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# WESTERN Tanager

July-August 2016 | Volume 82, Number 6

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The Western Tanager is the chapter newsletter of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, published online bi-monthly in PDF format.

Articles, letters drawings and photographs concerning conservation, birding, chapter activities, and articles of interest to the membership are welcome for submission. Please send copy as Microsoft Word, RTF documents, or plain text files to [westerntanager@laaudubon.org](mailto:westerntanager@laaudubon.org). Photos should be high resolution (300ppi) .jpg or .tif files. Submissions are due the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month to be included in the following issue. All rights reserved. All photographs are used by permission and are copyrighted material of the credited photographers.

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**ON THE COVER**

May 7 2016, Tejon Ranch Landscape Fields of Gold

This is a view of the hills shrouded in clouds as we travel west to Big Sycamore Canyon, from the 300 Street gate.

Photo by: Jason Koenig



**ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER**

Jason Koenig is a Los Angeles based photographer specializing in landscape, wildlife, portraiture and street photography. His education in biology and psychology, interest in animal behavior and love of the outdoors have all shaped and influenced his work.

Speaking about his photography Jason says, “As far back as I can remember, the camera has always been apart of my life. As a kid I marveled at how such a seemingly innocuous black box could contain so much magic. Those images my parents had our family pose for and that we later saw as prints existed somewhere inside of that mystery box. For me, it was like a friend I hadn’t really gotten to know yet; that had always been around from my birth to my graduation, never missing a special occasion. A friend that didn’t ask anything of me, was always giving, and who would one day open up boundless worlds. All I had to do was simply give it a little attention.

When a bum shoulder forced me out of the daily grind to have shoulder surgery, I realized how completely I’d allowed myself to be swallowed up by my job. I wasn’t pursuing any of my passions; and for that matter, I didn’t even really know what they were. But my faithful and silent friend did and was right there waiting for me; so I grabbed my parent’s old Minolta, bought some film and hit the road for Point Reyes.

Most of the rolls I shot that day, I would never see. Let’s just say, not knowing much about cameras, I had some difficulties unloading the film. But I left the last roll I’d shot in the camera plus I had the images I’d photographed with a digital model back when they were the new kids on the block; to this day, one of my favorite shots I’ve ever taken was with that antiquated little digital.

As much as I was bummed about exposing the film, that’s not what was important about that day. It was more than just firing off some pictures. What was important was vowing to never let anything take away my passion; about actually having the experience of taking a photograph, the “experience of photography”. From that day forward, I’ve sought to live that experience to the fullest, to hone and develop my craft; to strive to photograph the next great image. If I can share photography that moves someone and if a hint of that magic can shine through my work, then I’m one step closer to doing justice to the awesome and profound experience of not only photography but life!”

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# TEJON RANCH

## AT LAST WE GET TO GO BACK UP TO THE MOUNTAIN - HOW YA GONNA KEEP 'EM AWAY FROM THE RANCH

By Louis Tucker, Field Trip Leader for Los Angeles Audubon

**S**ometimes a postponement can deliver interesting surprises. Our annual winter Los Angeles Audubon Tejon Ranch trip got postponed due to the “ghost El Niño”; which decided to rain the week of our January 9, 2016 planned trip. It was kind of ugly that week with the rain, which wasn’t as bad in LA as it was up on the ranch which is mostly in Kern County. During the week before January 9, I was in close contact with our super biologist/guide/staff member, Scot Pipkin; Scot was not exactly very positive about what was happening up there. You see, the dirt roads on the ranch can be very rough even in the best of conditions; but, when rain hits, and up there, when snow comes along with it, the high elevations are completely inaccessible. So, on Wednesday of that week, he and I decided that we would have to postpone our trip. Ugh!

However, he came up with an alternate date which we would have to wait several months, to make sure that the strange El Niño had truly passed. So, we did reschedule, which also meant that some of the original participants also had to drop out and new ones were added. We decided on May 7, 2016, the day before Mother’s day. I thought with the rain that happened up there and with a pinch of spring in the air, it would be a good time. This could mean the possibilities of remaining wild flowers, and some of the spring migration would be in full swing, as well as what happened several years before, the possibility of seeing California Condors if we could get up on Martinez Ridge and Ray’s Perch.

Well, in the process of time, we lost Scot to a great new assignment in Santa Fe, New Mexico, coordinating an education program for the Audubon Society in New Mexico. This is something, given Scot’s knowledge of

the natural world, I know he will be brilliant at. So, there is the “selfish” question: “What about us?” Never fear! Scot had been training docents for several years to lead trips around the ranch so that the staff at the ranch could tend to more pressing needs in maintaining the ranch and doing other Tejon business. Two of the three docents I already knew: Chris Gardner and Steve Justus. These two guys had been on most of the Tejon trips I had been on up there, and knew the terrain quite well. They were joined by Reema Hamman, someone new to me, but had been trained by Scot as well.

And, of course, no trip is complete without the warnings of “some of the things you may want to do, you may not be able to do” theme, because all winter and spring, it had been very sketchy up there in terms of the weather. (We were warned that we may not be able to get up to Martinez Ridge and Ray’s Perch, with its elevation above 6,000 feet because there may be boulders on the road and the roads could be slippery because of the rain that had taken place. The roads become slippery like clay. Ugh, again! I will admit to a silly childish flaw in my character right now: I tend to inwardly pout when I get bad news however, I try not to visibly let on that this is happening to me internally. Ha! Our LA participants were Stephen Bernal, Nick and Mary Freeman, Mark Hansen, Tommye Hite, Jason Koenig, Kerry Morris, Julie Rush, Diane Smith and Jack Wickel. I think I prepared them for some eventual disappointment without gritting my teeth.

Up at Tejon, the day didn’t start out looking that promising. It was quite cloudy and chilly. As a matter of fact, the mountains were shrouded with heavy ominous clouds. But we jumped in the three



Louis Tucker, Tejon Ranch field trip leader



May 7, 2016 Tejon Ranch field trip participants

## Tejon Ranch Cont'd

SUV's that the ranch provided for us and headed out to search for birds and other creatures. The first place we drove was in search of Tejon's Burrowing Owls. Well, only one owl popped out its burrow and quickly flew off in the distance. Not exactly the looks we were hoping for, but, slowly traveling along over the near ridge there were three Swainson's Hawks. That was a nice surprise. In the many times I've been on the ranch, I've only seen this species one other time. Swainson's Hawks do go through the Antelope Valley; I guess timing is everything. There were two light race birds and one dark one. All along our journey there were Horned Larks almost everywhere. It's amazing how these birds can so thoroughly be camouflaged even in very little vegetation, and then surprises you as they take off into the air.

Looking out of the south side of our vehicle we saw a doe Pronghorn Antelope lying down on the ground. The initial thought was that she might be in the process of calving, but, that didn't seem to be the case. It was unusual to see a doe all by herself with not one sign of even a small herd around at all. That is very dangerous for her, given that there are any number of predator threats - as in coyote, black bear and mountain lion in these environs. Seeing us driving on the road, she got up and trotted off.

We headed off to Big Sycamore Canyon. Getting over there proved easier than expected, given the steepness of one of the hills. No slipping and sliding yet. Once we level out up there, there are some very dilapidated structures, worn by weather and neglect, however not disturbing the wonderful ambiance of the scenery. We were hearing the chattering of songbirds which were not necessarily being that cooperative. We did see cooperative Lewis' Woodpeckers, however. There were quite a few of them and if you were diligent and stayed focused you could get some wonderful views of their deep green mantles, rosy bellies, gray breasts and collars, the deep red face, and dark green head. This is a handsome bird, if you can catch the coloring in good light. The lighting was

variable, in that it was still a bit cloudy. Walking around the hill we managed to see at least eight of these birds. There was the teasing of Ravens which we all wanted to make into a larger predator. A Red-tail did show itself, soaring around majestically.

Leaving Sycamore and the oak trees which are there as well, we went to a pond which is very dense with reeds to look for Tri-colored Blackbirds. And, we had Tri-colors and Red-wing Blackbirds chattering it up and flying around. Tejon has one of the few stands of Tri-colored Blackbirds in southern California. There were no Yellow-headed Blackbirds in this group of very gregarious birds this time. The chatter and fluttering around was incessant. This stand of reeds with the blackbirds gives one a text book comparison of Tri-colored and Red-wings. Although the Tri-colored do have red shoulders in the males, they are rarely seen. And in the male Red-wings, this is just what you see. It's also sometimes difficult to distinguish the gurgling's of these two species. It takes expert ears to gauge the harshness of the Tri's versus the seemingly more fluid Red-wings.

It was time to move on. We went across the "flat lands", eastward, which do run into Antelope Valley, to the south of the ranch. By the way, I've mentioned this before, but, Antelope Valley gets its name from the Pronghorn Antelope which used to roam



*Western Kingbird, Photo by Tommye Hite*



*Golden Eagle, Copyright © 2016 Jason Koenig*

## Tejon Ranch Cont'd

freely in this valley; the Tejon Ranch is reintroducing them back to where they once flourished. We were headed over to the magnificent Joshua Tree Forest to look for Scott's Orioles. On our way there, we had some sightings of Western Kingbirds fly catching and chasing away ravens. Also there were some Lark Sparrows, which are so distinct and above and beyond what "little brown jobs" sparrows can be. As we were traveling east on the valley floor, we saw our Pronghorn doe again; doing the same thing as she had earlier: lying down and the getting up and trotting away. The sky began to show a little promise. Clouds were breaking and the sun was beginning to make its presence felt.

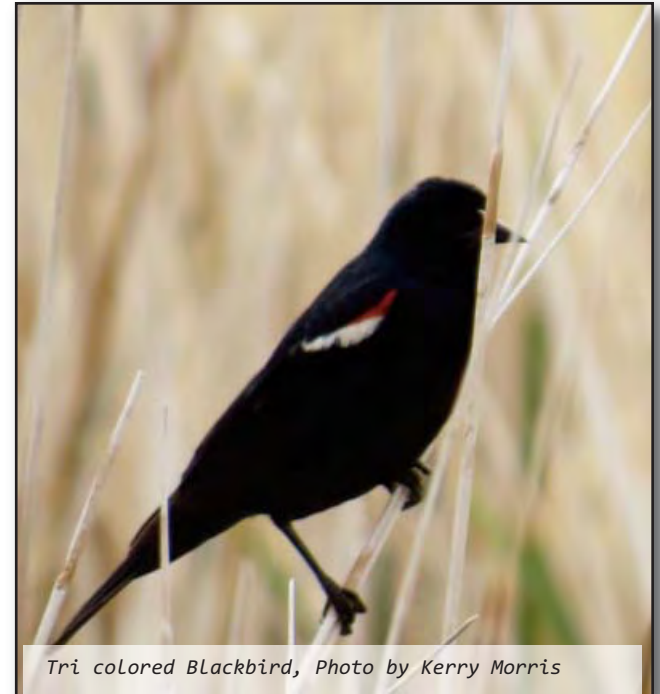
In the Joshua Tree Forest, we had a repeat of a cameo appearance by the target bird. A beautiful male Scott's Oriole jumped from on top of one of the trees and took off north, showing its brilliant yellow, black and white colors and quickly disappeared. I'm not really sure how many folks were able to catch the sight of this lovely bird. We left the cars to walk around in the forest. We were hearing Cactus Wrens and a few Mockingbirds. Of course, we wanted to see the wrens, but, got only to see the "Mockers". In the fields there were other colorful flashes of beauty. Tejon Ranch hosts two species of bluebirds: Western and Mountain Bluebirds. The Mountain Bluebird is only there in the winter. But, the beauty of the Western Bluebird isn't exactly "chopped liver". There were adult birds foraging in the fields for their youngsters. Gorgeous! Most of the Joshua Trees had lost their blooms. Some still had pods on them, and some had dried up flowers. However, a decision was made. As it was looking much clearer, and the roads seemed to be cooperating, we decided to take the trek north into the mountains and get up to Martinez Ridge and Ray's Perch. My internal pout disappeared!

On our way there, we had to go through Canyon Del Gato Montes, which still had some wildflower holdouts. There were still some poppies and blooming Beavertail Cactus. The magenta flower on that cactus

is one of the more stunning things you can ever see in the desert. They were giving off such brilliant color. Tejon also has a number of different species of Buckwheat and some of them were in bloom as well. And, with some which had gone past time, you could still admire the rich chocolate brown of the dead flower. There were other stunning wildflower sights and unfortunately, I can't name a one. But on the desert floor, it looked like an elaborate jeweled tapestry; a true feast for the eyes.

We began our steep climb. We actually did fairly well. The rough roads were not that bad at all. Going around one of the switchbacks, the lead vehicle had a real unexpected surprise. An owl flew in front of our vehicle from the north side of the road to the south side, another cameo appearance, and a special one, which only Steve Justus and I saw. This is quite unfair, because it was a Spotted Owl which then disappeared before I could announce it on the radio to the following vehicles. As we were climbing up the mountain, if you looked south, you could get such incredible views of the expanse of the ranch and also the western end of Antelope Valley. It is truly an awesome sight. You have to wrap your head around Tejon's size which is more than four hundred square miles and 270,000 acres. We could never cover it in a day. At the last gate that would let us into the area of Martinez Ridge, there was one Purple Martin, in a bare tree, singing. This was another brief appearance, and a beautiful one. One of the unfortunate noticeable things up there that is really sad is the loss of great stands of conifers, due to the drought and the infamous bark beetle infestation. There is remarkable devastation.

We finally reach Martinez Ridge. This is such a great spot. This is also where "magic" can happen. If you look north from the ridge you look into the southern end of the central valley. Also, Tejon is part of the Tehachapi Mountain range on its western end. And, from the north, it is the southernmost part of the Sierra Nevada's. Also along the ridge there are plans



*Tri colored Blackbird, Photo by Kerry Morris*



*Lark Sparrow, Photo by Tommye Hite*

## Tejon Ranch Cont'd

for the continuation of the Pacific Crest hiking trail through the ranch. This seemed like a great place to have lunch. There is a huge rock formation in the field which provides a few nice places to sit down and eat. Also, at the foot of this rock is more stone that is level. And, the indigenous peoples who lived in these hills carved out the stone and made shallow bowl like shapes in the stone for mortar and pestle. The indigenous people used these to grind up their herbs and to possibly make flour, and maybe other medicinal remedies.

With everyone enjoying what they had brought to eat, the group really loosened up and we had a lot of laughs while eating. As we were eating, a “happening” began to unfold which would present this question: “To eat or be eaten”? I’ve eaten up on these rocks a number of times but I’ve never witnessed the intense curiosity of the ground squirrels before. Ground squirrels started coming out from the cracks in the rock inspecting and I’m very sure looking for food. Even our goofiness and fun didn’t deter these little critters. They would come out and look and then scurry back into the cracks. There were Steller’s Jays calling in the background along with an occasional call from Mountain Quail. Neither would appear. But, the appearance of the ground squirrels caused something else to happen, in dramatic fashion. Appearing out of nowhere, as if out of “thin air” (from where does that phrase come?) a pair of Golden Eagles, flying at break neck speed. They were above, near, all around us; sometimes at one hundred feet or less. They seemed like a mated pair and they were foraging for food. It took me a while to put it together, until the “light bulb” went off in my head. These birds were hunting with big purpose. I’m sure they had youngsters back at the nest; and the ground squirrels attracted them. The funny thing about our being there was that we ended up being a “shill” for the squirrels. Those eagles flew fairly close to us, but, they would not fly into our group and grab a squirrel. They put on an aerial show for quite some time. At one point, the female landed on the ground quite a distance from us

and stood there for a time, while her mate continued to fly around us.

I am now like a kid at Disneyland (A little side-bar here) you see, Golden Eagles are in my top five favorite birds. All five are part of the birds of prey/scavenger category. Most birders would probably pick other bird families, maybe based on coloration, their particular call or song, their habits and how they relate to us emotionally. My “faves” are “natural born killers”. Don’t judge me; especially you meat eaters (LOL?) I am fascinated with how they were created and designed to do what they do.

Interestingly, Golden Eagles are No. 2 on this list; only because No. 1, the Gyrfalcon, is a rare visitor in the winter, south of very cold climes. Golden Eagles are mostly silent birds. They can achieve some amazing speeds in a stoop: a sensational 200 miles per hour. That’s really outrageous for such a big bird. The Peregrine, No. 3 on my list, exceeds it, but barely. This eagle can prey on almost anything it wants. (I recently read an article where a rancher in New Mexico was getting upset because a Golden Eagle was killing his cows!) That’s crazy! But, I do know they can take an animal the size of a White-tailed Deer. And, that’s a big animal. When they master their hunting skills, they aim for the lung of their prey. And, I guess, the size of the prey determines how and at what speed they can kill it. They may not be able to carry it; they’ll just eat it on the ground. OK, just in case you were asking, No. 4 is the California Condor, which is on the list for so many reasons - being North America’s largest vulture. That bird is just incredibly huge in every respect feathered aircraft. And, No. 5 is a tie: the



*Blooming Beavertail Cactus, Photo by Kerry Morris*



*Golden Eagle, Copyright © 2016 Jason Koenig*

## Tejon Ranch Cont'd

dark race of both the Rough-legged and Ferruginous Hawks just because they are so “freakin’” beautiful. No subliminal message there, honest!

Well, I’m back from my self-indulgent little tangent. We watched the eagles in complete awe; catching every detail of these great birds. The sun would shed light on their golden hackles. It was sensational. As we packed up to go back down to the valley floor, they continued to fly around. This took place for at least forty-five minutes. As it was getting late and the sky was beginning to look threatening. With a possible threat of rain, that is not the place you want to be; on top of a mountain out in the open and having to go down slippery, craggy roads. But, stop for a moment. Can you imagine, driving away from a pair of beautiful, foraging adult Golden Eagles? We kept seeing them as we descended the mountain. Fantastic! So, we retrace our drive and come back to the Canyon Del Gato Montes with the last of the wildflowers. We got out of the cars again. And while we were exploring a bit, another little drama unfolded. A gopher snake managed to climb into the left rear wheel well of the Expedition some of us were riding in. This became a “madcap” adventure, trying to get the snake out from the wheel well. There were a number of people valiantly and earnestly trying to save this reptile, but, the snake wasn’t having it. And, how I would love to say that we were successful with this craziness. Alas, we weren’t. A few brave people tried and they all failed. It was strangely funny, in a way. Poor snake! It was not seen again. We had to drive away with it in the wheel well. Oops!

Up on one of the very steep ridges in the Canyon Del Gato Montes, we also spotted a doe Mule Deer. How this animal was moving along this ridge was really remarkable. The hill was practically vertical. And, of course, she quickly disappeared. Amazing! We went back through the Joshua Tree Forest taking the whole day and relishing the splendor of it all.

At this point our trip was coming to a close. We were saying “goodbye” to the Kingbirds, Lark Sparrows, Western Bluebirds, and all of the gazillion Horned Larks near the Joshua Tree Forest. The day ended up being really great. Tejon Ranch is truly a great escape from the craziness of LA, and it is so close. The “ghost El Niño” didn’t do the damage I thought would be possible up there. And, I think that all of the participants had a great time. How can you not, when there was at least a forty-five minute aerial show from a pair of Golden Eagles, beautiful flowers, pronghorn, singing birds and an outrageous landscape? Also, being in this incredible spot, which the Tejon Ranch Conservancy is committed to keeping the area wild. It is a place where all of your worries and cares just seem to vanish once you step on this property. Everywhere you turn there is some form of beauty; whether it is bird, mammal, reptile, insect, plant and tree life or just the whole landscape. Even things which are dead and petrified have their own strange beauty in the natural cycle of life. It is the wilderness “crown jewel” of southern California. May it stay forever wild! 🐿️

*Please view this article online for more outstanding photo submissions from the participants of this field trip. Go to [www.laaudubon.org](http://www.laaudubon.org).*



*Ground Squirrel, Photo by Kerry Morris*



*Pronghorn Antelope, Copyright © 2016 Jason Koenig*

## YOUNG AUTHORS | My Trip to Alaska

By Dessi Sieburth



*Three Least Auklets on a rock in St. Paul Island*

**O**ne of my favorite birding destinations in the spring is Alaska because many migrating birds are returning to Alaska. I had been to Denali National Park and the Kenai Peninsula previously, and I wanted to go to other birding locations in Alaska. This year, I went to Saint Paul Island, which is one of the four Pribilof Islands in the Bering Sea, and then I went to Nome, which is on the tip of the Seward Peninsula in western Alaska. I went from June 4 to June 13, 2016, because early June is the best time to see shorebirds, seabirds, and songbirds as they start breeding. At this time of the year, many birds are vocalizing, and they are easier to spot. I went with a small group of four other birding friends. To prepare for this trip, the five of us met several times and studied the birds found in Alaska.

Our group flew from Los Angeles to Anchorage, where we spent our first day. We did some local birding there along the coast of the Cook Inlet and in the adjoining Westchester lagoon, and saw a Sabine's Gull, rare in Anchorage. We also saw White-winged Crossbill, Hudsonian Godwit, and Alder Flycatcher. We also went to Kincaid Park, where we saw an adult moose with two babies.

Then we went to St. Paul Island. St. Paul Island is treeless and there were grasslands, tundra, and wildflowers. We stayed at the only hotel there, the King Eider Hotel. There, we went with a tour group, TDX, which provides guides and transportation for birders during the summer months.

We birded St. Paul Island for four days, going out birding for fourteen hours per day, and with the help of our guides, who were very knowledgeable, I saw fourteen life birds. Some highlights there included Slaty-backed Gull, Wood Sandpiper, King Eider, Yellow-billed Loon, and Snowy Owl. The seabird cliffs at St. Paul were absolutely breathtaking. At the cliffs, I was able to get a few feet close to Horned and Tufted Puffins, who were preparing to nest on the cliffs. I saw hundreds of Thick-billed and Common Murres, and Least, Parakeet, and Crested Auklets. The Red-legged Kittiwakes were also a highlight, as I was able to get about five feet close to one of them. Of all the birds I saw, the Red-faced Cormorants were my favorite birds because they were so close and beautiful.



*Parakeet Auklets were common at St. Paul Island*



*The Red faced Cormorants on St. Paul Island were my favorite birds*



Nome was our next stop. To get there, we had to fly back to Anchorage. Since there are only three major roads in Nome and the birding was pretty easy, we did not have a guide. Nome was quite a unique place, as we saw shorebirds displaying and Semipalmated Sandpipers sitting on top of houses. Highlights in Nome included Bluethroats and Arctic Warblers singing and displaying, and Bristle-thighed Curlew, Spectacled Eider, Gyrfalcon, and a friendly Rock Ptarmigan in courtship plumage. Short-eared Owls and Long-tailed Jaegers were everywhere you looked, and I had never seen so many of them in my life before. Songbirds were singing everywhere in the dwarf willows, and Gray-cheeked Thrush, Northern Waterthrush, and Blackpoll Warblers were common. We had several interesting mammals, including Grizzly Bear and Musk Ox. I ended up with thirty life birds total on the Alaska trip and fifteen of them I saw in Nome.



*A Tufted Puffin sits on a rock in St. Paul Island*



*Short eared Owls were common around Nome*

I also wanted to do a conservation project in Alaska, as many bird populations are declining. I decided to learn more about the Bar-tailed Godwit because this bird is an example of a long distant migrant. I was very happy when I saw several Bar-tailed Godwits in Nome. Bar-tailed Godwits make a nearly 7,200 miles non-stop migration journey from Alaska to New Zealand without food and water for eight days each fall. My goal is that other people learn about these amazing birds and that they will be motivated to help and to protect the Bar-tailed Godwits and other migrating birds. I am planning to publish an interview I am doing with a biologist in Anchorage who has been doing research about the Bar-tailed Godwit. The birding in Alaska turned out to be spectacular, and it was an adventure that I won't forget. Thanks to Los Angeles Audubon Society for supporting my birding trips and conservation projects. 🐦



*A Bluethroat was singing from a perch in Nome*



*We saw several Bar-tailed Godwits in Alaska. Drawing by Dessi Sieburth*

*All photos taken by Dessi Sieburth,  
<http://protectingourbirds.my-free.website/>*

## INTERPRETING NATURE

By Stacey Vigallon, Director of Interpretation, and the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Interns

On May 14, 2016 students participating in the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Internship Program presented their research to the public at a symposium hosted at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park. Projects this year addressed native plant germination, park visitor behavior, community engagement, species mapping, and creating dye from native plants. The information obtained through student research projects is available to California State Parks and the Baldwin Hills Conservancy staff, is used to inform habitat restoration at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook, and serves as a foundation upon which new interns can build new projects. We are proud of the work that interns did during the 2015-2016 school year, and we're looking forward to working with a new group of Greenhouse Interns and Restoration Leaders in this fall. Below we are pleased to present the 2015-2016 Greenhouse Intern project abstracts...

### Sidonie Horn

#### **Coast Live Oak Location and Seed Disperser Visitation at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook**

My project focused on observing the relationship between Western Scrub-Jays, Eastern Fox Squirrels, and Coast Live Oak in the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park (BHSO) located in Los Angeles. The restoration of BHSO may depend on the spread of these backbone species. I believed that in the absence of Coast Live Oaks, Western Scrub-Jays would most likely be seen in areas frequented by people (the parking lot, etc.). I surveyed for Western Scrub-Jay and Eastern Fox Squirrel activity in different areas within the park. All scrub jays and squirrels were observed at the Greenhouse survey site, an area

with several young oak trees and well established ground cover. By observing which locations in BHSO Western Scrub-Jays are most likely to visit, we will have a better idea of where to plant young oaks. This will help speed up the ecological recovery of the park.

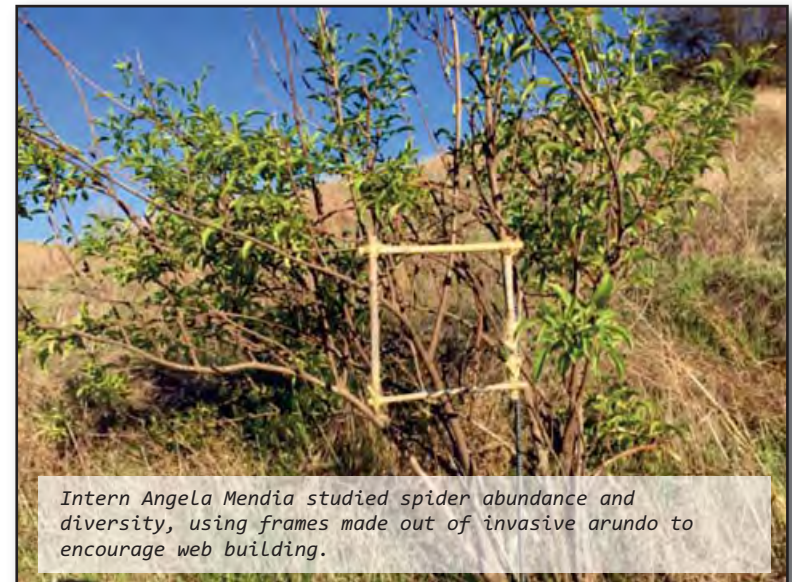
### Magaly Lopez

#### **Better Germination in California Black Walnut**

I studied germination conditions of California black walnuts (*Juglans californica*). Between fall 2014 and spring 2015, I observed the germination rate between non-refrigerated and refrigerated walnuts collected in 2014. I hypothesized that non-refrigerated walnuts would have greater germination. My data showed the opposite: 56% of the refrigerated walnuts germinated compared to 29% of non-refrigerated walnuts. For fall 2015 to spring 2016, I observed the germination rate of refrigerated and non-refrigerated walnuts collected in both 2014 and 2015. I hypothesized that refrigerated seeds, no matter the age, would have higher percent of germination than non-refrigerated seeds, which was true for refrigerated seeds overall. However, seeds collected in 2015 had roughly equal germination between refrigerated and non-refrigerated (28% and 29%, respectively). I predicted seeds collected in 2014 would have a higher percent of germination than seeds collected in 2015. This was true for refrigerated seeds (40% for those collected in 2014, 28% for those collected in 2015), but not true for unrefrigerated seeds (19%



*All the work that Greenhouse Interns do over the course of the school year takes place outside including computer work like project proposals and data analysis.*



*Intern Angela Mendia studied spider abundance and diversity, using frames made out of invasive arundo to encourage web building.*

for 2014 seeds, and 29% for 2015 seeds). Based on two years of data, I recommend refrigerating seeds before planting, and seeds that have been stored for over a year are still viable to plant.

**Angela Mendia**

***Spider Abundance and Diversity: Frames in Isolation vs. Vegetation***

This year my project utilized handmade spider frames to document spider abundance and biodiversity at the Baldwin Hill Scenic Overlook. Twenty spider frames, built by students in the Greenhouse Program, were placed on the hillside adjacent to the greenhouse: 10 in isolation and 10 within vegetation. I monitored frames from September 2015 through January 2016, recording 1-2 days a week any spiders and webs found on the frames. Overall, spider abundance was very low, and only jumping spider species were present. Jumping spiders occupied the isolated frames more frequently than the frames near vegetation: spiders were observed on 8 out of 10 isolated frames but only 3 of the frames near vegetation. For future studies, I suggest that the spider frames should be put up by early summer and monitored through the fall in order to better capture the window of when spiders would be more active.

**Ana Paola Rivera**

***Health and Safety at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook***

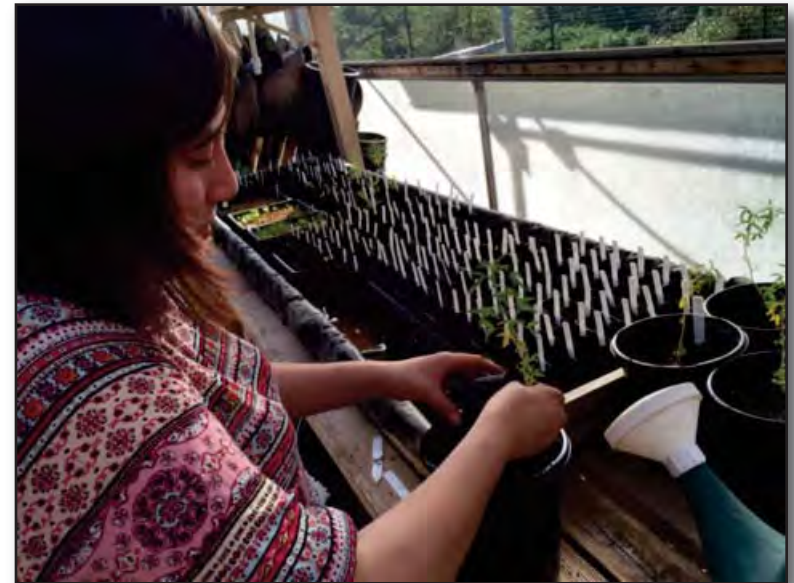
I studied exerciser behavior that might contribute to both safe and unsafe conditions at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook during the 2015-2016 school year. Access to parks and nature is important to human physical and mental well-being, especially city-dwellers (Louv 2005, Gies, 2006, Reynolds 2015). Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook is an island of habitat surrounded by Los Angeles, Culver City, and Inglewood. It is important to the community because it serves as a connection to nature and a place to exercise for free. Park fea-

tures make it very attractive to exercisers, however, steep terrain, vehicles, and high-use raise safety issues. Unlike what I predicted, there were roughly equal numbers of men and women observed using the park. Way fewer people than I predicted used headphones (44%) or walked backwards in the middle of the road (just 2%). However, I was correct in my prediction that about 50% of people would exercise in a group. I observed 11 instances of people walking backwards during just seven observation sessions. Based on my results, I would recommend for the park to conduct an Exercise Safety Workshop that would address how running backwards and using headphones may affect everyone's safety at the park.

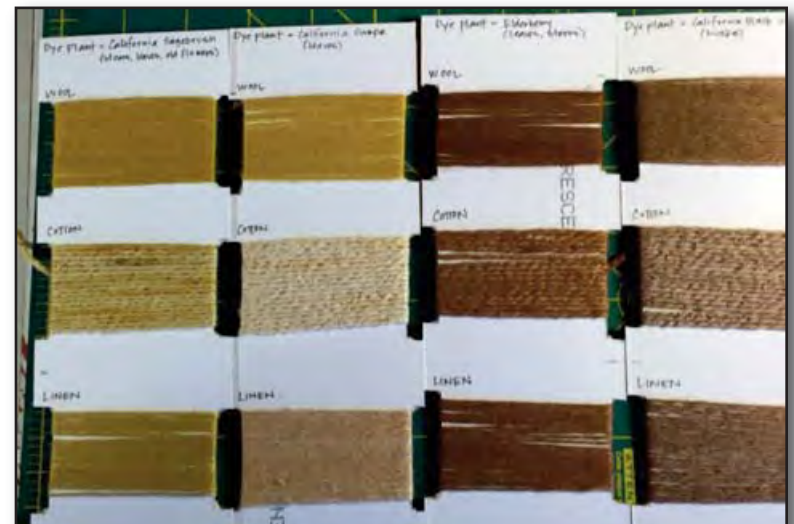
**Karina Westby**

***Knitting and Native Plant Dyes: Connecting with Nature and Managing Stress***

My project combined nature and knitting. I created dyes from native plant species at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook, and I learned to knit and tracked my stress level. The presence of parks can encourage healthier lifestyles, and access to nature can benefit mental health (Gies 2006, Louv 2005). Activities like knitting have also been shown to help manage stress (Erhenfeld 2013, Craft Yarn Council 2015). I hypothesized that wool yarn would absorb more dye than cotton or linen yarn, which was supported by the data: wool was the only fiber that consistently had a strong dye result. I also hypothesized that twenty minutes of



*Germination of native plants species has always been an important aspect of the Greenhouse Program. The bladderpod and milkweed plants seen in this photo will be used in future restoration projects at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook.*



*The arts and ethnobotany were incorporated into Intern Karina Westby's project using native plants to dye yarns made of wool, cotton, and Linen.*

knitting a day would significantly reduce my stress. Though I was unable to knit every day, during 65% of my seventeen knitting sessions my stress level decreased. The process of creating dye from plants required patience and a deep understanding of nature that came from first-hand interactions with the outdoors and learning from a variety of cultural sources. I recommend trying additional native and non-native plant species found in the park for dyes. I also recommend knitting as a stress-reducing activity and that Greenhouse Program students should teach the skill to elementary students.

**Emely Perez**

### ***Transplant Survival Rate of Five Different Native Species***

Monarchs are important pollinators essential to nature, and they can't survive without milkweed (Monarch Joint Venture A, Sandoval 2015). We need pollinators for life to function properly (Black, Shepard and Allen 2001). To prevent further pollinator extinction we need habitat conservation and restoration. My research involved testing the transplant survival of three Milkweed species, California Buckwheat, and Bladder pod at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook greenhouse. I hypothesized that these species of native plants wouldn't have the same transplant survival once they're transplanted into individual pots, and this was correct. The transplant survival seemed dependent on how soon they were transplanted after being seeded, especially for Milkweed species. Milkweed species seedlings that were sitting in the seed trays for 67-81 days before being transplanted had lower transplant survival than those that were transplanted 30-38 days after seeding. Bladder pods had 100% transplant survival but buckwheat survival was very low (3%). I recommend that the seedlings be transplanted soon after the second set of leaves (after the cotyledon leaves) have appeared in order to increase the chances of survival. My plan for next year is to study milkweed transplant survival outside the greenhouse on the adjacent hillside.

**Jibril Collins & Yesenia Vasquez**

### ***How Do People Interact with Nature at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook?***

Our project focused on how people interacted with nature at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook. From December 2015 through February 2016, we observed park visitors at four different sites, recording the number of people at each site who stopped to look at the view/interact with nature, and the number of people who stopped to take a photo. In November 2014 and 2015, we had the "Be Nice Hike" event, in which Greenhouse Program students engaged park visitors in a high-five station along the main trail and a message station asking visitors to write/drawn what they like about the park. We observed 105 instances of people taking pictures, and even more instances of people stopping to look at the view/engage with nature (143 total). During the 2015 Be Nice Hike, 81% of people in the area at the time participated in the high-five station. Examining messages from the Be Nice Hike events in 2014 and 2015, nature (26%) and the view (28%) comprised the majority of the reasons why people liked the park. Based on these results, we conclude that nature is important to people at Baldwin Hill Scenic Overlook, a sense of community exists, and the park is an important resource.

**Jose Rivera**

### ***Positive Effects of Nature and Meditation on Greenhouse Program Participants***

People living in the urban environment suffer from chronic stress more so than people living in a non-urban environment (Wolf 2013). My project focused on nature and meditation as a way for people to manage stress within the Greenhouse Program, engaging 38 participants in two styles of meditation: coloring and sitting in nature. I hypothesized that on a week-to-week basis participants will report no difference in stress levels, which was proven to be incorrect. The majority of participants showed a decrease in reported stress level after taking part in either form of meditation. The percent

of positive emotions listed increased after meditation and negative emotions decreased. My second hypothesis that participants will, upon reflection at the end of all mediation sessions, report that meditation helped them manage their stress, was supported by the data collected. Of the 24 people who completed post-assessment forms about their experience, 88% said that their meditation experience was positive or helpful in some way, and 87% said that they would consider meditating on their own in the future. I would recommend studying how meditation benefits elementary students and I would recommend meditation being used frequently in the Greenhouse Program.

**Sindel Donaldson**

### ***Animation, Nature, and a Child's Mind***

Animated films are a huge part of children's lives and have a heavy influence on the way children think and act. They give children ideas that tend to stay with them throughout their life (Goldman, 2012). These ideas include ones about how they should view nature. My project compares the way that a sample of animated films from the United States, Japan, and Ireland portray nature to children. When viewing the films, I concentrated on which animals were portrayed as good or bad, how animals and humans interacted, and the antagonist's motivation. To have a better understanding of how animated films might distort nature as a reality, I completed nature journaling activities at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook two days a week. Between October 2015 and February 2016 I recorded the weather, the sounds, and the plants and animals I saw. I found that the American films portrayed nature as something to be controlled by humans, while the Irish films portrayed nature as something humans must be friendly and work with, and Japanese films portrayed it as something to fear and respect. 🐾

## LET'S GET OUTSIDE

By Cindy Hardin, Director of Outdoor Education

**T**he days are long; the nights are warm — it's summertime in beautiful Southern California! Of course, outdoor activities are a year-round option in this part of the world, due to our mild Mediterranean climate. But the bright mornings and long golden evenings that are emblematic of the season bring a special call to make the time to step outside and enjoy a slice of nature, near our homes and farther afield.

There is mounting evidence, both anecdotal and research based, that indicates that time spent outdoors in a natural setting is conducive to mental, emotional and physical health. Richard Louv, author of "Last Child in the Woods" and "The Nature Principal", has long been an advocate of keeping and/or re-introducing nature in our lives. As the role of technology in society continues to grow at an unbridled rate, the real world of the great outdoors is slipping further and further away from large segments of the population. This is particularly true of young people, many of whom have had access to electronic devices like smart phones since early childhood. It has been reported that school age children spend on average 7.8 hours *daily* viewing electronic screens of some kind.

The greening of the school yard is one tool to counterbalance this obsession with images on the screen. Los Angeles Audubon has been a key player in bringing nature to our local schools through the creation of a thriving native habitat at Leo Politi Elementary School and a pending project at Esperanza Elementary School. A Canadian study showed greening of school grounds improved academic performance of students, lowered exposure to toxins and increased teachers' enthusiasm for being teachers (James Raffan, "Nature Nurtures: Investigating the Potential of School Grounds", The Evergreen Canada Initiative). LAAS's hands-on experience with campus greening has seen similar positive effects at Leo Politi.

Of course, contact with green spaces is important for all age groups. But where to go? Los Angeles is indeed a huge, sprawling metropolis. According to The Trust for Public Land, we have the dubious distinction of being one of the most "park poor" cities in America. One of the ways this rating is determined is by tabulating which percentage of the population is within a 10 minute walk to a park. Our largest parks, Griffith Park and our beaches, are positioned on the perimeter of the city, and are in no way located within a 10 minute walk for most residents. However, the sprawling nature of LA, disparaged by many for good reason, was in part driven by the notion that most residents would have their own "mini-park", i.e. the backyard. This style of civic planning has left us with hellish commutes, a dependence on the automobile and isolation from the city core. But, it has also created vast tracts of housing with lush backyards and tree-lined streets.

In many areas, the canopy created by these "street trees" is quite dense. Older neighborhoods, constructed in the post World War II building boom, are veritable urban oases of mature trees, and home for many of our avian friends. For example, the neighborhoods around Slauson and Vermont do not immediately come to mind as a location for prime nature viewing. But I have taken students on birdwalks on campuses located in this area, and spotted Hooded Orioles, Bushtits, nesting hummingbirds and all manner of finches, amongst other species of birds.

My own neighborhood, which is block upon block of apartments, is also filled with street trees. Hummingbirds nest six feet from my kitchen window every year, Cooper's Hawks are regularly sighted during the early evening hours, and Dark-eyed Juncos forage amongst the undergrowth in the mornings. This year, towards the end of May, a

flock of 50 Cedar Waxwings passed through to fortify themselves as they continued their migration to Western Canada.

Louv recommends at least 10 minutes a day of what he calls "Vitamin N" (Vitamin Nature). The National Wildlife Federation suggests an hour a day in the fresh air. Stepping outside your door and really looking at your own neighborhood is an easy way to get your daily quota. Exploration of your personal locale might yield some nice surprises. In East LA one could get to know Hollenbeck Park or Hazard Park. Mar Vista has a collection of cardio challenging stairways. Montecito Heights is adjacent to Debs Park. There is a lovely restored section of Compton Creek in Compton, and south LA has a fabulous wildlife park, complete with a nature center, built on re-claimed industrial land, at Compton and Slauson. And of course, there is the wildly popular Bald-



*The Microscope Station at Open Wetlands always hold interesting surprises. Regular visitor Maddie helps docent Diana Spurlin search for invertebrates found in our tidal channel water sample.*

win Hills Scenic Overlook, at the western edge of the Baldwin Hills. This California State Park, located in the middle of the city, is enjoyed by hundreds of people every day. Habitat improvement and restoration that is being done there by LAAS continues to amplify the native plant pallet, and attract more and more native species of birds and other wildlife.

In addition, if one chooses a regular time of day for these neighborhood forays, there's a good chance that you will begin to notice others doing the same thing. We are creatures of habit. I walk every morning between 5 and 7 am, and have many "pre-dawn friends" as a result of this routine. Traversing the same routes at approximately the same time on a daily basis gives opportunity to be an eyewitness to seasonal changes in light, vegetation and presence of animals, and build community with your human neighbors!

Well, you may say, I live in a place that truly is a concrete jungle. There are definitely parts of Los Angeles that fit this description. Fortunately, there is open space to be found, some within the city limits, and lots adjacent to our borders. And your Los Angeles Audubon Society is here to help! As you probably know, we offer regularly scheduled birdwalks and nature activities on most weekends. We encourage one and all to come and join us. Each of these events is staffed by volunteers who love to share their knowledge and enthusiasm about the natural world with others. Some of your options:

**OPEN WETLANDS:** On the **first Saturday of every month, from 9 am to noon**, the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve is open to the public. Attendees can borrow binoculars, view aquatic invertebrates through microscopes, and stroll through the dune habitat and out to the creek to look for birds through our high powered scopes.

**TOPANGA CANYON:** We host a guided birdwalk on the **first Sunday of every month, from 8 am to noon**, in the wilds of Topanga Canyon. Historic Trippet Ranch is the starting point, and wide

open spaces, native plants and mountainous surroundings are all a part of this excursion. The quiet of the canyon on an early Sunday morning is just the antidote to hectic urban overload!

**FRANKLIN CANYON:** An amazing swath of hidden wilderness is the site of a birdwalk that takes place on the **second Sunday of every month, from 8:30 to 11:30**. A lake, a pond, hillside trails and all manner of wildlife is found in this park-you won't believe that Los Angeles is just over the hill.

**KENNETH HAHN STATE RECREATION AREA:** Sweeping views of the Los Angeles Basin are part of the package during this birdwalk on the **third Saturday of the month, from 8 am to 11 am**. No walks in July August, but walks resume in September, just in time to catch the return of our wintering birds and migrating species as they swing through on their way to points south.

**BALLONA WETLANDS:** This walk focuses on Del Rey Lagoon, the ocean and Ballona Creek in its search for birds on the **third Sunday of every month, from 8 am to noon**. No walk in December.

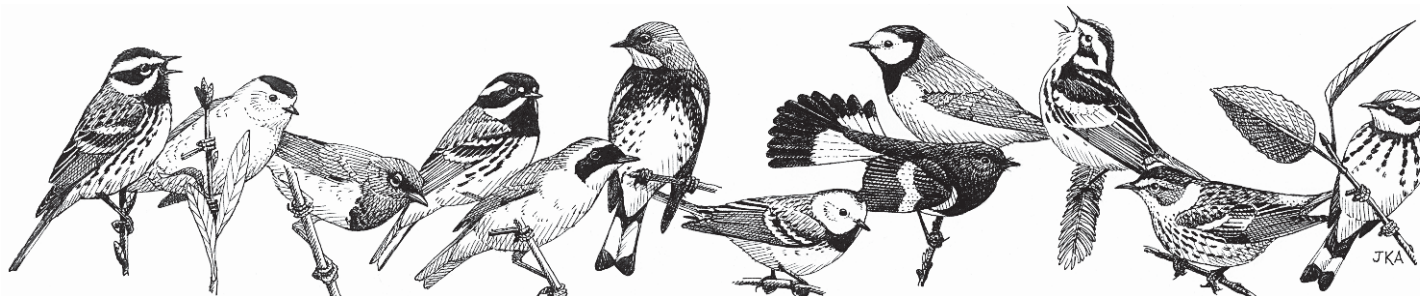
Although birding is a component of these events, there is also a focus on native plants and habitats, and general enjoyment of nature and its wonders. Our volunteer guides welcome folks with all levels of experience, including those with little to no familiarity of our local wild habitats! LAAS is committed to encouraging every citizen to learn more about the environment, with the belief that better knowledge leads to better stewardship of our precious open spaces. More details can be found about each of these events at [losangelesaudubon.org](http://losangelesaudubon.org). In addition, there are listings of trips that will take you further afield; the above walks are meant to explore the urban wilderness that abounds in Los Angeles.

But perhaps you are already a nature enthusiast. If that is the case, you should know that we are always looking for volunteers to help us with our endeavors to de-mystify nature to the general public. In fact, our fabulous volunteers are the lifeblood of these programs, and frankly, we could not do it without them. Training is provided, and, as you can see by the above descriptions, commitment of your time might be as little as once a month. Please contact me at [cindyhardin@laaudubon.org](mailto:cindyhardin@laaudubon.org) if you would like to get involved.

Urbanites are often conditioned to think that one must travel to experience nature. But in fact, it can be as close as your front porch. Take the time during this most juicy of seasons to step outside, feel the sun on your face, look for insects and the beautiful songbirds that are hunting for them, watch the play of light and dark on the leaves of the trees, and listen for the call of the mockingbird and other avian neighbors. You will be amazed at the enduring resilience and presence of the wild things, even here, in our big giant city. 🐦



*Dirt roads in West LA?! Yes, indeed. This is a part of my own "neighborhood nature", which I did not discover until I was tipped off by a Long time resident in my area.*



## Birds of the Season — June 2016 By Jon Fisher

**S**pring migration, nearly six months in duration, has finally come to a close. The last of the late passerines have traversed the area by the first half of June. Yet as long as it lasts, it seems to be over all too quickly.

The general impression this spring was that observed migrant numbers were well below average. There were a few days and places that offered good numbers of birds, but these were in the minority.

While rainfall was still well below average, a relatively cool and wet spring perhaps had enough of an influence to cause migrants to spread out, rather than concentrate in greener patches typical of very dry years. The inexorable decline of Neotropical migrants may also be partly to blame for the lower observed numbers and weather may also have played a role. The short answer, as it frequently is — we don't really know why fewer birds were observed.

As one might expect given the relative paucity of migrants, there were likewise an underwhelming number of vagrants, but San Clemente Island netted a decent handful of rarities and a few turned up on the mainland as well.

Now in its fourteenth year, our America's Birdiest County event at the end of April produced 270 species. Below our record of 277, but a respectable number for three days of extensive coverage. In addition to being quite a bit of fun, this event generates a significant amount of data.

Though the main focus in spring is on migrants, resident birds are breeding locally as early as January— and of course some species breed throughout the year. With the arrival of summer visitors, this activity continues to increase through May and June. The resulting cacophony of sound and energy being expended to raise broods is always something to be looked forward to. And these ob-

servations can be put to good use. Evidence of breeding can easily be included on eBird checklists by entering breeding codes, thus making these lists all the more valuable.

A late inland **Brant** was at the Piute Ponds from May 27-28 (Darren Dowell).

Also late were two **Common Mergansers** at Quail Lake near Gorman on May 21 (Kimball Garrett) and another along the LA River in Glendale on June 5 (Joy Brooks). Unusual inland were three **Red-breasted Mergansers** at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on May 1, with one continuing through May 20 (Rod Higbie). Ten at Hansen Dam on May 7 was a good inland count (Kimball Garrett). Another lingering bird was a **Hooded Merganser** at Descanso Gardens on May 7 (Mark Hunter).

Scarce inland was a **Pacific Loon** at Alondra Park Reservoir on April 23 (Mark & Janet Scheel), while late inland was a **Common Loon**

at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on May 23 (Rod Higbie).

Attesting to the fact that they are increasing in southern California waters were six **Brown Boobies** near San Clemente Island on May 2 (Olaf Danielson).

First found on February 17, the county's first **Neotropic Cormorant** remained at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas through May 20. There was plenty of searching but no subsequent reports.

**Cattle Egrets** were at Santa Fe Dam on April 15 (Amy Williamson) and at the Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area in Willowbrook on April 27 (Richard Barth).

The now adult **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron**, having lingered in the area for nearly a year, was reported at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh through May 22.

The county's second **Glossy Ibis** was found in the Sepulveda Basin

on May 24 (Mike Stensvold). Though nearly annual in Imperial County - and with a few records from adjacent counties- this was the first chaseable bird in Los Angeles County. It remained through June 5 and offered many birders an excellent and easy opportunity to observe it.

One of the reintroduced **California Condors** was near Lebec on April 24 (Gabriel Gartner, Brooke Keeney). Quite rare in spring was a **Broad-winged Hawk** seen flying over Hahamonga Watershed Park in Pasadena on April 17 (Darren Dowell).

Intriguing was a **Ridgway's Rail** that turned up at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on March 20 (Don Sterba) and still present on June 12. This species, known for many years as the subspecies "Light-footed" Clapper Rail, was present as a breeder in this area until 1949 but has since absent from the county. Thus the presence of this bird is encouraging to say the least.

Possibly indicative of local breeding was a **Sora** at Malibu Creek State Park on May 26 (Karen Chaivoe).

As expected in spring, unusual shorebirds were scarce. Four **Pacific Golden-Plovers** were found

together on San Clemente Island on May 1 (Michael Novak, Justyn Stahl) and a late **Semipalmated Plover** was at the Piute Ponds from May 27-June 8 (Darren Dowell).

A **Solitary Sandpiper** was on the LA River in Long Beach on May 1 (Jon Feenstra) and a less expected **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at the Piute Ponds from June 3-4 (Jon Feenstra, Darren Dowell, Adam Searcy, Steve Morris).

Quite scarce as a transient in the county was a **Red Knot** on the salt pan at the Ballona Wetlands on June 8 (Jun & Bin Wu).

At an unexpected date and locale was a **Glaucous-winged Gull** at Apollo Park near Lancaster from June 10-13 (Kerry Ross).

Scarce on the coastal slope was a **Black Tern** at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on May 8 (Tom Miko). Conversely rare inland was a **Least Tern** at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB from May 12-14 (Darren Dowell), with either the same bird or another observed on June 7 (Jon Feenstra).

Two **Arctic Terns** at the Piute Ponds on June 3 were a nice surprise inland, with one continuing through June 8 (Jon Feenstra, Darren Dowell, Adam Searcy, Steve Morris).

Two **Inca Doves** in Lake Los Angeles on May 30 indicate that a small population persists there (Andrew Lee). A few others continued to be reported at Col. Leon H. Washington Park in Los Angeles.

**White-winged Doves** were found at Apollo Park near Lancaster on May 26 (Logan Khale) and in west Palmdale on May 27 (Beverly Shoemaker).

Six **Long-eared Owl** nests were discovered in the Lancaster/Palmdale area this spring, with up to ten young fledged (Kerry Ross). Easily overlooked as a breeder, they may well be more common than records indicate.

**Black Swifts** were again observed over the foothills above Claremont this spring, with eight present on May 7 (Tom Benson) and smaller numbers being reported through June 4. Nesting is presumably taking place somewhere locally, but this species ranges widely on daily foraging flights.

A handful of **Vermilion Flycatchers** were found on the coastal slope and on the deserts, with a count of eight being notable at Oakdale Memorial Park in Glendora on June 12 (Rick Fisher).

Continuing wintering flycatchers included a **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** at Creek Park in La Mirada through May 2 and a **Tropical Kingbird** at El Dorado Park in Long Beach through April 16. An **Eastern Kingbird** on San Clemente Island on May 30 was obviously a spring vagrant (Justyn Stahl, Alex Bartolo).

**Plumbeous Vireos** were at Maywood Riverfront Park in Maywood on April 27 (Richard Barth), at Apollo Park near Lancaster on May 9 (Darren Dowell) and at the Piute Ponds on May 18 (John Birsner).

A **Purple Martin** was at the Piute Ponds on April 24 (Dessi Sieburth, Frank & Susan Gilliland) and five were there on May 22 (John Birsner). Two were at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on May 24 (Rod Higbie) and one was in northwest Lancaster on May 22 (Kerry Ross).

Miscellaneous passerines included a **Pygmy Nuthatch** out of place at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on April 20 (Jun & Bin Wu), a late **Varied Thrush** at Rancho Sierra Golf Club on May 1 (Pamela Stones) and a **Townsend's Solitaire** on San Clemente Island on May 17 (Justyn Stahl).



The wintering **Gray Catbird** at Monte Verde Park in Lakewood was present through April 23, while a spring vagrant was on San Clemente Island from May 18–24 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole Desnoyers).

A rare spring **Red-throated Pipit** was on San Clemente Island on May 1 (Justyn Stahl). Also of note were two more at Big Bear Lake on May 1. Rare but expected in fall along the coast, this species is unusual in spring.

A **Northern Waterthrush** at the Piute Ponds on May 27 was the only one reported this spring (Darren Dowell).

A **Black-and-white Warbler** continued at DeForest Park in Long Beach through May 7. Others were at Ohara Nursery in West Carson on May 1 (Vincent Lloyd), at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on May 12 (Lee Pace) and on San Clemente Island on May 14 (Alex Bartolo).

**Tennessee Warblers** were on San Clemente Island from May 13–15 (Justyn Stahl, Michael Novak), on May 22 (Nicole Desnoyers, Joel Throckmorton) and again- possibly the same bird- on May 30 (Justyn Stahl). Also of note was a **Lucy's Warbler** was on Edwards AFB on June 2 (Jon Feenstra).

A **Hooded Warbler** stopped over

at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach from May 11–14 (Jun & Bin Wu) and another was at Apollo Park near Lancaster on June 12 (Davie Bell, Luke Tiller).

San Clemente Island produced an **American Redstart** on May 19 (Justyn Stahl, Richard Hepner, Nicole Desnoyers) where it continued through June 3. A different bird was found there on June 7 (Nicole Desnoyers, Joel Throckmorton) and another was in Altadena on June 10 (Luke Tiller).

**Northern Parulas** were at Maywood Riverfront Park in Maywood from May 21–22 (Richard Barth) and on San Clemente Island from May 12-13 (Justyn Stahl, Michael Novak).

A wintering **Palm Warbler** continued on the LA River north of the 91 Freeway through April 9, while a spring migrant was at the Dominguez Seminary and Museum in Carson from April 11–14 (Richard Barth). Late was a **Yellow-rumped "Myrtle" Warbler** was at the Piute Ponds on May 27 (Darren Dowell).

Continuing wintering Emberizids included a **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Madrona Marsh in Torrance through April 12, a **Grasshopper Sparrow** at UCLA in Westwood through May 7 and a **White-throated Sparrow** at Silver Lake

Reservoir through April 11 (Chris Dean).

A **Summer Tanager** at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on May 29 (Darren Dowell) was the only one reported during the period.

**Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were San Clemente Island on 12 (Joel Throckmorton), at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on May 14 (David Moody) and again on San Clemente Island from May 19–June 7 (Richard Hepner) and May 28 (Justyn Stahl). Another was at a residence in Long Beach on June 10 (Tracy Drake).

San Clemente Island also produced two **Indigo Buntings** present from May 11–14 (Justyn Stahl, Michael Novak) and another on May 22 (Nicole Desnoyers). A singing male was at Malibu Creek State Park from June 5–13 (David Plotkin).

Up to five **Red Crossbills** were at Apollo Park from May 21–28 where breeding has taken place in the past (Mark & Janet Scheel).


The seasonal movements of birds are one of the most intriguing things about them, so it's fortunate that there's only a short lull between spring and fall migration. In fact these two events overlap slightly. Wilson's Phalaropes,

among the earliest southbound birds, had already appeared by the first week of June while the late spring songbirds were still heading north.

July and August will be big months for shorebirds, with a good chance for vagrants and a variety of plumages to study.

Though some passerines disperse early from breeding areas, fall migration for this large and varied group won't seriously get underway until later. While still dry, the mountains will be good for these southbound birds in August and they will be increasingly encountered in the lowlands as well.

August and September will also be prime time for seedeaters in the lowlands. Sparrows, buntings, Bobolinks and perhaps a Dickcissel or Lark Bunting are possible. Any weed patch along river channels, in flood basins and elsewhere has good potential for attracting these birds.

Regardless of where you bird in Los Angeles County this summer and fall, you are practically guaranteed a wide variety of birds and the potential for vagrants. It's easy to take our wealth of birdlife for granted, yet there are few other places in the state- or even the country- that are as productive for birders. 

# PRESS RELEASE | Your Breeding Bird Atlas Arriving Soon

## Long-tailed Tits and Bushtits – Family Aegithalidae

### BUSHTIT

*Psaltriparus minimus*

Species Sponsor: For Shirley Webster

Highly gregarious in the nonbreeding season, Bushtits forage in flocks of up to 40 at that time, maintaining flock cohesion by near-constant repetition of their *tit* or *spit* contact calls. Breeding birds in our area consist of pairs; in other parts of the range nest helpers (often unmated males) may be common. The mating system of birds with nest helpers is unknown (Sloane 2001). The pendulous nest of this bird generally contains 6 to 10 eggs (wfvz records), although one exceptional nest with 15 eggs was collected in “del Rey” by Howsley (1935).

This species is resident in much of the Pacific and Great Basin west and in montane regions of the American Southwest, Mexico, and Guatemala. Birds in southern populations often exhibit a black cheek patch, and were formerly considered a distinct species: the “Black-eared Bushtit,” *P. melanotis*. It is now known that this plumage is merely a color polymorphism with no taxonomical significance (Sloane 2001).

#### SEASONAL OCCURRENCE

Bushtit is a year-round resident. It is an irregular wanderer into the lowlands of the Antelope Valley in fall and winter.

#### SUBSPECIES

Los Angeles County appears to be in an area between the ranges of moderately pale nominate birds of the central California coast; the paler *californicus* of the inner Coast Ranges, Central Valley and western Sierra Nevada foothills south to Kern County; and darker *P. m. melanurus* of northwestern Baja California and the San Diego region. Much study is needed to determine whether our birds represent two or more of these subspecies or whether they are an intermediate swarm.

#### HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

*Year-round habitat.* Rangelike, the habitat preferences of this species vary from montane forest to arid scrubland, with elevations in the interior ranging from ca. 180 to 3500 m. It is generally a bird of open woodland, concentrating in piñon-juniper, pine-oak, and juniper-pine-oak associations, but will occupy open riparian growth in arid environments (Sloane 2001). Coastal California birds range down to sea level, and occupy dry chaparral and coastal sage scrub when intermixed with taller growth, oak and mixed-oak woodland, and piñon-juniper woodland. This species has also adapted to residential plantings in suburban environments (Garrett 1995, Garrett and Dunn 1981, Grinnell and Miller 1944).

*Nest placement.* This bird builds its long, pendulous nest in a variety of trees and shrubs, depending upon the vegetative mix of the local environment. Nest heights can range



Breeding Evidence Summary					
Reported from 309 of 409 blocks (76%); 534 records					
Blocks by confidence level		Records by breeding evidence code			
		Confirmed	Probable		
CO:	243 79%	NY:	16 3%	G:	1 <1%
PR:	36 12%	NE:	2 <1%	T:	11 2%
PO:	30 10%	FY:	65 12%	F:	66 12%
		FS:	1 <1%	AL:	2 <1%
		FL:	62 12%	M:	15 3%
		OH:	50 9%		Possible
		UN:	8 1%	S:	1 <1%
		NB:	144 27%	E:	66 10%
		PE:	2 <1%		

from 1 to 30 m, and nests may be placed near the trunk or in the outer vegetation of the supporting tree (Sloane 2001). California nests are said to be most typically in live oak, scrub oak, or ceanothus, but birds will also place nests in vines, willows, low-growing conifers, citrus trees in groves, and other nonnative trees and shrubs (Grinnell and Miller 1944). In the county, a strong preference for oak is evident, both in Atlas-period (14 of 38, 37%) and historical egg-set (50 of 95, 53%) data. Historically, willow also provided important substrate, with over a quarter (25, 26%) of county egg sets collected from nests in that tree. Additional nests have been recorded from a total of 19 named plant species in the county. The mean height reported for 87 county nests is 2.9 ± 1.2 m (SBCM, wfvz records, BBA files).

*Nonbreeding season.* In winter, occasional vagrants (possibly young of the year) are found in desert lowlands, but there is little habitat information (Garrett and Dunn 1981, Sloane 2001).

#### GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

This species was documented in almost every block south of the Antelope Valley. It may be truly absent from

The Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas, to which many Los Angeles Audubon members have contributed much time, many breeding bird sightings, and considerable financial support, is ready for the press.

This 660-page hardcover compendium addresses the 228 species found with evidence of breeding during the 1995–1999 Atlas survey period plus 18 additional historical, island-breeding, and post-Atlas breeding species. Our Atlas findings are based on over 28,000 records provided by over 300 volunteer observers contributing more than 10,000 hours of field effort.

The authors have supplemented this information by consulting extensive ornithological and paleontological literature, data from over 5600 egg-set records, and trend data from eight county BBS routes and eight county CBC circles in the attempt to provide as comprehensive a picture of our county’s breeding avifauna as possible.

The typical species account includes maps of distribution and abundance; a county-wide abundance estimate; details of habitats, nesting sites, and nesting chronology; the historical distribution where known; population trend estimates where data warrants; and county fossil records, if any. Many of these subjects are informed by historical county records and data from elsewhere in the range.

Of particular interest to birders may be suggestions on where to view the species in the county as well as information on seasonality and migration timing. Also included are paragraphs addressing the subspecies present here and conservation notes and threat assessments. Appendices include a list of all species recorded in the county as of spring 2015 and a list of Los Angeles County Sensitive Bird Species.

The Atlas introductory material includes a discussion of the county’s geology, climate, habitats, and fire ecology; information on human impacts from pre-European contact until the present; the history of avian studies in the county; and a delightful essay on Pleistocene avifauna by Dr. Daniel A. Guthrie. The Foreword to the Atlas was written by Michael C. Long.

The Atlas was authored by Larry W. Allen and Kimball L. Garrett with maps by Mark C. Wimer. Jonathan Feenstra and Dexter Kelly furnished additional text and Ryan J. Harrigan furnished additional maps. The Atlas volume itself will be hardcover with sewn binding and printed on archival paper.

The Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas is a project of Los Angeles Audubon Society in cooperation with the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and other county Audubon chapters. It is published by Los Angeles Audubon Society.

*Order now!* The low list price of \$49.95 is in part made possible by your donations. In addition, a 20% pre-publication discount price of \$39.96 (plus tax and shipping/handling) is available if you order by 15 July 2016. Ordering details are at [www.losangelesaudubon.org](http://www.losangelesaudubon.org) or call 323-876-0202.

*Nick & Mary Freeman, Field Trip Chair & Leaders*

Los Angeles Audubon's field trips often require driving to more distant destinations and more time spent in the field than do

LAAS's local bird walks. No pets. No children under 12, without permission from leader please. *We do not sell, trade, or re-use contact information; cell and email simply improve our chances of contacting you at home and in the field.*

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

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

#### CARPOOLING

For ride sharing purposes, your contact information may be shared with other confirmed participants unless you specify otherwise at sign-up.

#### "FEE REQUIRED" RESERVATIONS

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

#### Mail to:

Los Angeles Audubon  
PO Box 411301  
Los Angeles CA 90041-8301

#### 'NO FEE' RESERVATIONS / MORE INFORMATION

**Email:** membership@laaudubon.org  
**Phone:** (323) 876-0202

Please leave voice message if no answer.

## Saturday, July 9

### 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, Cal-lope 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, July 31

### 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 7

### Sweltering Salton Sea

\$15 FEE, SIGN-UP 8 CARS LIMIT

Leaders: *Nick and Mary Freeman*. Anticipate 95-

105°F. This is the gauntlet of SoCal birding, but we will see Yellow-footed (only place in the U.S.) and Laughing gulls, Black Tern, Abert's Towhee, and Gila Woodpecker. We may 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. Brawley Inn - (760) 344-1199 offers a better continental breakfast, \$80, and there is a decent restaurant next door. America's Best Value Inn in Westmorland - (760) 351-7100 is \$70. Ask for AAA discount. Continental breakfast. Meet at Cattle Call Park at 5:30 a.m., and bird until about 3 p.m. Bring lunch, FRS radios, scope, sunblock, minimum 1 gallon of water, and a big hat. Other lodging suggestions and information in e-mailer.

## Saturday, August 20

### Piute Ponds, Edwards AFB

NO FEE, 20 MAX SIGN UP,

*PERSONAL EAFB PASS REQUIRED!*

Leaders: *Jim Moore*. A good mix of shorebirds, with a chance at LeConte's Thrasher, and Pectoral and Baird's sandpipers. Some of the finest desert birding in LA County! Some amazing birds have been seen here over the years, including a pair of Hudsonian Godwits, and a Little Stint just four years ago! Extension to Apollo Park and possibly elsewhere afterwards.

Meet at the Avenue C gate at 7:30 a.m. To get here, take Hwy 14 N to Avenue D, head E to Sierra Hwy, head N to Avenue C, and go a block E to the gate at the end. Lunch and finish at Apollo Park. Bring lunch, sunblock and lots of

water. Likely hot weather, and possible afternoon wind. High clearance vehicles may be a plus. Cameras O.K.

Call LAAS to sign up. Limited to 1<sup>st</sup> 20 with the *required* EAFB annual access pass in-hand.

*Talk with Misty Hailstone on the base by phone at (661) 275-2435 between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. before Aug 10 to arrange a **required annual pass**.* Tell Misty your personal information (legal name, driver's license number and state issued, social security number, date of birth, email address, and phone number). Please do not e-mail or leave a message. Access for foreign nationals is trickier but still possible.

**More field trip listings will be available online soon.**

# Bird Walk Listings

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

## Open Wetlands at Ballona

1st Saturday of every month  
**July 2 & August 7**  
**Time: 9:00–Noon**

Los Angeles Audubon Society hosts the ongoing 1st Sat. of the month “Open Wetlands” event at the Ballona Salt Marsh. Binoculars will be available to borrow, and volunteers will help visitors view aquatic invertebrates through microscopes, learn about the unique ecosystems found at Ballona, and view birds through powerful spotting scopes along Ballona Creek. Please drop-in!

ENTER THROUGH THE GATE located in the northeast corner of the parking lot behind Alkawater/Gordon’s Market, in the 300 block of Culver Blvd. in Playa del Rey. *No baby strollers please.* Please contact Cindy Hardin at [cindyhardin@laaudubon.org](mailto:cindyhardin@laaudubon.org) or call (310) 301-0050 if you have any questions.

## Topanga State Park Birdwalk

1st Sunday of every month  
**July 3 & August 7**  
**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

## Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area

4100 S. La Cienega Blvd  
Los Angeles 90056  
3rd Saturday of the month  
**(Except for July and August)**  
**Time: 8:00–noon**

Leader: *Eric and Ann Brooks, Eleanor Osgood* This trip covers landscaped parkland, a man-made lake and natural coastal scrub habitats within the Baldwin Hills. We are likely to see many of the resident birds such as Black and Say’s Phoebes, Cassin Kingbirds, California and Spotted Towhee, Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper’s Hawk. We will also look for newly arrived migrants such as Bullock’s and Hooded Orioles, Western Kingbird, Warbling and Hutton’s vireos. Resident birds have begun to nest providing a whole new way of watching birds

**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”)

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

CARPPOOLING IS ENCOURAGED!

To provide your information to join the LAAS CARPOOL DATABASE [membership@laaudubon.org](mailto:membership@laaudubon.org) or call (323) 876-0202 leave a message. We will attempt to connect you with other birders interested in sharing a ride to our events.

and park in the first available spaces. |  
**Binoculars provided.**

## Upper Franklin Canyon Sooky Goldman Nature Center

2nd Sunday of the month  
**July 10 & August 21**  
**Time: 8:30 a.m.–11:30 a.m.**

Leader: *Eleanor Osgood*. Join us as we take a casual walk around the ponds and trails of this urban oak woodland nature preserve. We are likely to see the resident Wood Ducks and as well chaparral bird species such as California Quail, Spotted and California Towhees and California Thrasher. We will look for migrants such as warblers, vireos, flycatchers; we may also encounter resident birds building nests and feeding young. Meet in the main parking lot for the Sooky Goldman Nature Center. This canyon is a hidden treasure where the surrounding urban residences of Sherman Oaks and Beverly Hills disappear from view.

**Directions:** FROM THE 101 FREEWAY: follow Coldwater Canyon Blvd. south for several miles to the intersection of Coldwater Canyon and Mulholland Drive (traffic signal). Make a 90 degree right turn onto Franklin Canyon Drive. There is NO sign indicating the entrance to the park; the turn at Franklin Canyon Road reads “Road Closed 800 Feet” and “Sunrise to Sunset” — this is the park entrance; do NOT make a U-turn

as this will take you onto Mulholland Drive instead of Franklin Canyon. Take Franklin Canyon Dr. down to park entrance, turn at first left into the parking lot.

FROM SUNSET BLVD: go north on N. Beverly Dr. to Coldwater Canyon Dr. to Mulholland Dr. Veer left on Mulholland Dr. At the next traffic signal, make a left turn onto Franklin Canyon Dr. continue to first parking lot on the left. MEET in the main parking lot for the SOOKY GOLDMAN NATURE CENTER, 2600 FRANKLIN CANYON DR, BEVERLY HILLS 90210. **Binoculars provided.**

## Ballona Wetlands Bird Walk

3rd Sunday of the month  
**(Except December)**  
**July 17 & August 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 [wbutorance@gmail.com](mailto:wbutorance@gmail.com)