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WESTERN Tanager

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WESTERN TANAGER

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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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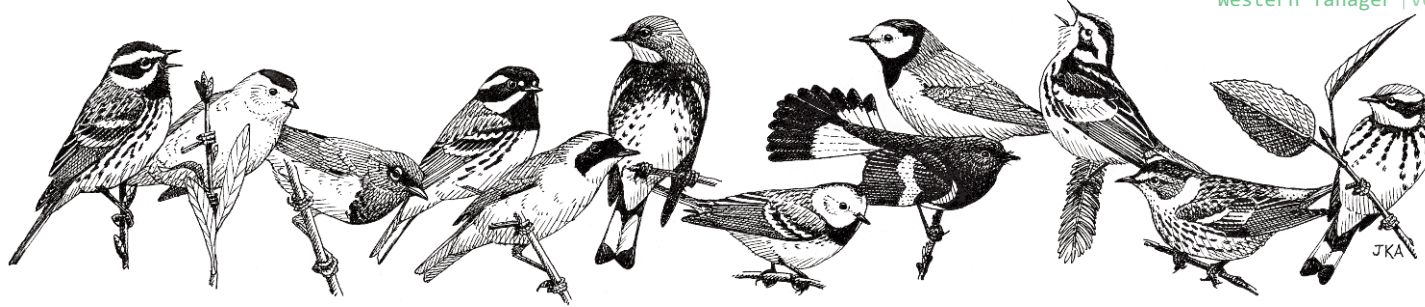
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Birds of the Season — April 2014, By Jon Fisher

For birders, nothing quite compares to spring. While it may be a slow time for rare birds, the number and variety of migrants heading north makes for many great days in the field from the coast to the desert. Perhaps appropriately, it's the end of the spring migration period—when eastern vagrants tend to appear—that's often the most exciting for birders.

That said, it's clear that major rarities can turn up any time. A first LA County record of Varied Bunting was found in late March and early April produced a Marsh Sandpiper—the second for the state—in Solano County.

First of spring migrants this year were generally recorded on expected dates, but several species made earlier than normal appearances. A handful of species—Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Pacific-slope Flycatchers, and Black-headed Grosbeaks among them—were in this category. What causes these birds to start their journey ahead of schedule or complete it more rapidly? The short answer is we're not entirely sure.

For our Neotropic migrants, migration evolved as a way to exploit available resources such as food, territories and nesting sites at

more northerly latitudes. This strategy also lessens the chance of predation once breeding begins. For these birds, the difficulty of undertaking migration is rewarded by increased breeding success.

For over 100 years bird banding has provided invaluable information about the migratory movements of individual birds. Much more recently, eBird has aided the study of migration at a population level. It's now easier than ever to know precisely when and where birds are showing up and if they're early or late, but we have yet to fully understand the reasons. Short and long term climate changes, varying weather patterns and the availability of resources on wintering grounds may all have some bearing.

While it was yet another very dry winter, thus far it's been a fairly typical spring; warm then cool, wet then hot. As always, the season offered plenty of variety including lingering wintering birds, lots of migrants and some new vagrants.

A lone **Brant**, scarce away from the coast, was at Legg Lake in South El Monte on February 16 (Ron Cyger). A **Eurasian Wigeon** was seen off and on at Hansen Dam near Lake View

Terrace through April 8 (Kimball Garrett). Diving ducks included a **Long-tailed Duck** continuing through February 24 and a **Common Goldeneye** last reported on February 19, both along lower Ballona Creek.

Still truly rare in the county, three **Barrow's Goldeneyes** were seen again at Quail Lake between February 22–24. It would seem that late fall and winter is a good time to turn our attention to both Quail Lake and other deep water lakes and reservoirs in the interior. This species may prove to be more regular than we think.

A long staying **Pacific Loon** persisted at Castaic Lagoon through March 30. A continuing **Red-necked Grebe** was reported at the lagoon through February 22 and another was near the Ballona Creek mouth on March 20 (Rob and Cheryl Hargraves).

The **Reddish Egret** found earlier at the Los Cerritos Wetlands reappeared from March 1–15. This species is regular just ten miles away at Bolsa Chica Lagoon in Orange County but it rarely recorded in nearby LA County. A flock of twenty-seven **White-faced Ibis** over Claremont on April 7 (Tom Miko) indicated that this species is passing through and many of these flyovers surely go undetected.

Swainson's Hawks were moving northward in February and by early March, sizeable flocks were being encountered. A very rare light morph "**Harlan's**" **Red-tailed Hawk** was in the Ballona area from last December through at least March 30 (fide Dan Cooper).

One to two **Bald Eagles** were seen off and on at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas through March 23 (Rod Higbie).

A **Harris's Hawk** at Hansen Dam on March 19 (Tom Miko) could have been a naturally occurring bird, but individuals in this part of the state are long suspected of being escapees. This species is popular with falconers and there is little evidence to suggest that naturally occurring birds would move as far as the coastal slope, especially absent any incursion of the species into the southeastern deserts.

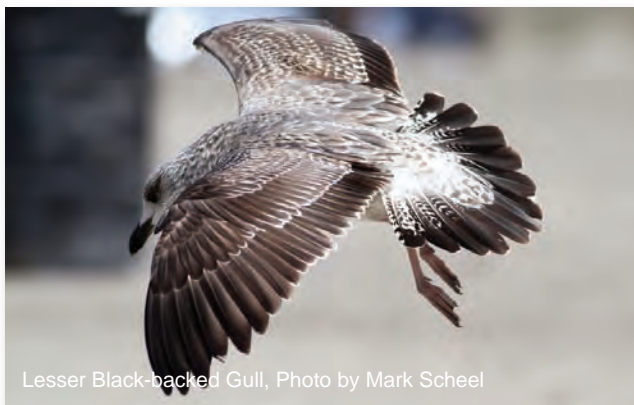
A **Ferruginous Hawk** over the San Fernando Valley on February 20 was the only one reported away from the Antelope Valley (Doug Martin).

A **Semipalmated Plover** was at the Piute Ponds where rare in winter on February 22 and a **Marbled Godwit** was there from February 15–22.

Other unusual shorebirds included a **Red Knot** near the Ballona Creek mouth on March 5 (Tim Spahr), a **Pectoral Sandpiper** continuing at the Piute Ponds through February 22 and a **Red Phalarope** there on March 2 (Curtis Marantz).

Quite rare in the county was a **Laughing Gull** at Shoreline Aquatic Park in Long Beach

from February 24–March 9 (Andrew Lee). Also very unusual was a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Dockweiler State Beach in El Segundo from March 26–29 (Logan Kahle). With this species increasing rapidly in the northeast, the number of records in California is on the rise. That fact, combined with increased observer awareness, means that additional records in the county are almost inevitable. Wrapping up rare gulls was a **Glaucous Gull** observed flying past Pt. Vicente on March 15 (Bernardo Alps).



Lesser Black-backed Gull, Photo by Mark Scheel

Inca Doves continued to be reported at Col. Leo H. Washington Park in Los Angeles, with an occupied nest discovered on February 1. Also at the park- and now rare and local in the county- was a **Spotted Dove** on March 2 with two there on April 8 (Robert McNab, Richard Barth). Another Spotted was at Augustus Hawkins Park in Los Angeles on April 9 (Richard Barth). Perhaps this species isn't quite as close to being extirpated as we thought. Rounding out the reports of Columbigiformes, a couple of **Common Ground-Doves** continued along the San Gabriel River in Bellflower.



Calliope Hummingbird, Photo by Mark Scheel

Numbers of migrant **Calliope Hummingbirds** can vary significantly from year to year, but 2014 has definitely been a good spring for them locally. Initial birds were in Big Tujunga Canyon on March 13 (Greggie Merkel), in Sunland on March 22 and 28 (Gerard van Heijzen), in Pasadena from March 25–26 (Darren Dowell) and in Monrovia on March 28 (Ellen Zunino). A smattering of reports followed, mostly along or near the San Gabriel foothills.

A **Burrowing Owl**, probably a spring migrant, was in Pico Rivera at the Rio Hondo Spreading Basins from March 8–11 (Al Moreno, Linda LeRoy).

A few **Lewis's Woodpeckers** continued, with one or two at the San Gabriel Country Club in San Gabriel through March 12 and at least three at Wilson Canyon Park in Sylmar through April 13.

The **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at Veteran's Park in Sylmar continued through March 2 and **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were at El Dorado Park in Long Beach on February 14 (Steve & Becky Turley), continuing both in Claremont

through February 15 and at Leo H. Washington Park in Los Angeles through February 20.

At least a half dozen **Northern “Yellow-shafted” Flickers** were present during the period, all reports being from the coastal slope.

Merlin populations have rebounded nicely since DDT was banned, but always rare in the county was a bird of the pale subspecies *richardsonii* at Inglewood Park Cemetery on February 25 (Richard Barth).

A **Gray Flycatcher** continued at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena through March 24 and Hancock Park in Los Angeles hosted a **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** from February 15-18 (Kimball Garrett) and the **Eastern Phoebe** at Legacy Park in Malibu continued through February 14.

First one then two **Vermilion Flycatchers** were at Oakdale Memorial Park in Claremont from February 17-March 30 (Victoria Brennan). On March 30, breeding was confirmed with the discovery of a nest with young (Rick Fisher). This flycatcher is a quite rare breeder in the county with just two previous records, neither from the coastal slope. The returning wintering **Vermilion Flycatcher** in Willowbrook continued through March 1.

Ralph Dills Park in Paramount hosted a **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** from March 7-April 8 (Richard Barth) and another continued at La Mirada’s Creek Park through March 2. An **Ash-throated Flycatcher**- probably wintering- was at El Dorado Park in Long Beach on March 5 (John Fitch).

Wintering **Tropical Kingbirds** continued at Legg Lake in South El Monte through April 12, at Harbor Regional Park in Harbor City through March 8 and at El Dorado Park in Long Beach through April 5.

What was presumably an early migrant **Western Kingbird** was at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on March 3 (Dick Norton, Jim Moore, Judy Matsuoka, Becky & Steve Turley). Another early individual was in Evey Canyon above Claremont on March 8 (Cathy McFadden, Paul Clarke).

Also rather early was a **Bell’s Vireo** at Hansen Dam on March 15 (Kimball Garrett) and it was followed closely by one in Arcadia on March 22 (Martha Estus).

Wintering **Plumbeous Vireos** turned up at Kelly Park in Compton on February 14 and at Inglewood Park Cemetery on February 25 (both Richard Barth). Less expected were spring birds at Wheeler Park in Claremont on April 7 (Tom Miko) and at Creek Park in La Mirada on April 11 (Jonathan Rowley), both of which probably wintered in the vicinity. Records of spring migrants are remarkably few, even in May when this species is slightly more regular. Also of note was a **Cassin’s Vireo** near Vina Vieja Park in Pasadena on February 14 (John Oliver).

Though typically among our early arriving passerines, **Warbling Vireos** in San Dimas (Sandy Koonce) and in San Pedro (Andrew Lee) on February 25 were ahead of schedule.

Regular on the deserts but scarce on the coastal slope, a **Bank Swallow** was at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on March 31 (Rod Higbie).

Miscellaneous passerines of note included a **Brown Creeper** away from expected areas at Wilderness Park in Redondo Beach on March 21 (Tracy Drake), a **Pacific Wren** continuing in Big Santa Anita Canyon above Arcadia through March 17 and a **Varied Thrush** at the South Coast Botanic Gardens in Rolling Hills Estates on March 2 (Ed Griffin).

New were **Black-and-white Warblers** at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area in Baldwin Hills on February 15 (Eleanor Osgood) and at Creek Park in La Mirada on April 11 (Jonathan Rowley). Others continued in Culver City through February 18, at Legg Lake in South El Monte though February 20 and in El Segundo through February 23.

Occidental College near Eagle Rock produced a very rare in winter **Tennessee Warbler** on March 7 (James Maley) and a **Lucy’s Warbler** was at Veteran’s Park in Bell Gardens from February 14-22 (Richard Barth).

Continuing were a **Virginia’s Warbler** at the Veteran’s Administration garden in West LA though February 14, a **Palm Warbler** at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh through April 4 and a **Pine Warbler** at Hansen Dam through April 8.

Continuing sparrows of interest included a **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Lacy Park in San

Marino through April 11 and a **Swamp Sparrow** at Legg Lake through April 12. A half dozen or so **White-throated Sparrows** either continued or were newly found over the period. The only one of these away from the coastal slope was a probable migrant at Bob's Gap near Valyermo on April 6 (Janet Scheel, Susan Gilliland).

The **Hepatic Tanager** at Gonzales Park in Compton was reported through March 30 while a **Summer Tanager** continued at Dominguez Seminary and Museum in Rancho Dominguez through March 24.

A continuing **Black-headed Grosbeak**, quite rare in winter, was in Beverly Hills through February 13. The first possible spring migrant recorded was an early one at Hansen Dam near Lakeview Terrace on March 9 (Kimball Garrett). A handful of others subsequently arrived ahead of schedule.



Varied Bunting, San Gabriel River at Encanto Park bridge, 3/26/14. Photo by Mickey Long

An excellent find was a male **Varied Bunting** along the San Gabriel River near Encanto Park in Duarte (Mickey Long). This bird, present from March 26-April 13, constitutes the first substantiated county record. In fact- assuming its acceptance by the CBRC- it's only the fourth for the entire state. The first record is perhaps the most intriguing- a flock of birds near Blythe in February 1914 from which two specimens were collected. One has to wonder if others might have been in the state that year. With the other two records being single birds on the eastern deserts in 1977 and 2012, this coastal bird was unexpected.

With colorful Cardinalids such as this, possible captive origin must be considered. The closely related Painted Bunting has been the source of much discussion and uncertainty when it comes to the origin of birds found in California. However, this Varied Bunting showed no obvious signs of having been in captivity and appeared to be of the subspecies *pulchra*, whose range is closest to California and thus more likely to occur as a natural vagrant.

The wintering **Orchard Oriole** at the LA County Arboretum continued through March 31 and another one was a surprise in Cheviot Hills on April 7 (Jesse Ellis). Another new find was a **Baltimore Oriole**, also in Cheviot Hills, on March 28 (Bob Pann).

While most of spring migration is already over, May is nonetheless a month loaded with potential. The deserts are a great place to look for migrants in spring, as green patches there are magnets for tired and hungry passerines. As good as the deserts can be, northbound birds are virtually everywhere.

Migrants will slowly decrease in number as the month progresses, but the numbers of such species as Willow Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee and Swainson's Thrush will peak during May. With just a bit of luck, the end of May should produce some good vagrant songbirds.

Once migration wraps up in early June, but also well before then, birding the San Gabriel Mountains will be productive and rewarding. In addition to the migrants passing through the mountains, there are resident specialties such as Williamson's Sapsucker and Red Crossbill and the possibility of such rare breeding birds as Gray Flycatcher and Lincoln's Sparrow to draw birders there.

Even in heavily birded LA County, there are many spots that are sparsely covered, even if only for a part of the year. What summering waterfowl might be present on Castaic, Pyramid and Quail Lakes? The lower LA River— most popular for July to September shorebirding— can host unusual waterbirds almost anytime. The northwest portion of the county in general is sorely lacking in coverage and seawatching from such appropriate spots as Pt. Vicente and Pt. Dume has potential at any time of year.

One of the endlessly intriguing things about birding is the chances for discovery that it offers. There are always new things to learn about identification, distribution, vocalizations and behavior and spring affords us these opportunities in spades. ➔



Join us for the Conservation Art Show 2014

Come celebrate the fifth year of the
Conservation Art Show at Politi Elementary School

CONSERVATION ART SHOW
FRIDAY, MAY 9, 2014
4:30 P.M.--7:30 P.M.

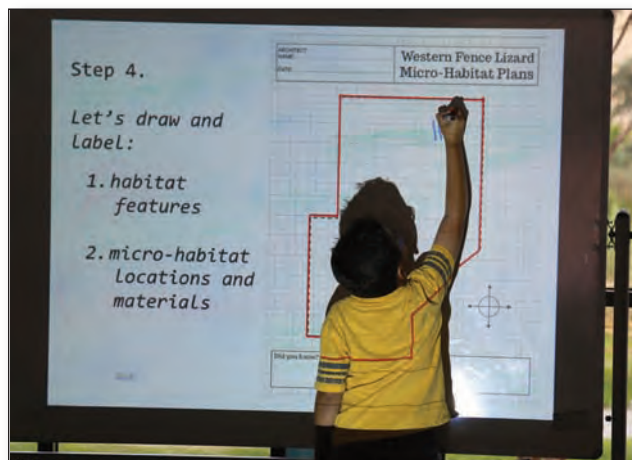
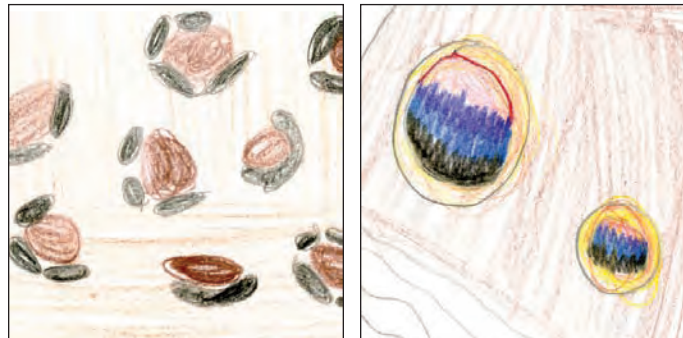
On Friday, May 9th from 4:30-7:30 p.m., come celebrate the fifth year of the Conservation Art Show at Politi Elementary School! This event showcases the science illustration and habitat restoration work that students at both Politi Elementary and Dorsey High School have worked on throughout the school year. Joining us this year will be a team of middle school students from the Incubator School, who will present their design work on making Dockweiler Beach more wildlife-friendly. We will also be showcasing the plover-themed science illustration work of students from 186th Street School and Second Street School. As usual there will be lots of hands-on activities for the whole family like paper-making, tours of the schoolyard habitat, and art/science projects to participate in. This year, the Politi Science Illustrators' ambitious studies had them thinking like architects and exploring patterns in nature, from the spots on a leopard's coat to animal courtship displays to how ocean tides work.

We hope you'll join us for an evening of art, science, and fun.

The event is being held at:

Politi Elementary School
2481 W 11TH ST
LOS ANGELES CA 90006-2961

For more information: LAAS@laaudubon.org



In the fall, Politi Science Illustrators collected data in the habitat in order to design micro-habitats for wildlife. In the spring, Greenhouse Program students helped build the micro-habitats. Both the plans and the micro-habitats will be on display at the Conservation Art Show.

During the spring semester, Politi Science Illustrators learned about patterns that animals wear to warn predators or to camouflage themselves.



Politi science illustrators and Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program students collaborated to learn about pollinators and the western fence lizard.

CELEBRATE THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS!

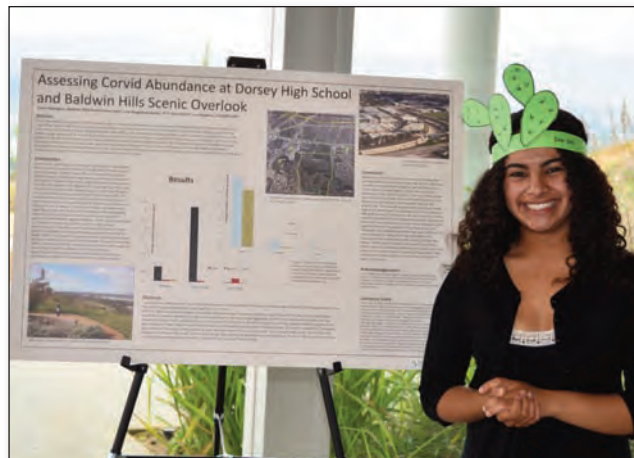
Los Angeles Audubon invites you to be our special guests at the upcoming

Cactus Commencement Celebration **Saturday, May 24, 2014** **10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.**

The "Cactus Commencement" graduation ceremony will honor 50 students from Dorsey High School who have made great contributions to their community and have completed Los Angeles Audubon's Environmental Youth Leadership program.

Your presence is requested to honor the new generation of environmental leaders. Students will be giving brief presentations on the research and community work they completed over the school year. Here's your opportunity to meet the environmental community leaders of tomorrow!

Through Los Angeles Audubon education programs, more than 5,000 students have gained a newfound connection to nature. We are especially proud of our Dorsey students success rates—those who graduate from our program have a 100% college acceptance rate! Many of our graduates are the first in their families to attend college and now serve as an example for their peers and siblings to follow in their footsteps.



The event is being held at:

Politi Elementary School
2481 W 11TH ST
LOS ANGELES CA 90006-2961

The Politi School venue is a very special one. In 2008, Dorsey students, working with Los Angeles Audubon, removed concrete and grass from the under-utilized campus in the heart of urban LA and transformed it into a schoolyard habitat, which now serves as an outdoor learning laboratory, expanding young minds with the wonders of the natural world. This schoolyard habitat was the first of its kind and inspired other schools to embrace nature as a teaching tool.

The Politi schoolyard habitat was a recently featured in the Bill and Melinda Gates newsletter, *"The Impatient Optimists"*, in an article written by principal Brad Rumble. Read more at: <http://bit.ly/18cnVUD>

Join us!

RSVP to: carolbabeli@laudubon.org



Sandhill Crane Field Trip Pixley and Kern NWR's

By Jim Moore, Field Trip Leader

23 birders gathered at town of Earlimart at 7:00 a.m., Saturday, February 15, 2014 for a full day of birding the southern San Joaquin Valley in search of local specialties. Many had spent the night before in nearby Delano while a few early birds carpooled from Castaic, leaving at 5:30 AM. Earlimart is about 30 minutes north of Bakersfield on Hwy. 99 and was the beginning of full day trek through the.

Even with our severe drought, there are still several water impoundments throughout the valley, mostly to support agriculture; however two support the Pixley and Kern refuges. Pixley is 6 miles west of Earlimart, entered by a small dirt road to the north, marked by a small sign, often overlooked.

Pixley is known for its population of Sandhill Cranes. And, even before reaching the refuge we begin to hear the eerie gargling of the cranes, who, right on schedule



Burrowing Owls, Photo by Tom Hinnebusch



Sandhill Cranes Photo by Tommye Hite

were gathering in the alfalfa fields just short of the entrance. The refuge staff estimated that 6000 cranes wintered there this year and we had close up looks of at least 3000 flying overhead or foraging in the alfalfa fields.

Besides the cranes, we saw two Snow Geese and a large number of Canada Geese also foraging the fields, and enjoyed the sight of a Burrowing Owl on the way in. We took a mile walked from a parking area at the entrance past a flooded field to a viewing platform overlooking a large water impoundment which held a large number of birds.

All together we saw 48 species at Pixley. Most notable were a large flock of Greater White-fronted Geese flying overhead, at

least 40 Dunlin, and good studies of the bi-colored morph of the Red-winged Blackbird. It is found only in the San Joaquin Valley and is distinguished by showing only its red epaulet, without a yellow edge. And, as a final bonus, on our way out we encountered two more Burrowing Owls which gave a good photo opportunity from a 20 foot distance.

On leaving Pixley, we caravanned west, stopping at a water impoundment near Alpaugh, and then onward to the turkey ranch north or the Kern refuge, to search for an early yellow-headed blackbird. We were not disappointed, find one among a large flock of Red-wings and European Starlings.

Our next destination was the Kern NWR, located east of Interstate 5, northeast of

Lost Hills. The refuge includes a long auto tour route allowing good views of several water impoundments, some shallow to support dabbling ducks, and some deeper for divers. The refuge includes a visitor's center with flush toilets, open during the week (but apparently not on Saturday) and picnic tables where we took lunch.

The auto tour route is fantastic, particularly in the early afternoon when visibility is best and there is less chance of fog. We had good looks at 45 species, including a flock of Greater White-fronted geese, a photo close-up view of a male Redhead, several common gallinules and a couple of Peregrine Falcons.

Our final stop was the Tule Elk Reserve State Park, west in Interstate 5, south of Lost Hills. On emerging from



Group of cranes, Photo by Thomas Hinnebusch

our cars we were greeted with a herd of eight bucks, grazing near the viewing platform. Also seen were pairs of Great Horned Owls and Burrowing owl. Bill Mof-fat, the site manager, gave us an overview of the reserve and took us on a driving tour inside the refuge. He mentioned that a Varied Thrush had been

hanging around his house and we capped off our trip by getting good looks at the end of the tour.

We tallied 72 species, during a long day. This is a highly recommend winter trip for intrepid birders who don't mind leaving Los Angeles county. 🐦



Greater Yellowlegs, Photo by Thomas Hinnebusch



Photo by Thomas Hinnebusch

Anza-Borrego Birds and More

By Kurt Leuschner, Field Trip Leader

Trip Report — March 22-23, 2014

Despite the lack of rainfall this year, and a cooler than normal forecast, a group of intrepid desert travelers ventured to the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park this past March and tallied some incredible sightings! We started off by finding some early spring migrants at Tamarisk Grove and Yaqui Well including Black-throated Gray Warbler, Black-chinned Sparrow, Lucy's Warbler, Western Kingbird and Ash-throated Flycatcher. We also spotted a herd of 15 Peninsular Bighorn on the nearby hillside. A few lambs were present and we enjoyed long scope views of this endangered subspecies. The scenery in Anza-Borrego is always spectacular by the way!

At Scissors Crossing we walked along a riparian area and found Loggerhead Shrike, Wild Turkey tracks (and later the bird), Nuttall's Woodpecker, and Red-shouldered Hawk. Further up the hill at our Julian lunchspot we watched an Oak Titmouse as a Sharp-shinned Hawk flew by. We also watched the live feed from an American Kestrel nest-cam (the first egg was laid the next day!) as we sampled the local apple pie. The Daffodil Festival was in full swing – we saw some blooming alongside the road (our lunch host Ken Wright's daffodils won "Best in Show!").

At Lake Henshaw we found White Pelicans and added a few ducks and waterbirds to our list, and as we were about to leave an adult Bald Eagle was spotted soaring high overhead, giving everyone great looks. A hike to Cottonwood Spring through a freshly burned area produced a great assortment of blooming wildflowers including Showy Penstemon, Scarlet Bugler, and Parish's Nightshade. Also in the area were Cactus Wren, California Thrasher, California Quail, and a misplaced

flock of migrating Savannah Sparrows. A few butterfly species were seen in this area, the most notable being the Silvery Blue at Barrel Spring along the Pacific Crest Trail.

We started the second day with a bang by coaxing a LeConte's Thrasher into the scope. Can you believe we actually walked away with the LeConte's still in the scope? That's how cooperative he was (did I mention it took us almost 2 hours to find him and we were on our way back to the cars to give up?). The sand dunes were covered with tracks from the night before: Kangaroo Rats, Kit Foxes, Coyotes, Scorpions, Darkling Beetles and Fringe-toed Lizards. Another highlight happened at 9:12am (12 minutes late!) when 10 Swainson's Hawks took to the air and "lifted off" into a thermal from a spot we had staked out the night before. The lighting was excellent and the birds were close - a great sighting indeed. Some of these birds may have flown all the way from Argentina – they funnel into Borrego Springs for a pit stop before continuing north through Coyote Canyon and beyond.

A quick lap around the sewage pond produced Vesper Sparrow, Phainopepla, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, and American Pipit. At our last stop (Club Circle Resort) we added more ducks to the list but missed the recently reported Tricolored Blackbird. We also missed seeing the Great Horned Owl (we only found the pellets) but on the way out half of the group succeeded in finding an even more exciting Burrowing Owl – a rare bird in the Borrego area. A fitting way to end a successful weekend of exploration in the largest State Park in California. 88 bird species all together and lots of great memories! Please join us next March! 



California Quail, Photo by Kerri Morris



Scott's Oriole, Photo by Kerri Morris



LeConte's Thrasher, singing, Photo by Kerri Morris

A Little Rain Can Do Wonders

By Cindy Hardin, Director of Outdoor Education

Although it now seems like a distant memory, our parched part of the world did receive a significant amount of rain during the first weekend in March. This one storm saved this season from being one for the books with lowest rainfall ever recorded. At Ballona the effects of the deluge were immediately apparent. The Ballona watershed covers a large swath of the west side of our town. We tell the students that tour the wetlands that every drop of rain that falls from the Hollywood sign to Santa Monica will end up in Ballona Creek, much of it passing through the wetlands before it reaches the sea. Of course, when we receive an inundation like the one that kicked off the month of March, some of that water will remain at Ballona for weeks-it is a wetland, after all! The following photos were taken two days after the last drops fell, and in that brief time span wildflowers exploded into bloom, ponds filled, and animals had a field day hunting for insects and nectar.



Ballona docent Linda Doebel scoops a water sample from our freshly filled vernal pond. This sample is destined for our microscope station, where students will have a chance to view aquatic creatures. Dragonflies, Midgeflies and mosquitoes all lay their eggs in this pond. The larvae look great under a microscope. They will soon burst forth into their adult insect form, providing food for lizards, warblers, phoebes and a host of other insectivores that can be found at Ballona. They are also a great teaching tool to illustrate the different types of life cycles found in the animal world, and a source of fascination for our visiting school children.



The purple flowers of the Dune Lupine contrast with the red colored pickleweed of the saltmarsh. Most of these flowers have now morphed into seed pods. We are keeping fingers crossed that next year will bring enough rain to allow for germination! The pickleweed stores salts in its tips, which turn red and then fall off, ridding the plant of excess salt. This adaptation allows it to thrive in the salty habitat found in the marsh. During years in which we receive a lot of rain the pickleweed will absorb enough freshwater to turn the entire plant a verdant green. As the photo illustrates, this year was not one of those years!



Upper Left: A wide shallow pond forms at the site of an old riding rink, a reminder of the days when a horse stable occupied the wetlands.

Upper Right: The seedpods are the clue to how Bladderpod got its name!

Lower Left: Our leader Emily Reed shows her group of students the channel through which rainwater flowed into the saltmarsh at the height of the storm.



Upper Left: Different shades of green, from the silvery tones of the Croton to the Technicolor green of the willows, create a tapestry of color where the sand dunes meet the riparian area of the wetlands.

Upper Right: The Allen's Hummingbird takes a break on a convenient snag after swooping after insects feeding on the newly blooming flowers

Lower Left: Deerweed and Dune Primrose rise above last year's dried out undergrowth, creating quite a buzz amongst the local bees.



The Say's Phoebe intently scans the surroundings for her winged lunch.



A Western Fence Lizard makes an appearance, attracted by both the prospect of a protein filled meal and the post rainstorm warmth of the sun.

At the moment there are still splashes of color and some standing water to be found at Ballona. The seeds are setting earlier than usual, and migrating birds are beginning to move through quickly, taking advantage of the fodder made more abundant by that one good storm. Is there an upside to this paucity of rain? Far fewer weedy introduced grasses have sprouted this year, leaving more resources for our native wildflowers. In fact, for the school tours, the Restoration Station, a part of the program since its inception, has been temporarily replaced by a Migration Station. There simply were not enough weeds for the students to safely remove without trampling native plants. The children now learn through a series of activities how the loss of 90% of California's wetlands negatively impacts wildlife and migratory habits of birds. But, as we tell the students, Ballona is still here, and whether we receive four inches or forty inches of rain, this habitat will remain in perpetuity, providing open space and respite for all kinds of creatures, including those of the human variety. 🐦



Nick Freeman, Field Trip Chairperson
and Mary Freeman, Field Trip Leader

Los Angeles Audubon's field trips often require driving to more distant destinations and more time spent in the field than do LAAS's local bird walks. No pets. No children under 12, without permission from leader please.

When you sign-up please provide complete contact information as stated in the write-up. Name, Address, City/Zip Code, Email address, Day-of-Event/Cell number, and an optional/alternate phone number—I.C.E., In Case of Emergency (home, work or friend.)

We confirm reservations and provide supplemental trip information by email reply. If you do not have convenient email, you may mail the reservation request (and fee if applicable); include a SASE; we will mail your confirmation.

CARPPOOLING

For ride sharing purposes, your contact information 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.

"FEE REQUIRED" RESERVATIONS

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

Mail to:

Susan Castor—LAAS Field Trips
PO Box 411301
Los Angeles CA 90041

'NO FEE' RESERVATIONS / MORE INFORMATION

Email: membership@laaudubon.org
Phone: (323) 550-8533

Please leave voice message if no answer.

Please support LAAS field trips with your donations.
Share with LAAS on Facebook and Twitter.
[facebook.com / LosAngelesAudubon](https://www.facebook.com/LosAngelesAudubon)
[twitter.com / LAAudubon](https://twitter.com/LAAudubon).

Field Trip Listings

Western Tanager | Vol. 80 No. 5 May/June 2014

Saturday, May 3

South Bay Parks

NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader *Tracy Drake* visits many of the South Bay parks regularly, including Madrona Marsh where she works. Colorful warblers and other passerines should headline. Tracy will visit Alondra Park, Madrona Marsh, Sand Dune Park, and Wilderness Park if time allows. Start and finish at Alondra Park, for carpoolers. To get here, get yourself from the 405 Fwy to Redondo Beach Blvd. heading east. Turn left (N) into the large parking lot at Yukon Avenue, turn right and park by the concrete walkway. Walk just to the lake, where we will meet at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch, especially if you might carpool, as we may bird until 3:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 4

Hansen Dam Riparian Birds

NO SIGN-UP, NO FEE

Leader: *Kimball Garrett*. An exploration of one of our region's premier "Important Bird Areas". Expect Bell's Vireos, Yellow-breasted Chats, Blue Grosbeaks and a variety of other birds of willow woodlands and mulefat scrub, along with numerous landbird migrants, waterbirds and marsh birds. We will be walking up to three miles, sometimes on narrow trails. Meet at 7:00 a.m. in the parking lot of the Hansen Dam Recreation Center along Foothill Blvd. just west of the Osborne/Lake View Terrace exit off the 210 Fwy. For those coming from the 5 Fwy, exit at Osborne and go north on Osborne to Foothill Blvd.; turn right (east) on Foothill Blvd. and go about half a mile to the entrance to the Recreation Center. (Note: Our meeting area is NOT the main Hansen Dam Park that is reached off Dronfield Avenue). We should finish up around 11:00 a.m.

May 10 & 11 Weekend

Mojave Area

SIGN-UP REQUIRED, NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP (12 MAX.)

Leaders: *Nick Freeman* and *Don White*. Western warblers and flycatchers should headline. Reptiles may be encountered! **Saturday:** Take Hwy 14 about 4 miles past Mojave, then turn right on California City Blvd. Drive through town about a mile past the shops, turn left into the golf course parking lot past the fenced driving range. Meet here at 6:30 a.m. Those who wish will dine in CA City. We may herp the roads after dinner, depending on conditions and interest. **Sunday:** Veer right heading north out of Mojave, take Hwy 14 for about 20 miles over the riverbed to Jawbone Canyon Road on the left, and meet right at the turnoff at the ranger station parking lot at 6:30 a.m. We will carpool to Butterbred Springs, and finish the day at Apollo Park or Piute Ponds. LAAS sign-up with ph# & e-mail mandatory. 12 max. Bring lunches, sun block, FRS radios. Reserve rooms (Motel 6 or other) in Mojave, or Best Western in CA City.

Friday, May 16

Small Owls of the San Gabriels

NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP (10 MAX.)

Leaders *Mary* and *Nick Freeman*. We will be looking for Flammulated, Saw-whet, Northern Pygmy and Western Screech-Owls. Sign up, and meet at 5:00 p.m. on the frontage road for Angeles Forest Hwy just north of the 210 Fwy in La Canada. Turn N on ACH, take the second right (Milmada Dr.), and a quick left (Flanders Rd.). Meet along the first 50-yard stretch, fed and gassed up, and we will carpool from here. Bring quiet cold weather gear (no nylon if possible), a small walking flashlight, binoculars, powerful flashlight optional. Photo ops possible. LAAS telephone / e-mail sign-up mandatory. 10 max.

Field Trip Listings, cont'd

Sunday, May 25

Santa Anita Canyon

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: *David Koeppel*. Take the 210 Fwy toward Arcadia, and take Santa Anita Avenue N to the parking lot at the very end of the road. Meet at the Gabrielino Trail trailhead at the bottom of the lot. 4 mile RT moderately strenuous walk through oak and chaparral canyons. Good selection of breeding birds including warblers, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western Tanager, and Band-tailed Pigeon. Dipper possible. Pack in a lunch and plenty of water. Meeting time 7:00 a.m. A **Forest Service Adventure Pass** is necessary.

Friday, June 13

Small Owls of the San Gabriels #2

NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP

Leaders *Mary and Nick Freeman*. We will be looking for Flammulated, Saw-whet, Northern Pygmy and Western Screech-Owls. Sign up, and meet at 5:00 p.m. on the frontage road for Angeles Forest Hwy just north of the 210 Fwy in La Canada. Turn N on ACH, take the second right (Milmada Dr.), and a quick left (Flanders Rd.). Meet along the first 50-yard stretch, fed and gassed up, and we will carpool from here. Bring quiet cold weather gear (no nylon if possible), a small walking flashlight, binoculars, powerful flashlight optional. Photo ops possible. LAAS telephone / e-mail sign-up mandatory. 10 max.

Saturday, June 21

Mt. Pinos

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: *Matthew Page*. White-headed Woodpecker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Hermit Warbler, Townsend's Solitaire, Mountain Quail. Hopeful Calliope Hummingbird and Northern Goshawk. Anticipate the elements, and bring a lunch. Take Hwy 5 N past Tejon Pass to the Frazier Park offramp, turn left, and follow Frazier Mountain Park Rd. bearing right onto Cuddy Valley Rd. Meet promptly at the "Y" formed by the junction of Cuddy Valley Rd. and Mil Potrero Hwy at 8:00 a.m., and park in the obvious dirt clearing. If time permits, we will also visit Mt. Cerro Noroeste (aka Mt. Abel).

Saturday, July 12

Big Bear Lake Vicinity Field Trip

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leaders: *Nick and Mary Freeman*. Meet in the Aspen Glen Picnic Area parking lot in Big Bear at 7:30 a.m. Take Hwy 18 or 38 to Big Bear Lake, then proceed about half way along the south side of the lake on Hwy 18 (Big Bear Blvd.) and turn south on Tulip Lane. The lot will be on the south side of this short street. Target birds include Williamson's and Red-breasted Sapsuckers, Calliope and Rufous Hummers, mountain finches and White-headed Woodpecker. Later, we may go to Arrastre Creek (east) or Upper Santa Ana River (south). It should be warm and there may be bugs, so come prepared. Bring lunch for a full day, and a **Forest Service Adventure Pass**. Those wishing to go owling with Mary in the evening (probably near Bluff Lake or Hart Bar Campground), plan to eat with us, and get a room for Saturday night as well.

Sunday, August 3

Lower LA River Shorebird Migration

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: *Larry Allen*. Take the 710 (Long Beach) Fwy S to the Willow Street offramp, head E over the LA River, and take the first left on Golden Ave, the first left on 26th, and follow this past the pump station onto DeForest Ave. Park near the river access by the bridge, meet along the river at 8:00 a.m., and bird until noon. More details in July.

Sunday, August 10

Sweltering Salton Sea

\$15 FEE, SIGN-UP 8 CARS LIMIT

Leaders: *Nick and Mary Freeman*. Anticipate 95-110°F. This is the gauntlet of SoCal birding. We will see Yellow-footed (only place in the U.S.) and Laughing gulls, Black Tern, Abert's Towhee, Gila Woodpecker. We should also see Wood Stork, Lesser Nighthawk, and Stilt Sandpiper. Find a friend, as singles will be bumped if we fill up the trip. Mail \$15 cell, and e-mail address to reserve. America's Best Value Inn in Westmorland - (760) 351-7100 is \$70. Ask for AAA discount. Continental breakfast. Brawley Inn - (760) 344-1199 offers a better continental breakfast, \$80. There is a decent restaurant next door, the Aspen. Meet at Cattle Call Park at **5:30 a.m.**, and bird until 2 – 3 p.m. Bring lunch, FRS radios, scope, sunblock, gallons of water, and a big hat. Other lodging suggestions and information in e-mailer. 🐦

Bird Walk Listings

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON'S bird walks are for those interested in reducing their carbon footprint by birding relatively close to home. Perfect for the birder looking for an introduction to local birds and habitat.

All are welcome, but no pets or small children please. These walks are appropriate for young bird watchers age 6 years and older. Binoculars are provided on some walks as noted. Bird walks DO NOT require advance sign-up, just show up at the specified meeting time and place. Read our FIELD TRIPS LISTINGS section for birding destinations a bit further afield.

Topanga State Park Birdwalk

1st Sunday of every month

May 4 and June 1

Time: 8:00–11:30 a.m.

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

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

Contacts: Ken: (310) 455-1401, ksafarri@aol.com Chris: (310) 455-1270

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area

4100 S. La Cienega Blvd, Los Angeles 90056

3rd Saturday of the month

May 17 and June 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 and Cooper's Hawk.

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.

KHSRA, 4100 S LA CIENEGA BLVD, LOS ANGELES 90056 **Binoculars provided.**

CARPPOOLING IS ENCOURAGED!

To provide your information to join the LAAS CARPOOL DATABASE membership@laaudubon.org or call (323) 550-8533 leave a message. We will attempt to connect you with other birders interested in sharing a ride to our events.

More information on birdwalks contact Eleanor Osgood at birdwalks@laaudubon.org or (310) 839-5420.

Upper Franklin Canyon Sooky Goldman Nature Center

2nd Sunday of the month

May 11 and June 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 Wood Ducks and as well chaparral bird species such as California Quail, Spotted and California Towhees and California Thrasher; we will look for early spring migrants such as warblers, flycatchers, swallows, orioles. Resident birds have begun to nest providing a whole new way of watching birds.

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, 2600 FRANKLIN CANYON DR, BEVERLY HILLS 90210. If lost the morning of the walk, call (424) 298-1376 between 8–9:00 a.m. **Binoculars provided.**

Ballona Wetlands Bird Walk

3rd Sunday of the month

May 18 and June 21

Time: 8:00 a.m.–noon

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

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

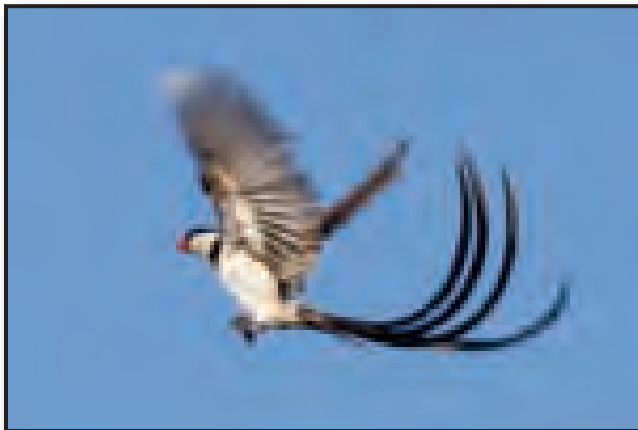
Wednesday, May 14

Baffling Birders and Bedeviling Biotas: Avian Invaders in California

Presented by Kimball L. Garrett.

Few areas of North America are as prone to the release and establishment of non-native bird species as California. Whether introduced purposefully or by accident, these avian immigrants include some of our most familiar bird species (think House Sparrow, European Starling and Rock Pigeon), a whole suite of additional species whose status is ever-changing, and a seemingly never-ending parade of escapees that send us running for our foreign field guides when we encounter them. Invasive introduced plant and animal species pose serious ecological threats worldwide, but which of our bird species merit the “invasive” label? How do we keep track of them, and how do we decide which species “count” on avifaunal lists? And how do we identify those odd escapees that could have come from anywhere?

Spending a lifetime birding in the Los Angeles area, Kimball Garrett has (figuratively) developed a stomach for introduced bird species and has been at the forefront of efforts to document their status in California. His talk is a light-hearted look at a serious subject, with the goal of enlisting more birders in the effort to monitor the non-native species that are becoming an increasing component of our avifauna.



Wednesday, June 11

Important Bird Areas of the Eastern Sierra

Presented by Andrea Jones

Andrea Jones, Director of Important Bird Areas Program at Audubon CA will provide a presentation on Important Bird Areas of the Eastern Sierra, focusing on Mono Lake, Crowley Lake, and primarily Owens River and Owens Lake. Audubon has been involved in negotiations for a conservation agreement at Owens Lake for the past 5 years. Andrea will tell the story of those negotiations and the stakeholders they worked with, and talk about the changing bird populations found at the lake. All these IBAs are woven together by a common theme - water that is one of the sources of water for Los Angeles and the birds that migrate through them.

Andrea Jones, NES, Coastal Program Director for Audubon California, leads the shorebird conservation efforts and works with the network of Audubon chapters across the state to implement conservation projects at high priority Important Bird Areas (IBAs). Andrea received her M.S. in Wildlife Conservation/Omithology and her B.S. in Wildlife Biology and Management from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Her thesis work focused on a metapopulation study of grassland sparrows on islands off the coast of Massachusetts. Prior to working at Audubon California for the past 8 years, Andrea worked at Massachusetts Audubon Society, directing their Coastal Waterbird and Important Bird Areas Programs.

Los Angeles Audubon's monthly evening program presentations are held the 2nd Wednesday of the month (except for July and August) at the

AUDUBON CENTER AT DEBS PARK
4700 N Griffin Ave
Los Angeles 90031
323-221-2255

<http://debspark.audubon.org>

Meetings start at 7:30 p.m. and are over at 9:30 p.m. Come early enjoy the nature, share your birding interests with like minded birders. Stay and enjoy the slideshow presentations.

All are welcome!



MORE INFORMATION:
(323) 550-8533
membership@laaudubon.org