Van Nuys on September 26 (Mike Stensvold).

A few Western Kingbirds, Western Wood-Pewees and Olive-sided, Ash-throated and Willow Flycatchers—species typically absent after September—were still passing through in the first half of October. In addition to these, a rare **Least Flycatcher** was at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on October 3 (David Bell) and more expected **Gray Flycatchers** were at Hansen Dam on 6 October (Kimball Garrett) and Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on October 11 (Mickey Long).

**Vermilion Flycatchers** included a returning wintering bird at the Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area in Willowbrook on September 29 (Richard Barth), one at Legacy Park in Malibu from October 5-7 (Nick & Mary Freeman) and one at Harbor Park in Harbor City on October 12 (Darren Dowell).

The **Tropical Kingbird** that spent the past three winters at Legg Lake in South El Monte was back as of

September 29 (Mickey & Jan Long) and another was at Banning Park in Wilmington on October 2 (David Bell).

A **Yellow-green Vireo** on the Palos Verdes Peninsula on September 24 (Jim Aichele) was only the seventh county record. This species shares with Tropical Kingbird the habit of occasionally wandering northward from Mexico in the post-breeding season and was one of several found coastally in September in coastal southern California counties.

The only fall **Purple Martin** reported was at the Piute Ponds on September 17 (David Bell).

Of interest was a **Steller's Jay** at Whittier Narrows on October 4 (Mickey Long) and two others in Turnbull Canyon near Whittier on September 30 (Larry Schmah). While regular in fall and winter at or near the base of the San Gabriels, this year they should be watched for away from those areas.

Quite rare in the county was a **Red-throated Pipit** at Legacy Park in Malibu on October 3 (Dan Cooper). A few others subsequently turned up in Ventura County where more attractive habitat exists. One wonders what a couple of sod fields near the coast in LA County might produce.

Early were single **Cedar Waxwings** at Peck Water Conservation Park in Arcadia on August 15 and in Pasadena on August 29 (John Garrett).

“Eastern” warblers were present in fair numbers and variety with eleven species recorded in addition to the regular western types. **Northern Waterthrushes** were at Apollo park near Lancaster on August 20 (John Birsner), along the LA River in Glendale on September 15 (Kimball Garrett) and at DeForest Park in Long Beach on September 17 (Jeff Boyd).

Eight **Black-and-white Warblers** were found between September 8 and October 10 and seven **Tennessee Warblers** were found between August 21 and October 1.

Rare but regular fall and winter visitors along the coastal slope, a **Lucy's Warbler** was at DeForest Park in Long Beach from September 10–October 4 (Jon Feenstra). Displaying a similar pattern of occurrence, but appearing in greater numbers than usual this fall,



were **Virginia's Warblers**, with about ten detected between September 12 and October 11.

**American Redstarts** were at DeForest Park in Long Beach on September 12 (Jeff Boyd) and at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena from September 26-30 (David Bell).

**Blackburnian Warblers** were at Exposition Park in Los Angeles from September 17–20 (Kimball Garrett) and at Creek Park in La Mirada from October 4–6 (Jonathan Rowley), while more expected **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on September 3 (David Moody) and at Malibu Creek State Park on September 27 (John Mueller).

Only two **Blackpoll Warblers** were reported, with birds at Del Rey Lagoon in Playa del Rey from September 15–16 (Bill Figueroa) and at Cal State Dominguez Hills on October 1 (John Thomlinson).

In a reverse of last year's literal invasion of **Palm Warblers**, one at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on October 10 was the only report thus far (Amy Williamson, Mei Kwan).

Early for the lowlands was a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** in La Canada on August 28 (Nick & Mary Freeman) and a few others subsequently appeared earlier than usual in the lowlands.

Rounding out the warblers was a very rare **Canada Warbler** at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia from October 5–6 (Brian Daniels).

Fall migrant **Green-tailed Towhees** were at Ralph Dills Park in Paramount on September 9 (Richard Barth), at Peck Water Conservation Park in Arcadia from September 16–23 (Luke Tiller) and at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on September 21 (Tracy Drake).

At least ten **Clay-colored Sparrows**— all but one on the coastal slope— were found between September 13 and October 6, and an equal number of **Vesper Sparrows** were present on the coastal slope between September 13 and October 12.

Legacy Park in Malibu hosted a **Black-throated Sparrow** on August 29 (Dan Cooper) and another was at Lake Balboa in Van Nuys from October 6-13 (David Bell).

**Lark Buntings** included one at Lake Balboa in Van Nuys from October 5–8 (Daniel Tinoco), a probable at Malibu Lagoon on October 5 (Nick & Mary Freeman) and another at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on October 10 (Jon Feenstra).

Scarce and local in the county was a "**Large-billed**" **Savannah Sparrow** on the jetty at the Ballona Creek mouth on September 1 (Jon Fisher).

An early **White-throated Sparrow** was at Rose Hills in Whittier on October 2 (Robb Hamilton). As it was with Palm Warblers, this species was present is well above average numbers last winter.

Over a half dozen **Indigo Buntings** were found on the coastal slope between August 15 and October 7.

Quite rare as fall transients, **Dickcissels** were at Peck Water Conservation Park in Arcadia from September 14–20 (John Garrett) and in Pico Rivera from September 22–23 (Larry Schmahl)

The excellent habitat at Peck also held three **Bobolinks** on September 15 (John Garrett). A high count of nine were there on September 22 and at least a few continued through October 5. Elsewhere, two were along the San Gabriel River in El Monte on September 17 (Jon Feenstra), one was along the San Gabriel River in Pico Rivera on October 12 (Jon Fisher), and one was at Hansen Dam 6–13 October (Kimball Garrett).

Expected transients on the coastal slope in spring, but far less so in fall, a handful of **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were observed as they passed through in September and October.

The fall's only **Orchard Oriole** thus far was in Big Tujunga Wash near Sunland on September 24 (Kimball Garrett). **Baltimore Orioles** were in Pasadena on August 29 (John Garrett), at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on September 15 (Dinuk Magamma), at Creek Park in La Mirada from September 26–28 (Jonathan Rowley) and at El Segundo Recreational Park on September 30 (Richard Barth).

Given all these records—how many vagrants did we not see? No doubt we missed a lot of them. While comparatively few Blue-footed Boobies are likely to escape detection, many less conspicuous species pass through unseen. Even if we are in the right place at the right time, they can still be easy to miss.

As fall migration slowly winds down, this hardly means that birds stop moving. Along the coast especially, birds easily come and go. Though much of the habitat there is monotypic sandy beach, most of the Los Angeles County coastline receives little if any coverage. But even barren sandy beaches can attract good birds—recall the Wilson’s Plover found last March at Dockweiler State Beach. A variety of gulls and pelagics might be seen anywhere on or from shore.

Before we know it, Christmas Bird Counts will be upon us. If you don’t already participate in any of these, it’s a very worthwhile endeavor. As much as our individual eBird records generate useful data, many CBCs have been run for decades and each year they provide a relatively complete snapshot of early winter birdlife in their respective circles.

In the meantime there will be plenty to do. It wouldn’t feel like winter without checking Quail Lake for scoters and possible Barrow’s Goldeneyes, or searching various fields and poles in the Antelope Valley for Ferruginous Hawks, Mountain Plovers, Mountain Bluebirds, and perhaps a longspur.

Though on the chilly side, the San Gabriel Mountains—especially the north slope—can be interesting to bird in late fall and winter as higher elevation birds often move down slope.

As always, the mild climate of near coastal areas will offer much of interest. The changes in birdlife there over the decades have been profound in some ways. Parrots and parakeets of a number of species and other exotics have become established to one degree or another. Non-native plantings have assisted the significant spread of Allen’s Hummingbirds and also allowed a number of orioles, tanagers, warblers and others to winter or at least linger later into the year.

A hallmark of California is the variety it offers, and that is reflected not only in its people, climate, habitats and scenery, but in the birding opportunities available at any season. We’re also fortunate that birding can be done in relative comfort virtually 365 days a year. It’s an ideal place to live if you’re a birder. 🐦

## Ralph W. Schreiber

### Ornithology Research Grants 2014

Call for Applications, Deadline—Dec. 1, 2013

The Los Angeles Audubon Society presents an annual research grant, the Ralph W. Schreiber Ornithology Research Award, to support research relevant to the biology of birds.

Award recipients are limited to students and amateurs ornithologists who are not able to secure research funding through channels available to professional ornithologists, and who reside in southern California (from San Luis Obispo, Kern and San Bernardino Counties south) or are currently enrolled in a southern California academic institution. There is no geographical restriction on the research area. While a more favorable consideration of research that is of a local nature involving local species and conservation issues, all researchers are encouraged to apply. Only one award will be given for an individual project or thesis.

One or more awards will be given out in 2014, with the maximum amount of an award to be \$1500. The application deadline for the 2014 Research Award is December 1, 2013, and it is anticipated that grants will be disbursed in April, 2014. In the last few years, grants were awarded for projects ranging from studies of urban parrots in Los Angeles to Emperor penguins in Antarctica.

#### GUIDELINES

Awards will be given to students and amateur ornithologists, who are not able to secure research funding through channels available to professional ornithologists. Applicants should reside in or attend school in southern California [San Luis Obispo, Kern, and San Bernardino Counties and south, and adjacent areas (at the discretion of the Awards Committee)]. Awards will be given for ornithologically-oriented research, which may be conducted anywhere. While we have taken a more favorable consideration of research that is of a local nature involving local species, all researchers are encouraged to apply. Only one award will be given for an individual project or thesis.

One or more awards will be given this year. The maximum individual award is \$1500.

Complete guidelines at [www.laaudubon.org](http://www.laaudubon.org). 🐦





## CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

By Garry George

### A Bird-Friendly Los Angeles?

We enjoy our birds and birding in Los Angeles, and Los Angeles County continues to rank with San Diego as the birdiest County in the U.S.

Los Angeles is very Birder-Friendly.

But *is* Los Angeles Bird-Friendly?

Other cities in the U.S. and other Audubon chapters have adopted programs to reduce threats to birds especially during migration when our local populations expands by the millions on their way to breeding or wintering grounds, or arriving in Southern California to winter.

Lights Out!, Cats Indoors! Bird-Friendly Buildings! Don't Take the Bait! (a ban on rodenticides that leave poison residue in animals that end up as prey and poison for raptors) are alive and well in San Francisco, Toronto, Chicago, Minneapolis and other cities in the U.S. and not only help birds thrive but bring new members and supporters to Audubon chapters.

Over the ten years I've been with Los Angeles Audubon I have seen some bird-friendly programs emerge from dedicated volunteers: our Tree-Trimming Guidelines to protect birds created by Linda Navroth and Eleanor Osgood has been adopted by Culver City and Whittier Narrows Park and other communities around California. "Kill Your Lawn" has provided some habitat in yards and conserved water, and inspired our Greenhouse Interns to create a fantastic comic book. But we never expanded either of these programs to scale throughout Los Angeles County nor engaged our city.

In fact, the City of Los Angeles seems to be a big challenge for a bird-friendly program. The City has proposed a Cat Program that would raise the number of pet cats (which can roam outside), give special rights to people who feed stray or feral cats, allow people to feed as many stray or feral cats on a property as they wish (by exempting "unowned" cats from the limit on the number of cats

that can be kept at a property), and authorize release of cats back to the streets that are turned into animal shelters. That means thousands more stray and feral cats per year returned to our streets and yards. – not bird friendly. The City built a wind energy project close to Butterbreth Springs that has the second highest mortality rate of birds ever recorded at a wind project in the U.S. and has killed 9 Golden Eagles so far in the first 1.5 years of operation – not bird friendly. New buildings even in parks and museums that are landscaped to attract birds have huge plate glass windows with which those birds collide – not bird friendly. Citizens and city landscapers love their lifeless lawns and exotic plant species that attract only crows, lifeless dead zones that could be living habitat – not bird friendly.

We share in the responsibility for this. Los Angeles Audubon has not targeted a campaign to educate our decision makers and civic leaders on the economic, ecological, and spiritual importance of birds to the citizens of our City.

A U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service survey reported that in 2001 46 million citizens identified themselves as bird watchers spending over \$85,000,000 (billion with a "b") in economic output creating over 863,406 jobs but our civic leaders don't know this.

Birds provide ecological services ridding our city of pests such as insects, rats, and pigeons while transporting seeds and pollinating plants, but our civic leaders don't know this.

Birds provide a spiritual and health benefit to citizens as they fly up taking our spirits with them, and their song brings our attention to nature and make us happy. Imagine a world with no bird song.

Can Los Angeles Audubon take on the task of making Los Angeles Bird-Friendly?

Our Board will be considering this in upcoming meetings, and whether we have the capacity to mount programs such as this will depend on you, our supporters. It will take time and resources to build and sustain a Bird-Friendly Los Angeles team and we'll need your help.

But if birds thrive, it would be worth it. 🐦

# FIELD TRIPS CALENDAR



Mary Freeman, LAAS Field Trip Leader &  
Nick Freeman, LAAS Field Trip Chairperson.

FIELD TRIPS OFTEN REQUIRE MORE DRIVING AND TIME IN THE FIELD THAN DO OUR BIRD WALKS. No pets. No children under 12, without permission from leader please. When you sign-up by email, we will confirm your reservation and provide any supplemental trip information by reply email. If you do not have convenient email, you may mail us your reservation request and fee; include a SASE, so we may mail back your confirmation. Provide your: Name, Address, email address (if used), day-of-event phone number (cell), and an alternate phone number in case of emergency (home, work or friend.) For carpooling purposes for reserved field trips, your information may be shared with other confirmed participants—unless you specify otherwise at sign-up. When carpooling, remember to offer compensation to your driver in these times of spiking gas prices.

Mail reservation fees, separate checks per trip to:

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

email reservations to: [membership@laudubon.org](mailto:membership@laudubon.org)  
Phone: (323) 876-0202 (leave voice message if no answer.)

Please support LAAS field trips with your donations.

Share your photos and stories with other LAAS fans on Facebook and Twitter.

[facebook.com/LosAngelesAudubon](https://www.facebook.com/LosAngelesAudubon)  
[twitter.com/LAAudubon](https://twitter.com/LAAudubon).

## November

**Sunday, November 3** (Daylight Savings Time Ends, reset your clocks)

### Newport Back Bay

**NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE**

Leader: *Mary Freeman*. Meet on the boardwalk along the NW bay at the “Sharp-tailed Sparrow Spot” accessible from the end of University Drive (small street) at 7:30 a.m. for the 6.4’ high tide (highest weekend of the season), and a full day of birding in the area. High tide at the mouth is 8:07 a.m., and may not peak in the back bay until after 8:45 a.m., but we want to be in position if birds flush to higher ground. Three rails, American Bittern; Nelson’s Sparrow and Short-eared Owl (both rare) will be target birds. Eurasian Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal, California Gnatcatcher, and American Bittern expected. 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, walk down the hill, over the bridge, and to the end of the boardwalk. Bring lunch. ‘Scopes and FRS radios helpful.

**Saturday, November 16**

### Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge

**SIGN-UP REQUIRED by Nov. 8, NO FEE, Limit 20**

Refuge volunteer *Slader Buck, John Fitch and Nick Freeman* will drive up to 20 lucky participants around this prime limited-access wetlands / agricultural site where throngs of wintering shorebirds and numerous raptors are seen. Nelson's (Sharp-tailed) Sparrow and Pacific Golden-Plover are usually sighted.

The refuge is part of the Naval Weapons Station. *Must send first, middle-initial & last names, DOB, if NO middle name, email and home phone number, alternate ph# optional; by November 8.* Only LAAS-confirmed individuals of U.S. citizenship with photo ID allowed on base. No weapons, camera OK. Meet at the main public lot at 800 Seal Beach Blvd. at 8:00 a.m. for a high tide of 6.1 feet around 11:00 a.m., and bird until noon. Take Seal Beach Blvd. S from the 405 Fwy, pass Westminster Blvd., turn left onto the base at the Forrestal Lane light, and left again into the lot. Spotting scopes and FRS radios helpful.



**Sunday, November 24**

**San Jacinto Wildlife Area & Lake Perris**

**NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE**

Leader: *Howard King*. Little Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gulls (2!), Short-eared Owls (2!) seen on past trips may not be back this year; but surely something will take their places, such as the Iceland Gull and Gyrfalcon seen here in recent winters (but not on our trip)! Take the 10 or 60 Fwy E to the 215 Fwy S, exit E at Ramona Expressway, continue E just past Perris Blvd., and meet at the Farmer Boys Restaurant on the S side of the road. Leave from here at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch, warm clothing and footwear for possible mud. We will try to carpool to defray the \$10 entrance fee for Lake Perris, if we go there.

**Christmas Bird Counts**

**Saturday, December 14**

**Lancaster Christmas Bird Count**

Contact compilers *Nick and Mary Freeman* at: (818) 636-4361 or [mnfreeman@earthlink.net](mailto:mnfreeman@earthlink.net) to be placed on a team or be given an area. Fee: None!

**Sunday, December 15**

**Malibu Christmas Bird Count**

Contact compiler *Dick Norton* at: (310) 455-1138 or [richardjnorton@dslextrreme.com](mailto:richardjnorton@dslextrreme.com) to be matched up with a team or a survey area. Historically, our best-attended count! Fee: None!

**Sunday, December 29**

**Los Angeles Christmas Bird Count**

Either contact compiler *Dan Cooper* at: (323) 397-3562 (cell) or [dan\\_cooper\\_90042@yahoo.com](mailto:dan_cooper_90042@yahoo.com) to be assigned a count area; or meet at Trails Cafe, Fern Dell, Griffith Park at 7:30 a.m.; or at Del Rey Lagoon, Playa del Rey by old boathouse on western shore at 7:00 a.m. This is one of the oldest CBC's in the U.S., having been run nearly continuously since the 1930s. Its boundaries extend from Playa del Rey on the coast east to Griffith Park, and take in large areas of the eastern Santa Monica Mtns., including the Ballona Wetlands and Franklin Canyon Park. at one of two locations: Fee: None! Lunch meeting: 1:00 p.m. Viva Fresh Mexican Grill, 6515 S. Sepulveda Blvd Los Angeles, CA 90045, just west of 405 Fwy. and Centinela.

**January**

**Saturday, January 4**

**Tejon Ranch**

**NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP REQUIRED**

Leaders: *Louis Tucker* and Conservancy biologist *Scot Pipkin*. Visits to the Ranch are by special arrangement with escort only, as one could easily get lost on the web of dirt roads covering this huge working ranch. Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, and Lewis' Woodpecker all likely in the rolling hills of the ranch. California Condor and Pronghorn Antelope (both reintroduced) possible. Bring clothes for possible cold and wind; and bring lunch, as we will be out most of the day (probably dark around 4 p.m.). Meet at 6:45 a.m. at the Denny's in Sylmar visible from the 5 Fwy. Take the Roxford St. turnoff, and be prepared to depart at 7:00 a.m. High clearance vehicles recommended, as we will carpool into these and ranch vehicles at the ranch. Rain at Tejon cancels. Limit: 12 participants only. Please register with LA Audubon by phone (323) 876-0202, and provide phone number, email, high clearance Y/N, spare passenger seats. FRS radios and scopes useful.

**January 11 & 12 Weekend**

**Salton Sea**

**FEE: \$10, SIGN-UP REQUIRED, NO LIMIT**

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 or email for more details. Meet at 7:00 a.m. Saturday at Cattle Call Park south of Brawley. We may visit Fig Lagoon near El Centro on Saturday. Calipatria Inn (800) 830-1113, Brawley Inn (760) 344-1199, and Americas Best Value Inn in Westmorland (760) 351-7100 are recommended. Arrive fed, bring lunches. Those who wish will eat together Saturday night. Mail request to LAAS with name, email, \$10 fee, and cell phone # if possible. FRS radios & scopes helpful.

**Friday, January 17****Point Mugu NAWS****\$5 DEPOSIT BUT NO FEE, LIMITED (24 MAX.)  
SIGN-UP REQUIRED by DEC 27**

Leader *Matthew Page* and base biologist *Martin Ruane* should find plenty of waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, gulls, scoters and other wintering birds to remark upon in this limited access tidal wetland area. During one visit we found a Masked Booby! Exit 101 fwy N onto Las Posas Road S in Ventura, to Hueneme Road west, to Wood Road south, across PCH, and meet in the main (#1) gate lot at 7:45 a.m. The attendance list must be submitted to the base, so sign up early; **deadline December 27**. Must be 16 years old, U.S. citizen, and no cameras or video recorders, please. Include in your reservation request letter, your citizenship status (U.S. only), phone number & email, full name with middle initial or NMN (to indicate no middle name), address with zip, CDL# (or other state license), last 4 of SS#, and a \$5 *deposit check (to LAAS) to be refunded at the gate*. Min 10 / Max 24.

**Saturday, January 18****Antelope Valley****NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE**

Leader: *Jim Moore*. We will be birding 110th Street East, Avenue A, Holiday Lake, Quail Lake, and spots in between. We will look for Mountain Plover, raptors, LeConte's Thrasher and other AV specialties. Meet at the west end of the Avenue S Park-and-Ride just to the east of the Hwy 14 Avenue S offramp (next to Lake Palmdale). Leave from here about 7:30 a.m. If you wish to carpool at Denny's off of Roxford in Sylmar, contact Susan at LAAS to share your contact info with others. Bring lunch and a full tank of gas for a full day of splendor in the alfalfa. No fee, no reservation. 'Scopes and FRS radios on 11-22 helpful.

**Friday, January 24****Gull Study Workshop—LECTURE****\$20 FULL WORKSHOP FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP (20 max.)**

Speaker *Larry Allen* will discuss most gulls that have appeared in North America – most 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. Plummer Park, 7–9:30 p.m., with one break. 20 maximum. This is a Ralph Schreiber Grant fund-raiser. **Mail \$20 fee**, phone number, your email address to LAAS, which gets you the lecture & field trip, and emailer with directions. **Lecture and field trip not offered separately**. Park in the south lot, so you don't get locked in.

**Sunday, January 26****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 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 determined and communicated during the lecture*. We will likely go to Doheny State Beach in Orange County, but perhaps elsewhere, depending on scouting. If we go to Doheny, it is a drive, but we have had large numbers of gulls on our workshops here, including Glaucous twice and a Lesser Black-backed! Maximum of 20 participants. See above to reserve lecture & field trip. Doheny Beach parking fee. Bring a lunch.

**February****February 1 & 2 Weekend****Carrizo Plain****FEE: \$20, LIMIT 16 Max.**

Leaders: *Mary and Nick Freeman*. Meet at 8 a.m. in Maricopa. Spectacular scenery. We will see Ferruginous Hawks, Prairie Falcons, Golden Eagles (maybe 20?), LeConte's Thrasher, Merlin and pronghorn; with likely Rough-legged Hawk, Mountain Plover and possible Sandhill Crane. We will meet in Maricopa, 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 email 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.



**Saturday, February 8**  
**Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area**  
**NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP**

Leader: *Kris Ohlenkamp*. “Freeway close” morning of birding. Kris has led this walk on-and-off for over 30 years, noting 240 species, and averaging 60-65 per walk. Peregrine Falcon seen about half of the time. Take the 405 fwy N into the San Fernando Valley, turn W on Burbank Blvd. and N (Rt.) on Woodley Ave. to the second Rt., which is marked “Wildlife Reserve”. Turn here and park in the lot at the end. Meet at 8:00 a.m., and bird until about 11:30 a.m.

**Saturday, February 15**  
**Sandhill Cranes at Pixley NWR & Kern NWR**  
**NO FEE, SIGN-UP**

Leader: *Jim Moore*. Snow Geese, Burrowing Owls, raptors, Common Gallinules, up to 15 duck species, and up to 1,000 Sandhill Cranes in the alfalfa fields surrounding Pixley NWR. This long day trip into the San Joaquin Valley visits Pixley, Allensworth State Historic Park, and Kern NWR. The turkey farm nearby should have 1,000 Tricolored Blackbirds and a few Yellow-headed. Kern NWR has an auto tour route around shallow ponds and marshes that attract waterfowl, shorebirds and passerines. Meet at 5:30 a.m. at the McDonald’s on Lake Hughes Road, off Interstate 5; or meet the group at 7:00 a.m. at the USA gas station on West Sierra Ave (J22), on the west side of Hwy 99. This is the second Earlimart exit when driving northbound. There are several motels in Bakersfield area. Contact Jim Moore at jimmoore@socal.rr.com if you need more information. Free, but please sign up with LAAS, with email & phone.

**Sunday, February 23**  
**Ventura County Game Preserve**  
**NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP**

Leader: *Irwin Woldman*. The private duck hunting club in Ventura has a long history of producing the kinds of birds that most rich, well-birded and disappearing habitats can lay claim to, including Sora and Virginia rails, American Bittern, Eurasian Wigeon, dark morph Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, and one Lesser Sand-Plover. Emphasis on raptors and waterfowl for this date, with perhaps some early shorebirds. Get to the preserve by taking the 101 Fwy W to Rice Avenue S, following the Rice Ave. prompts to the T-intersection terminus, then take Hueneme Rd. west (Rt.), take the first left turn, Casper, to the end, proceed through the gate and park

across the street from the barn. Meet here at 7:30 a.m. We will walk the property, so good hiking/mud shoes with energetic legs inside a plus. We may have one car. Scopes & FRS radios helpful. There is a slight chance of cancellation, so please check the LAAS website for trip status the day before.

## Coming this Spring

**March 22 & 23 Weekend**  
**Anza-Borrego State Park Birds, Wildflowers, Insects, and More**

\$20 LAAS MEMBER FEE / \$40 FOR NON-LAAS, LIMITED SIGN-UP (20 Max.)

Leader *Kurt Leuschner* is a Professor of Natural Resources at College of the Desert in Palm Desert. He specializes in field ornithology, entomology, and desert natural history. On Saturday and Sunday we will car-caravan in and around Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, from Julian to the desert floor. This is a peak time for both wildflowers and the annual migration of Swainson’s Hawks! High points over the years include: hundreds of Swainson’s Hawks in migration, LeConte’s Thrasher, Bald Eagles nesting, Wild Turkeys, Peninsular Bighorn Sheep, Desert Lilies, Long-eared Owl, Chuckwalla, Baja Collared Lizard, Great Purple Hairstreak and Silvery Blue. Every year is different. Scenery is spectacular! Suggested accommodations in Borrego Springs: Borrego Palm Canyon Campground in the State Park (reserve through [www.reserveamerica.com](http://www.reserveamerica.com)), Hacienda del Sol motel (760) 767-5442 is quite near our meeting point, Stanlund Motel (760) 767-5501 and Palm Canyon Resort (800) 242-0044 are just down the road. Anticipate a busy weekend and make your reservations months ahead of time. We will meet at 6:45 a.m. both days in the parking lot of the Borrego Desert Nature Center (address: 652 Palm Canyon Drive), just west of Christmas Circle in Borrego Springs. Finish up around lunchtime on Sunday. Net profits go to the Ralph Schreiber Grant Fund. **Limit 20 people.** Reserve by mail with \$20 fee for LAAS members / \$40 non-LAAS fee; cell #, and email address to LAAS. *Email attachment with more details will be sent later.*

**April 5 & 6 Weekend**  
**Owens Valley Grouse Trip**  
**\$55 FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP (20 Max.)**

*Mary and Nick Freeman* lead. We will meet in the early A.M. this year for better Sage Grouse photo ops! More details later.

# BIRD WALKS CALENDAR

*LAAS Bird walks are geared for the beginner/intermediate birder looking for an introduction to local birds and are interested in reducing their carbon footprint by birding relatively close to home. All are welcome, but no pets or small children, please. 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.*

*For further bird walk information contact Eleanor Osgood at [birdwalks@laaudubon.org](mailto:birdwalks@laaudubon.org) or call her at (310) 839-5420.*

*CARPPOOLING IS ENCOURAGED, call (323) 876-0202 to provide information to join the LAAS CARPOOL DATABASE. We will attempt to connect you with other birders interested in sharing a ride to our events.*

## TOPANGA STATE PARK BIRDWALK

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of every month**

**Nov. 3 and Dec. 8**

**Time: 8:00–11:30 a.m.**

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

### Directions:

FROM VENTURA BLVD: take Topanga Canyon Blvd 7 miles S. Turn E uphill on Entrada Rd. Follow the signs and turn left into Trippet Ranch parking lot. FROM PACIFIC COAST HWY: take Topanga Canyon Blvd. 5 miles to Entrada Rd. Parking fee.

Contacts: Ken: (310) 455-1401, [ksafarri@aol.com](mailto:ksafarri@aol.com)

Chris: (310) 455-1270

## UPPER FRANKLIN CANYON

### SOOKY GOLDMAN NATURE CENTER

**2600 Franklin Canyon Dr**

**Beverly Hills 90210**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month**

**Nov. 10 and Dec. 8**

**Time: 8:30–noon**

Leader: *Eleanor Osgood*. Join us as we take a casual walk around the ponds and trails of this urban oak woodland nature preserve. We are likely to see the resident ducks accompanied by some newly arrived wintering ducks such as the Ring-necked Duck; as well as chaparral bird species such as California Quail, Spotted and California Towhees and California Thrasher. We will expect some wintering land birds such as: Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Fox Sparrow, and White-crowned Sparrow.

### 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 Drive to Coldwater

Canyon Dr to Mulholland Dr. Veer left on Mulholland Drive. 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.

If lost the morning of the walk, call (424) 298-1376 between 8–9:00 a.m. **Binoculars provided.**

## BALLONA WETLANDS BIRD WALK

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month**

**(with the exception of December)**

**Nov. 17**

**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. TAKE THE MARINA FWY (90) to Culver Blvd and turn left for a mile. Turn right on Pacific Ave. The lot is on the right. Lot or street parking is usually not a problem. Three hour walk. 'scopes helpful.

Contact: Bob (310) 326-2473 [wbutorance@gmail.com](mailto:wbutorance@gmail.com)

## KENNETH HAHN STATE RECREATION AREA

**(4100 S. LA CIENEGA BLVD, LOS ANGELES 90056)**

**3<sup>RD</sup> SATURDAY OF THE MONTH**

**Nov. 16 AND DEC. 21**

**Time: 8:00–noon**

Leaders: *Eric & Ann Brooks, Eleanor Osgood*. This trip covers landscaped parkland, a man-made lake and natural coastal scrub habitats within the Baldwin Hills. We are likely to see many of the resident birds such as Black and Say's Phoebes, Cassin Kingbirds, California and Spotted Towhee, Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper's Hawk. We will look for birds of the Coastal Sage Scrub such as: Spotted and California Towhees, and Song Sparrow. The lake attracts heron, egrets, cormorants, ducks as well as an Osprey. We will also look for wintering birds such as Hermit Thrush, Merlin, Golden-crowned Sparrow, and Western Meadowlarks.

### Directions:

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



## PROGRAM PRESENTATIONS

Wed., Nov. 13, 2013

**Ron LeValley presents:  
Midway Atoll, Home of a Million  
Albatrosses!**



© Ron LeValley Midway Permit PMNM-2012-006

**I**N FEBRUARY OF 2012, RON VISITED MIDWAY ATOLL, part of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. Much has changed since his last visit in 2001. The Fish and Wildlife Service has greatly improved the condition on the island for the native wildlife. Ron will share his stories of the positive changes that have been made to the refuge along with his pictures of “Wisdom” the oldest wild bird known in the world and the increasing Short-tailed Albatrosses. He will augment the many bird pictures with images of the increasing number of Green Sea Turtles, the endangered Hawaiian Monk Seal and some of the beautiful underwater inhabitants of the National Monument.

### MEETING TIME & LOCATION

**Audubon Center at Debs Park  
4700 N Griffin Ave  
Los Angeles, CA 90031  
7:30 P.M.–9:30 P.M.**

Save the Earth and Carpool! Call 323-876-0202, we will add you to our carpool database and help coordinate a ride-share.

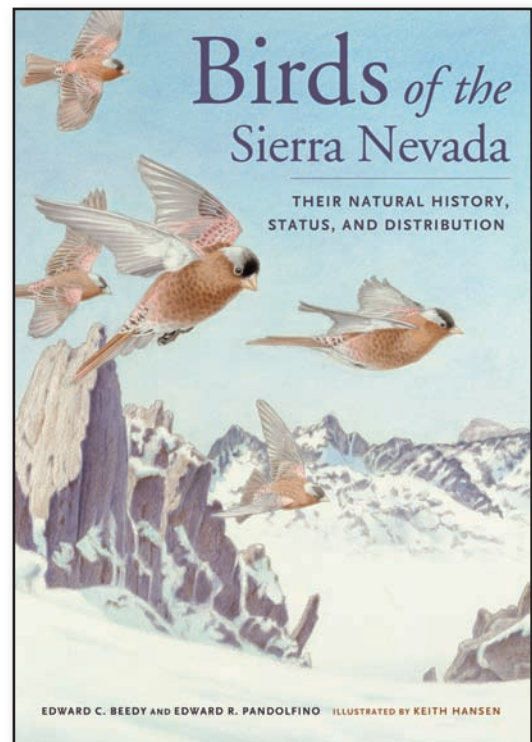
Wed., Dec. 11, 2013

**Ed Pandolfino presents:  
Birds of the Sierra Nevada**

**E**D WILL TAKE YOU ON A VIRTUAL TRANSECT OF THE range from the oak savanna in the west, through serene conifer forests of the west side, up into the majestic alpine regions, and down the steep eastern escarpment to the pinyon/juniper woodlands and open steppes of the Great Basin. Along the way we'll see and hear the stunning diversity of birds that make the Sierra their home. We'll learn about which birds are in decline and which are expanding and increasing. We'll address some mysteries surrounding some of those species and discuss how birders can help to solve them.

Ed Pandolfino is President of Western Field Ornithologists, a Regional Editor for Northern California for the North American Birds, and has published more than two dozen articles on status and distribution of *western birds*. He co-authored with Ted Beedy, *Birds of the Sierra Nevada: Their Natural History, Status, and Distribution*, illustrated by Keith Hansen and published by U.C. Press in May 2013.

Ed's book, *Birds of the Sierra Nevada: Their Natural History, Status, and Distribution* will be sold at the meeting.



# Trip Report: San Gabriel Mountains and Mount Wilson

By Dessi Sieburth

August 17th, 2013

**W**E HEARD “TOOT, TOOT, TOOT” IN THE DISTANCE and saw some agitated Mountain Chickadees flying around in a big pine tree up Angeles Crest Highway. That was when Mary Freeman, our field-trip leader, found us the Northern Pygmy Owl. The owl was tiny with streaks on the breast and big eyes. The Northern Pygmy Owl was certainly the best bird for me on this trip. Another special bird was the Clark’s Nutcracker which we heard calling. We ended up seeing 6 of them.

Another birdy hotspot was the Chaleo Visitor Center where we heard at least three Crossbills and got a good look at five species of woodpeckers including Hairy and White-Headed Woodpeckers. We also spotted the Hermit Warbler and saw Pygmy and White-Breasted Nuthatch side by side for comparison. The surprise birds of the day were two Lilac-Crowned Parrots which we saw when we first met to carpool in La Canada. We ended up with 28 species. A big thanks to Mary and Nick Freeman to make sure everyone had an amazing time.



The second part of the trip was visiting the observatory at Mount Wilson. Norm Vargas helped lead a two hour tour. The most exciting part when we saw the 100 inch telescope which will be open to the public for star gazing soon. We also got to see the sunspots at the solar telescope and visited the Mt. Wilson history museum. I really enjoyed this trip and I recommend this trip to everyone who likes birds and is interested in learning about the Mount Wilson Observatory. 🐦

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*Dessi Sieburth is a 6th Grader at Foothill Progressive Montessori school in La Cañada. Dessi's passion for birds started when he built his first bird feeder at the age of eight. Since then Dessi saw 354 different species of birds. He led a bird walk at the Huntington library and plans on leading more walks. When Dessi isn't birding he is building and monitoring Bluebird Nest Boxes. He also helps conserving the California Condor. He visited a senator and wrote 2 articles about AB 711 which bans lead ammunition in California. Dessi likes to educate other students about birds. He talked to ninety 3th graders Longfellow Elementary school about creating bird habitat, leaving cats inside and about his nest box project. Dessi's plans for the future: being an ornithologist.*



# WESTERN TANAGER

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A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

*Western Tanager*, is the newsletter of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, published online in PDF format 6 times a year, 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 publication in the *Western Tanager*. Please send copy as Microsoft Word, RTF documents, or plain text files. Photos should be high resolution (300ppi) .jpg or .tif files. Submissions should be in the hands of the editor by the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month to be included in the following issue.

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Los Angeles Audubon Society is non-profit organization and a chapter of the National Audubon Society.

*The mission of Los Angeles Audubon Society is to promote the enjoyment and protection of birds and other wildlife through recreation, education, conservation and restoration.*

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Mail this form, and include a check made payable to  
LAAS - Membership:

Los Angeles Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 931057  
Los Angeles, CA 90093-1057  
*Attn: Membership*

### LAAS Membership Levels

Regular 1-yr Chapter Membership ...\$25	\$ _____
Couple 1-yr Chapter Membership ....\$35	\$ _____
Family 1-yr Chapter Membership .....\$50	\$ _____
Tax Deductible Donation to LAAS	\$ _____

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Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

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An introductory membership to the National Audubon Society is \$20 and should be sent separately to:

National Audubon Society  
PO Box 422246  
Palm Coast, FL 32142-6714

Be sure to write "C3ZC03OZ" on the NAS application to assure assignment to the Los Angeles chapter. For NAS renewals, use the form provided in the National Audubon magazine, "Audubon."

If you have any questions about membership renewals, change of address or any other membership concerns, please contact Susan Castor at (323) 876-0202 or email her at membership@laaudubon.org.