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WESTERN Tanager

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OPEN WETLANDS AT BALLONA | BIRDS OF THE SEASON | BIRDEROGRAPHERS | & MORE



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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 westernanager@laaudubon.org. Photos should be high resolution (300ppi) .jpg or .tif files. Submissions are due the 1st of the month to be included in the following issue. All rights reserved. All photographs are used by permission and are copyrighted material of the credited photographers.

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ON THE COVER

Great Blue Heron eating a rat. | Photo by Joe Bevins.



I grew up in a birding family. Although in recent years I became aware of this special revelation. When I was younger I thought all families must have spent time with their noses between binoculars like mine did. Both my parents have a love our world's wild places and the all animals that inhabit them. I grew up in Colorado but also spent some of my formative years in in Alaska, Montana, Wyoming and Kentucky. During this time my parents fostered not only a love for exploration in wilderness through outdoor sports - skiing, hiking, biking, kayaking, rock and ice climbing - but also in conservation of land, water and animals. I have many memories of visiting reserves and refuges when I was younger. One that has come to fruition recently is the reintroduction of Black-footed ferrets into Colorado's Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, which I got to visit in January 2016. When I was in elementary school in Laramie, Wyoming I remember learning about the Black footed ferret being found again in Meeteetse, Wyoming and the first program for reintroduction in Shirley Basin. What a victory it is to be able to show the public that a program like this can be successful and also in my own life. A testimony to reflect upon in remembering to continue to support local and global conservation programs.

This can also be highlighted in the Arsenal's rehabilitation story itself, having once been a military installation and toxic waste site now a thriving wildlife refuge close to downtown Denver.

My love of photography started during college when I first went to Africa where my parents had migrated for a time. The diversity of all walks of life caught my attention. At that time I was shooting with a waterproof Pentax point and shoot. After I graduated I moved to Japan to teach English and this cemented my desire to capture what I was experiencing. I upgraded to my first DSLR after an English conversation student of mine – who happened to be a pro-landscape photographer – took me under his wing. This friendship continues to be a blessing and as I was able to return to Africa over the next few years to visit both my parents and the wildlife. I moved to Pasadena, California in September 2015 to enter Fuller Theological Seminary. What a joy it has been to see the plethora of our avian brothers and sisters in the greater L.A. area.

I was surprised to capture this photo of a Great blue Heron eating a rat on February 6, 2016 at the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve. A day in which the Los Angeles Audubon had graciously opened the reserve for the public. I was shooting with a Canon 7D Mark II with a Tamron 150-600 lens on this day.

Joe Bevins
 Pasadena

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BOOK REVIEW

The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling / Written and Illustrated by John Muir Laws

By Linda Oberholtzer

It was a sweltering spring day in the 1990s in Anza Borrego National Park. A group I was birding with saw John Muir Laws sketching some wildflowers and asked him to join our group for lunch.

I don't do well in the heat. I was turning deep purple in color. Only John noticed. He upended a cooler of slushy ice over my head and saved me from a heat stroke. I have tracked his career ever since, arranging to have him speak at the Whittier Area Audubon Society, being his chauffeur for his first Sea and Sage Audubon Society presentation, participating in a drawing workshop at the Friends of the San Jacinto Mountains in Idyllwild, participating in a drawing workshop at the Western Field Ornithologist Conference in Santa Maria, seeing his presentation at the California Audubon Retreat in Asilomar, watching his presentation at Tuolumne Meadows for the Yosemite Institute and seeing his presentation as the Annual Dinner speaker for the Sea and Sage Audubon Society.

Once I was in charge of driving him around to his first talk at the Sea and Sage Audubon Society. He commented that he would much rather stay with people at their homes than stay in a hotel room. After the presentation, a group of us invited him to watch the movie "Night of the Living Dead" at a nearby home. He thoroughly enjoyed it!

One time he came to Sylvia Gallagher's Bird Observation class in Huntington Beach and jumped onto a table flapping his arms like a bird.

His field guide to the Sierras made sense. He put all orange flowers together, all orange birds together. You didn't have to know what "family" the species was from to look it up.

John is dyslexic and sometimes struggles with written words. But the paintbrush has always been his friend and he can sketch anything. Growing up in a family of nature lovers paved his path of curiosity.

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John Muir Laws' latest book, "The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling" published by Heyday books in Berkeley, CA., is a wonderful tool for the budding naturalist. It has lovely color and black and white illustrations as well as inspiring text.

The book was made in collaboration with Emile Lygren, whom he met at San Francisco State's Sierra Nevada Field campus in 2009. They discovered that they both used journals to deepen their relationship with nature, John through drawing and Emile through writing.

Every time John goes out into the field he ponders these questions:

I wonder

I notice

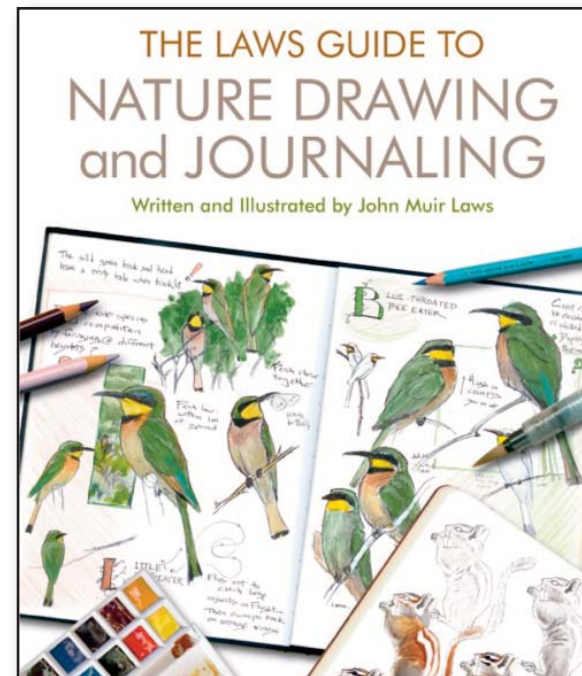
It reminds me of

Reflecting on the Process

He has a marsh by his house, Coyote Point Marina, where he frequently watches wildlife. One day he noticed the directions shorebirds face while resting. After a lengthy observation he concluded that the birds were pointing their breasts into the wind.


Another day he journaled watching the growth of a poppy plant during the course of one day and charted its growth. Sometimes he will draw a plant, showing where the leaves are eaten away and write a comment like "I wonder what ate this?" next to the drawing.

The book details important practical information such as what type of journal to buy and how to illustrate it, down to the type of colored pencils to buy. He suggests that one fill a small knapsack with the things needed for a field outing so it is hanging on a hook by the door ready for an adventure. He says to throw in a glue stick in case you want to make a collage or put a leaf or other item in your journal.



With this step by step guide, you will be fully equipped to observe and record your experiences to share with others.

John is a naturalist, educator and artist with degrees in conservation and resource studies from the University of California at Berkeley; in wildlife biology from the University of Montana, Missoula; and in scientific illustration from the University of California, Santa Cruz. He is a 2010 Audubon TogetherGreen Conservation Leadership Fellow and has received the Terwilliger Environmental Award for outstanding service in environmental education. He is married and the father of two children.

Read the article and illustrations by Dessi Sieburth in this issue to see how one young naturalist makes a journal. 

DISCOUNT CODE: To receive a 10% discount off *The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling*, visit: www.heydaybooks.com. Just enter at checkout the code: LA1NL

OPEN WETLANDS AT BALLONA: EVERYONE IS INVITED! | By Cindy Hardin, Director of Outdoor Education

The Los Angeles Audubon Society's (LAAS) newest program, OPEN WETLANDS AT BALLONA, has become a roaring success story over the past year. This event, held on the first Saturday morning of each month, is another way that we seek to fulfill our mission to educate the public about birds, wildlife and conservation.

LAAS plays host to thousands of school children on field trips every year at the Ballona salt marsh, and we receive many requests from teachers, parent chaperones and the children themselves to come back again to visit. Passersby who see the students arrive on field trip days also express an interest in visiting Ballona. In March, 2015, LAAS launched "OPEN WETLANDS" to respond to this high level of interest in our local wetlands. It was decided to model these Saturdays on the student field trips, and to include the same activities to the public that is experienced by our young visitors. These activities are designed to provide an in depth look at this last coastal salt marsh to be found within the city limits. The goal was to go beyond a simple guided walk, and to use equipment that helps to highlight the thriving ecosystem found at Ballona.

Our Saturday visitors are encouraged to check out binoculars in order to better view the many bird species found at the marsh. They also make a stop at our Microscope Station. At the microscopes they can view the small aquatic invertebrates that are found in our tidal channels. We never know what we will find in these samples; the star of our January Open Wetlands was a worm commonly known as the "Spaghetti Worm"; check out the photo below, and you can guess why that is its common name!



This Ciriformia luxuriosa was the star of the Microscope Station at the January Open Wetlands. Its common name is Spaghetti Worm-it's easy to see why, isn't it?! | Photo Credit: Beto Arroyo

After a look through the microscopes, it's time to take a walk through the wetlands. The same trained naturalist volunteers that staff our field trips are on hand to guide the public through the marsh. First stop is the platform which overlooks the tidal channels. This is prime viewing for all kinds of birds. Perhaps we will be alerted to the rattling cry of the Kingfisher as she peruses the channel for a fishy snack. If the tide is low, we are almost guaranteed to see a Snowy Egret or two poking in the mudflats for a meal. Above the Eucalyptus grove to the east is the place to look for soaring Red-tailed Hawks and Kestrels, especially as the morning warms up and the birds take advantage of rising warm air to ride the thermal currents. We sometimes are surprised by seed foraging birds on the ground, like the White Crowned Sparrows, as we walk along the trestle. Our January Open Wetlands saw an extra special winter visitor on the Trestle Trail: a Burrowing Owl! Attendees were thrilled to see the Owl, and she calmly posed for her photo shoot, and in fact remained in the same burrow for several days.

Next is a walk through the dune habitat, as we make our way to Ballona Creek. Coastal Dune habitat is probably even more rare than wetlands (California has lost 90% of its historical wetlands!). A high functioning coastal wetland is a mosaic of different habitats that includes upland areas, grasslands and dunes. The dune system at Ballona has been carefully restored, over decades, by hand removal of introduced and invasive plants. The dunes now abound with native plants and wildflowers, including Coastal Dune Buckwheat, host plant for the endangered El Segundo Blue butterfly. As spring hits its stride, this area is abuzz with all manner of insects, and the lizards and birds that eat them.

Once at the creek our visitors walk along the levee to the tidal gate, where they are met by more of our trained naturalists and their trusty spotting scopes. The scopes are trained on various “birds du jour”. The Osprey might be perched on a distant post, Avocets could be seen on the mudflats, and winter and early spring means that hundreds of Black Bellied Plovers will be roosting on the distant salt panne. Some folks linger at the spotting scopes, as different species come and go throughout the morning, following the rhythm of the tides.

The return walk through the dunes is the time where one has a better chance of seeing lizards, or, if you’re lucky, a Gopher Snake. The warmth of the later morning sun draws these reptiles out of their hiding places beneath the Dune Lupine and Deerweed, and sharp-eyed observers can spot them as they move through the sand.



The Burrowing Owl is one of the smallest species of owls. True to its name, it takes over the burrows of other animals, like the abundant Ground Squirrels that we have at Ballona. This owl was another surprise guest at the January Open Wetlands. It sunned itself all morning, perched next to a burrow along the old Pacific Railway Trestle. | Photo Credit: Ray Valencia

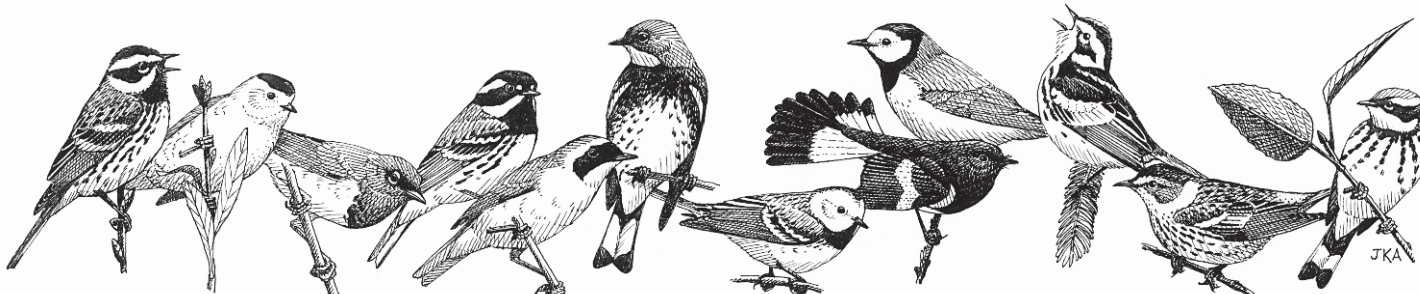
This program will see its one year anniversary on Saturday, March 5th. This event has grown from its first date, which saw just over 20 attendees, to become a real “happening”. We now regularly see over 60 visitors at each OPEN WETLANDS. Clearly there is a keen interest of behalf of the general public to visit and learn more about this State Ecological Reserve. It’s a delight to do our part to help fulfill this need, and we hope that you will join us for a wetlands walk on one of these first Saturdays.



The National Parks Service mobile Visitors Center, will be at Open Wetlands on Saturday, March 5th. Talk to an NPS Ranger and Learn more about our National Parks!

To celebrate our first anniversary, we will have some special added attractions on Saturday, March 5th. The National Park Service (NPS) will be in the adjacent parking lot with their mobile visitors’ center, LA Ranger Troca. Learn more about our National Parks as NPS celebrates its own anniversary-100 years of informing and inspiring the millions who have visited these national treasures! And Stacey Vigallon, Audubon employee and Scientific Illustrator, will be offering a guided Sketch-the-Wetlands tour (drawing materials provided!) from 10:00 to 11:30, giving guests the opportunity to explore the wetlands as artist naturalists. Open Wetlands takes place between 9 am and Noon on the first Saturday of each month. Visitors can drop by at any time during those hours, and do a quick visit or stay for the entire morning. We encourage everyone to come down to Ballona and take this opportunity to learn about this beautiful spot and really get to know this very special habitat in the midst of our very big city. The wetlands are waiting!

If you need more information, please contact Cindy Hardin at (310) 301-0050 or cindyhardin@laudubon.org.



Birds of the Season — February 2016 By Jon Fisher

Though the prospect of a truly wet season is still looming for southern California, rainfall continued well below average through mid-February. After four dry winters, we're off to an uncomfortably slow start for what was billed as a year of change.

While we may eventually end up thanking El Niño for denting if not breaking the state's drought, the event comes with a mixed bag of effects. The warmer waters associated with it tend to wreak havoc on the ocean food chain by suppressing the upwelling of cold nutrient rich waters. This ultimately causes a decrease in the fish that many birds rely on for food. Double-crested and Brandt's Cormorants, Brown Pelicans, Common Murres and Cassin's Auklets were some of the species affected thus far along the west coast, with all experiencing significantly increased mortality—largely due to starvation—over the last six months.

During the period the coastal slope experienced generally pleasant weather and an abundance of both regular birds and va-

grants. The deserts and mountains were a different story, as they offered something more akin to "real" winter weather. But it's all a boon to birders as the widely varied habitats and microclimates of the county combine to maximize the number of species present throughout the year.

Many rarities in Los Angeles County were continuing birds and these constituted the bulk of reports over the period. Christmas Bird Counts ended up with average or slightly below average species counts, but still produced a good selection of rare birds. New vagrants continued to be found and we added a new species to the county list. It was hardly an uneventful season.

Irruptive species were represented by a fair number of Red-breasted Nuthatches on the coastal slope as well a couple of out of place Brown Creepers and Pygmy Nuthatches. Lewis's Woodpeckers and Varied Thrushes continued few in number, with both present in single digits.

Few notable ducks were reported. About

seven rare but regular **Eurasian Wigeons** were recorded. The returning "**Eurasian**" **Common Green-winged Teal** at the San Gabriel Coastal Basin Spreading Grounds in Pico Rivera continued through January 12. Interesting and potentially confusing was an intergrade Eurasian/American Green-winged Teal present there from January 23–30 (John Garrett). The **Long-tailed Duck** lingering near the Ballona Creek mouth in Playa del Rey was seen off and on through January 24.

Rare inland were **Red-throated Loons** continuing at Legg Lake in South El Monte through December 23 and at Lincoln Park through December 19. New was one at Castaic Lagoon on February 8 (Thomas Hinnebusch, Rose Leibowitz). Also at Castaic was a continuing **Red-necked Grebe** reported through February 6.

Over five dozen **Brown Boobies** were on Ventura County's Anacapa Island during the period, thus it should be no surprise that a few were observed off the LA County coast. These included two off Pt. Dume on December 20 (Kimball Garrett, John Gar-

rett), and single birds at Malibu Lagoon on December 22 (Ron Steffans), at the LA Harbor entrance on December 27 (Kimball Garrett), in the San Pedro Channel on January 1 (Bernardo Alps) and at Leo Carillo State Beach on January 18 (Kimball Garrett). This species has been increasing in southern California waters, but LA County records have yet to catch up to those in other counties.

Away from expected areas was a **Least Bittern** at Westlake Marina in Westlake Village on December 20 (Mark & Janet Scheel). An **American Bittern** was at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on January 3 (Darren Dowell, Mark & Janet Scheel) and three **Cattle Egrets** were at Lake Balboa on December 31 with two still present through January 1 (Julia Ray). The **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** first found in late November continued near the World Cruise Center in San Pedro through December 23.

Three **California Condors** were spotted along Gorman Post Road on December 13 (Mark & Janet Scheel) and seen in the general area through December 18.

It's hard to know where a **Swainson's Hawk** over La Crescenta on December 31 may have headed (Kimball Garrett), but a few birds noted in the latter half of January were almost certainly early spring migrants. Scarce on the coastal slope was a **Ferruginous Hawk** at Lake Balboa on January 15 (Mike Stensvold).

Quite rare in the county was a **Sandhill Crane** northwest of Lancaster on December

31 (John Garrett, Alex Rinker).

Gulls included a **Black-legged Kittiwake** off Pt. Dume on December 20 (Kimball Garrett) and a **Heermann's Gull**—quite unusual inland—along the LA River in Glendale on February 6 (Keri Dearborn). Always a nice find in the county was a **Glaucous Gull** at the San Gabriel Coastal Basin Spreading Grounds in Pico Rivera on January 10 (John Garrett).

A superb find was a **Kelp Gull** also at the spreading grounds in Pico Rivera from February 4–5 (John Garrett). Though there are a handful of other North American records, this southern hemisphere gull had only been recorded once before in California, with a single bird being responsible for several occurrences on the northern coast in April and May of last year.

Up to three **Common Ground-Doves** continued along the San Gabriel River in Bellflower through January 30. **White-winged Doves** included a continuing bird at Cabrillo Beach through January 5 and one at the West SGR Parkway Nature Trail from December 18–January 10 (Joyce Brady).

Now reduced in abundance and far outnumbered by Yellow-chevroned Parakeets, a few **White-winged Parakeets** nevertheless persist. Two were in Exposition Park in Los Angeles on December 15, two more were at Rosedale Angelus Cemetery on January 26 (Kimball Garrett) and one was a Legg Lake on February 6 (John Garrett, Darren Dowell).

Owls of note included a **Short-eared Owl** at the Piute Ponds from January 2–12 (Mark & Janet Scheel) and a **Northern Saw-Whet Owl** found in Griffith Park on the Los Angeles CBC on January 3 (Lance Benner). The latter report makes one wonder where else Saw-Whets may be wintering locally. As always with owls, nocturnal coverage—or more precisely the lack of it—is the limiting factor in the number of records.

Rare but occasional in the lowlands in winter was a **Williamson's Sapsucker** in Griffith Park on January 3 (Dan Cooper, James Bailey). One to two more continued at Veteran's Memorial Park in Sylmar through February 9, an almost lowland locale where they are regular in winter.

Two **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were also at Veteran's Park in Sylmar, with both present on December 20 and again on January 13 (Brittany O'Connor, Scott Logan, Patricia Bates) and one continuing through January 30.

Intergrades are relatively common in the county, but **pure Northern "Yellow-shafted" Flickers** are rare and frequently reported without the necessary characters being confirmed. This winter, pure birds were documented at Woodlawn Cemetery in Santa Monica on December 15–January 3 (Larry Schmah), at Holmby Park in Holmby Hills on January 3 (Kimball Garrett), at Culver City Park on January 11 (Walter Lamb) and in Pasadena from December 19–January 18 (John Garrett).

A pale “**Prairie**” **Merlin** of the subspecies *richardsonii* was in the east Antelope Valley on January 3 (David Bell, Luke Tiller).

Hammond’s Flycatchers included one continuing at Legg Lake in South El Monte through December 26, one at Lake Balboa in Van Nuys from January 2–15 (Mike Stensvold) and another at Pan American Park in Long Beach from December 16–January 6 (Richard Barth).

A **Gray Flycatchers** persisted at Vina Vieja Park in Pasadena through December 13 and others were at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale from December 13–February 2 (Luke Tiller) and at Arcadia Park in Arcadia on December 23 (Mickey Long). **Pacific-slope Flycatchers** were in San Marino on December 19 (Jon Fisher) and at Monte Verde Park in Lakewood from December 28–January 23 (Joyce Brady).

An **Eastern Phoebe** continued at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB through December 24 as did one at Madrona Marsh in Torrance through February 7.

About ten **Vermilion Flycatchers** were present on the coastal slope during the period, with numbers increasing over the past few years.

Rare as a wintering bird was an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** continuing at Madrona Marsh in Torrance through February 6.

A **Tropical Kingbird** continued at El Dorado Park in Long Beach through January 8, but

far rarer was the **Thick-billed Kingbird** back for another winter at Horsethief Canyon Park in San Dimas and present through January 8. Woodlawn Cemetery in Santa Monica hosted a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** through January 28.

Cassin’s Vireos were at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on December 13 (Luke Tiller), in Harbor City on December 27 (Don Sterba). Nearly a dozen of the more common—at least in winter— **Plumbeous Vireos** were also present during the period.

A few early **Cliff Swallows** turned up in the first week of February, soon to be followed by the usual multitude of others.

Santa Anita Canyon above Arcadia held a continuing **Pacific Wren** through December 19, but potentially far rarer was a not-determined-to-species **Pacific/Winter Wren** found on the Palos Verdes CBC on December 27 (Jim Pike).

A rare county find was a **Gray Catbird** at Monte Verde Park in Lakewood on December 26 (Amy Niemeyer). Though it proved not always easy to find, it was reported through January 17.

Eleven **Black-and-white Warblers** were either found or continued during the period. Scarce in winter **Nashville Warblers** were in Exposition Park in Los Angeles from December 18–January 3 (Kimball Garrett) and at Pt. Dume on December 20 (Kimball Garrett).

An **American Restart** continued at the San

Gabriel Coastal Basin Spreading Grounds in Pico Rivera through January 23 and the **Northern Parula** at Legg Lake in South El Monte was reported through December 23.

Palm Warblers included one north of the 91 Freeway on December 12, with two there on January 23 (Andrew Lee). Others were in Harbor City on December 27 (Don Sterba) and at Terminal Island in Long Beach on January 21 (Doug Willick). A few rungs higher on the vagrant scale was a **Pine Warbler** found at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on December 24. It was reported again from February 2–9 (David Bell, Luke Tiller).

A **Painted Redstart** continuing in Mar Vista through December 17 was the only one found this winter.

Clay-colored Sparrows continued at Madrona Marsh in Torrance through February 6, at Vina Vieja Park in Pasadena through January 30 and at Oak Park Cemetery in Claremont through February 9. A new bird was at Valhalla Cemetery in West Hollywood on January 10 (Richard Barth).

Rare but somewhat regular at the Ballona Creek mouth was a “**Large-billed**” **Savannah Sparrow** found on January 27 (Sarah MacLellan).

Very unusual in winter was a **Grasshopper Sparrow** continuing at Madrona Marsh in Torrance through January 24 and another on the UCLA campus in Westwood from December 21–January 5 (Richard Hedley). The ultra-rare **Le Conte’s Sparrow** first found at

Castaic Lagoon on November 22 was reported through December 27. Subsequently, rising water levels inundated the weed patch the bird was inhabiting and its whereabouts thereafter are unknown.

Swamp Sparrows included one continuing at Wheeler Park in Claremont through December 29 and one at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on January 8 (Tom Miko).

About a half dozen "**Red**" **Fox Sparrows**, the least common of the four types locally, were present during the period. At least ten **White-throated Sparrows** were discovered or continued through the period.

Among the abundant Gambel's White-crowned Sparrows were rare **oriantha White-crowned Sparrows** at the Piute Ponds on December 21 (Jon Feenstra) and at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia on January 9 (John Garrett).

About ten **Dark-eyed "Gray-headed" Juncos** and another half dozen or so "**Pink-sided**" **Juncos** found over the period were both above average numbers. Notable was the fact that four of those Gray-headed birds were found together at Charlton Flat on February 3 (Luke Tiller), a surprising concentration for a bird so scarce locally.

About seven **Summer Tanagers** were on the coastal slope between mid-December and late January.

Very rare as a wintering bird was a **Lazuli Bunting** continuing at Madrona Marsh in Tor-

rance through February 6. More expected but still noteworthy was a **Black-headed Grosbeak** near West Hollywood on December 27 (Maria Gritsch, Warren Tenhouten)

The Los Angeles CBC produced an **Orchard Oriole** at the Los Angeles Country Club on January 3 (Kimball Garrett) while rare in winter **Hooded Orioles** included one continuing at Madrona Marsh in Torrance through December 11 and one at the Huntington Gardens in San Marino on December 19 (John DeModena). A **Baltimore Oriole** continued at Holmby Park in Holmby Hills through December 27.

Away from the higher San Gabriels, small numbers of **Red Crossbills** were reported in the Antelope Valley and near Castaic Lake over the period. An **Evening Grosbeak** at a residence in Glendale on December 17 was the only report for the period (Yvonne Burch-Hartley).

We can't know what the effects of El Nino will be in March and April, but spring typically brings a series of fronts moving from northwest to southeast in the desert. These often generate strong winds that pin down migrant songbirds and then, once they diminish, may open the door for a flood of migrants. When that happens these can result in some of the excellent birding days on the deserts. Places such as Apollo Park, Lancaster City Park and various windbreaks and patches of trees scattered across the Antelope Valley can be literally dripping with birds.

Calmer and milder conditions typically prevail

on the coastal slope and either clear or overcast days there can make for productive spring birding, with good numbers of migrants possible almost anywhere. The south facing slopes and canyons of the front range of the San Gabriels can be especially good at this time as they are often filled with migrants.

Over the next few months, an array of migrants will traverse the county. Some of these travel only a few hundred miles or less, while species such as Swainson's Hawks cover up to 14,000 miles each way travelling from wintering areas to breeding sites. Sooty Shearwaters, common at times along our coast, travel up to 40,000 miles each year from here to New Zealand and back.

While migration is in essence a very simple concept, birds have taken it to a level and complexity that challenges the human concept of what is possible in nature. Each species is different in its timing and abundance and spring offers an unmatched opportunity to watch this event unfold.

Spring is intoxicating for the avid birder. For the many species that change plumages, this is the time when they are at their most attractive. Residents and even many migrants are singing and evidence of breeding can't be missed. It's a rewarding time to get out and enjoy the rejuvenation of life that the season brings. 🕊️

YOUNG AUTHORS | Why Field Notes Are Important | By Dessi Sieburth



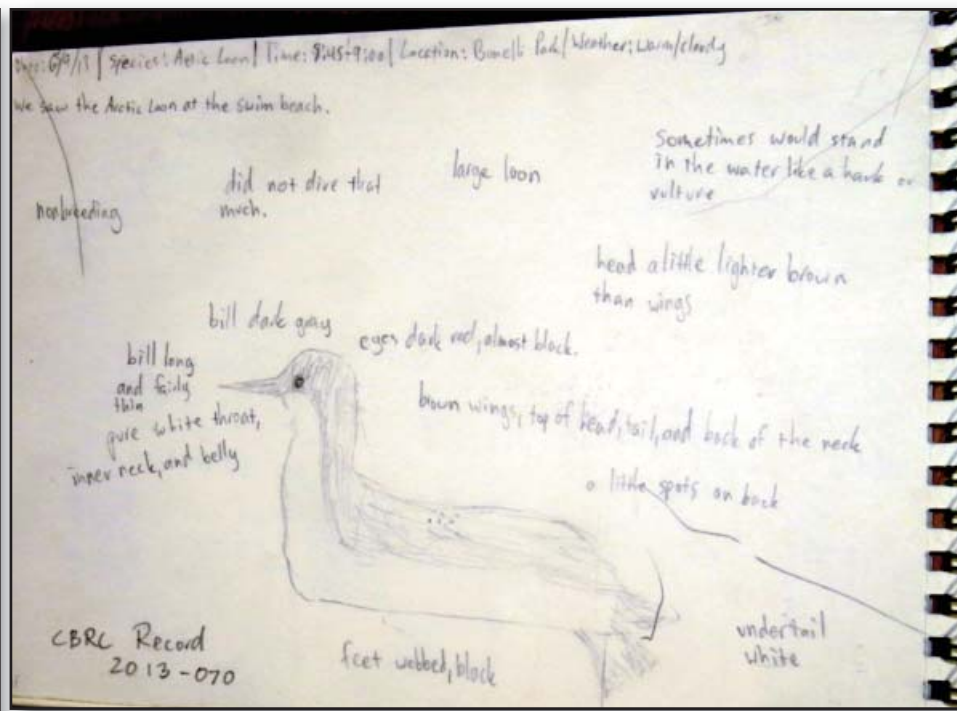
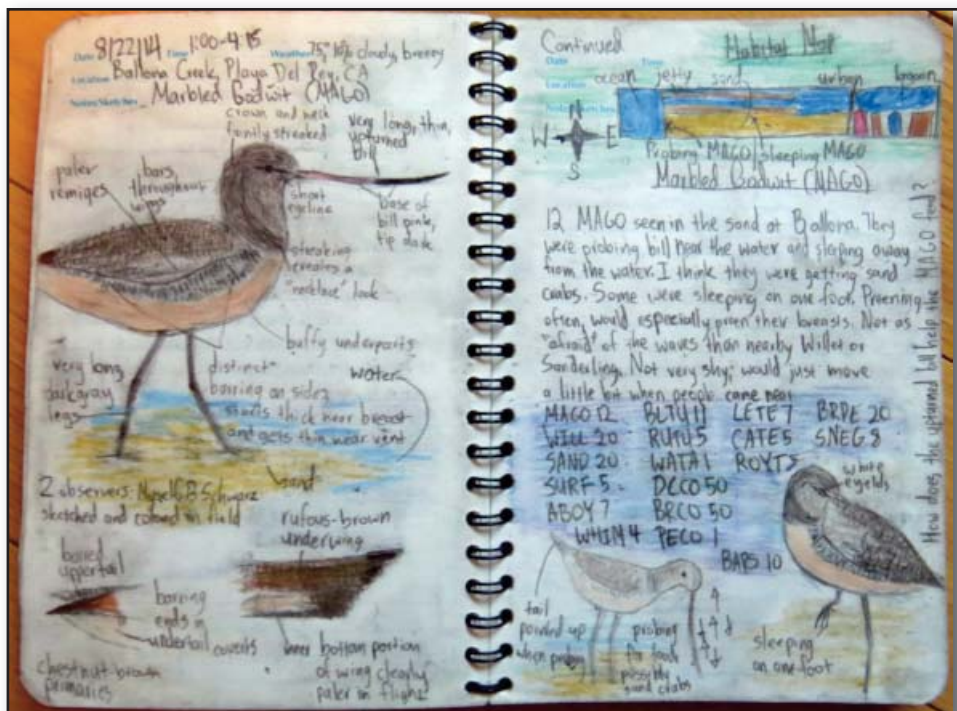
My field notes from the 2015 ABA Young Birder contest about the White-Faced Ibis at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Los Angeles County

A field notebook is a powerful birding tool. It is a small notebook where you write down your experiences while birding, including sketches of a bird, its field marks, and its behaviors. You also write down location, date, and time of the observation. Field notes are done in the field while you observe the bird. Today, we use technology to do all these things, and phones and cameras are replacing the field notebook. However, having a field notebook can be more helpful than using technology when birding. For example, sketching a bird can be better than taking a photo because with a drawing, you can capture the behavior of a bird, which you might not be able to do in a photo. When taking a photo, the lighting might not be sufficient to show all the field marks, or parts of the bird might be hidden by branches. You can also record a lot more data in a field notebook, including detailed information about the weather, like the temperature and how cloudy and windy it was at the time of the observation. In my field notebook, I include interesting behaviors, the habitat, and how I can tell the bird apart from similar species. Finally, I include a list of the other species at the birding location. If I use a photo in my notebook, I make sure to include additional information.



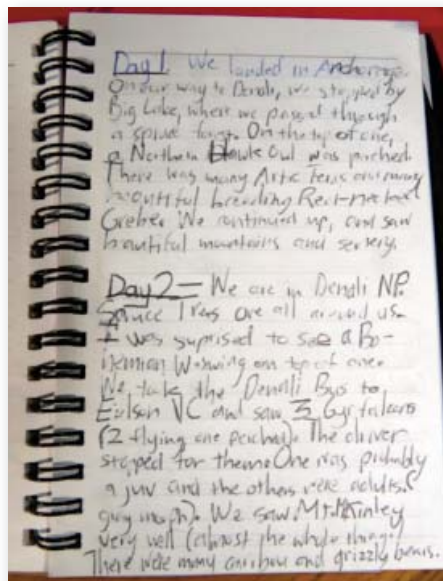
My field sketch of American Avocet at the Los Angeles River (from the 2015 ABA Young Birder contest)

I have been drawing birds since I was 8 years old, and I started using a field notebook when I was ten years old. First, I sketched more common birds in my neighborhood. Then at age 12, I participated in the 2015 American Birding Association Young Birder of the Year contest and became more serious about my field notes. For the contest, I participated in the field notebook category. I spent many hours sketching birds and making detailed notes about their behavior. Field notes are also important for documentation of rare birds. In 2013, an Arctic loon was reported at Bonelli Regional Park in Los Angeles. Instead of taking photos, I sketched this bird and wrote down information about behavior, weather and the field marks. I sent the sketch to Guy McCaskie, who is on the California Bird Records Committee, for documentation. I also bring my notebook when I go birding on trips outside California. I wrote notes from my birding trips to Alaska, Arizona, and Texas in my journal. Those notes are summaries of what happened during the day and they are not field notes, as I wrote them at the end of the day. They are still useful to me as I can go back later and read about my trip. My sketches and notes have helped me become a much better birder as I pay close attention to every detail of the bird.



My field sketch of Marbled Godwit at Ballona Creek in Playa del Rey (from the 2015 ABA Young Birder contest)

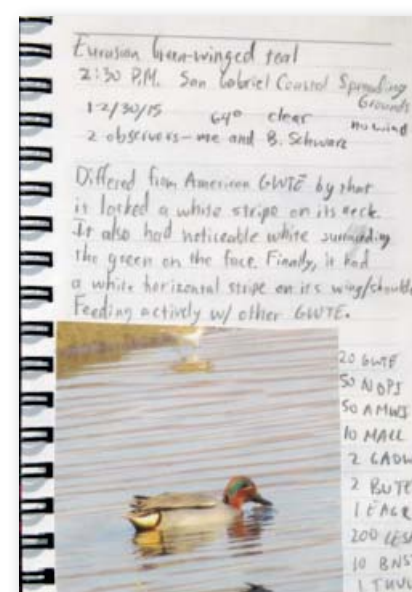
I sent this field sketch of the Arctic Loon, which is a rare bird in LA County, to Guy McCaskie



Example of a journal entry (my Alaska trip in 2015). A journal is different from a field notebook



Field notes of the endangered Tricolored Blackbird at Legg Lake and Eurasian Green-winged Teal at San Gabriel Coastal Spreading Grounds, both in LA County. I added the photo for the Eurasian Green-winged Teal.



INTERPRETING NATURE | Susan Miller Dorsey High School EcoClub and Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program

By Robert Jeffers, LAUSD Teacher and Los Angeles Audubon Board Member

“This tastes really good!”

“And, you grew it right here! In *your* school garden, and remember that you picked it ... this morning,” I reply with the satisfaction and unchecked joy that teachers feel when students connect the results of weeks and months of hard work to an outcome they themselves have worked to achieve: a bowl of pasta with fresh heirloom zebra tomatoes, Italian basil, and green onions they grew themselves.

Almost every year over the past 7 years I have had a conversation similar to this one with my students at Susan Miller Dorsey High School as they discover the wonders of working a communal green space shared by many to do something simple but uncommon to them: grow food and provide habitat for wildlife in the city. Opened in 1937, Dorsey is an inner city Los Angeles high school with a rich history and a head-turning alumni base that includes famous artists, a member of Congress, notable musicians, and many NFL players. That history instills a hidden pride in even the most doubtful students. When introduced to the garden - that the simple gesture of putting a pumpkin seed in the ground or planting a tiny toyon - students become more engaged in both school and community. It's a lesson I have witnessed countless times at Dorsey and made possible by water, sun, and a small space adjacent to the track field. The lessons learned from having a garden transcend the academic and engage the cultural, the personal, and the emotional. And, the results are additive - they build.

Usually, students learn about the garden either through our EcoClub or through our environmental stewardship class. Over the years the sequence has usually played out like this: students in the EcoClub will like what they do enough to take an entire class on environmental stewardship. Other students will then want to go on a field trip because of what they've learned at Yosemite National Park during spring break and others will want to join LA Audubon's Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program so they can study even more about the environment and work directly to improve it in their neighborhood. Those that love it begin to take the initiative outside of class and in:

“Mr. Jeffers ... can we take our test in the garden?”

“Sure! Grab a book or a clip board and we'll head on out.”

Though each year brings new students and idiosyncrasies particular to that group, what always remains the same is the wonder. Students can't help but have a strong reaction to and connection with the garden. Sure, it doesn't always start positive:

“That's nasty!! Worms!” or “I'm not eating that - it came out of the ground! It's dirty!” or “Yikes! Spiders!!”

However, that almost always changes by the second visit. Students begin connecting with the garden - they notice House Sparrows, Finches, and the “Tuxedo Bird” (the Black Phoebe) visiting the birdbath. They ask for more time in the garden - during AND after school.

Current EcoClub student and Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program Restoration Leader, Gerson Rivas, stated it clearly:

“Planting plants is fun ... and when you [Mr. Jeffers] say it's time to go ... I always feel like I wish we could stay 30 more minutes.”

Without the garden, moments like these never happen. But like the garden itself, it takes time to grow both the reputation and the program. My journey with our garden started about 9 years ago with Dorsey students in the newly re-established EcoClub, when we started on-campus recycling and thinking about other ways to green up our campus. Within just two years, we had won recognition from Disney and ABC Family as one of the top recycling schools in the city and county of Los Angeles, and got the ball



Young native plants installed along the fence bordering the Dorsey garden and the sidewalk off-campus, 2009.



The raised beds of the Dorsey garden bursting with food in April 2010.

rolling on re-vamping the neglected garden space on the edge of campus. As a teacher, I wanted students to understand the importance of green space in an urban environment and the presence of urban wildlife, like birds, in their community and on their campus.

Our garden is not perfect – it's on a forgotten, abandoned shot-put "ring" adjacent to the track and had been fallow for several years. The space had rotten wood boards that roughly marked out the shape of beds, a makeshift greenhouse fashioned from white PVC piping and tattered sheet plastic, and an unreliable irrigation system with a single impact rotor sprinkler head. With little sleuthing I heard rumblings of former teachers who once worked the space with great results for school and students alike and I figured it was now my turn to introduce the current generation of students to gardening — the perfect bridge between student and nature. Knowing I couldn't go it alone, I enlisted the assistance of two

University of California Master Gardeners — current Los Angeles Audubon Board member, Lisa Fimiani, for direction with native plants, and food plant specialist, George Pessin. The tandem worked perfectly as the students learned from experts outside of Dorsey, which connected the wider community to the students and the students into the wider community. Again, the benefits of a green space located on a school campus reinforced and transcend academics.

The first year we met once a week after school in the garden, and we regularly had between 8 and 20 students show up ready to weed, till, plant, harvest — whatever the space called for. They learned not only how to plant but when to plant. They learned the power of teamwork as together they got so much more

done than any one person ever could. And, importantly they grew food: kohlrabi, radishes, fava beans, chard, kale, carrots, scallions, melons, strawberries, many lettuces and more. They ate what they grew, gave away what they didn't and learned through experience. They watched as tiny native plants and seeds shot up to create a living fence that provided food and habitat to native invertebrates and birds. Each year the discoveries, the lessons, the wonder stayed the same, but the students and the people involved changed.

Original students graduated and new students enrolled. Original volunteers moved on to new projects and new volunteers emerged. Five years ago Morgan Carey of Victorious Green donated four beautiful green garden beds, complete with drip irrigation systems. Students helped assemble, install, and maintain the beds. And again, they learned not just

gardening and drip systems, but pragmatic lessons about construction, project planning with implementation, and teamwork in a real-life context outside the classroom. This little patch of earth has enabled students to learn about not just fresh vegetables, native plants, and how to attract birds, but the value of securing, maintaining, and preserving these spaces so others can share in the experience as well.

Current Dorsey student, EcoClub officer, and Greenhouse Program Restoration Leader, Hilary Alas, summed it up well: "Not being inside the classroom ... having access to fresh air ... exposing [students] to the garden can encourage [student] interest and awareness of nature ... and to different ideas and lessons outside of the normal school curriculum." If these lessons fall outside the conventional school curriculum then I am thankful that Dorsey has such a space. I hope that other schools can experience the wonder of having one as well. 🐦



The native California grape is well established in the Dorsey garden and sets fruit each year (eaten by students and wildlife).



Field Trip Listings

Nick Freeman, Field Trip Chair

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@laudubon.org
Phone: (323) 876-0202

Please leave voice message if no answer.

Saturday, March 5

Bonelli Regional Park

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: *Rod Higbie*. Bonelli Regional Park is a remarkable island of habitat. It contains extensive coastal sage habitat, along with a large lake surrounded by parkland. Birds sometimes seen in the past include California Gnatcatcher, Cactus Wren, Greater Roadrunner, and occasionally Bald Eagle. 200 other species throughout the year. From LA, take the 10 or 210 Fwy east towards San Dimas to the top stretch of the 57 Fwy. Proceed N from the 10, or S from the 210 on the 57 Fwy to the Via Verde exit just N of the 10/57 interchange (at the bottom of Kellogg Hill). If coming from the N, turn left onto Via Verde, and left into the "Park and Ride" lot. If coming from the S, take the Via Verde offramp and proceed Rt. to the "Park and Ride" lot on the Rt. We will meet here at 8:00 a.m. to carpool since there is a \$10.00/car park entrance fee. Rod will continue birding until noonish, or when we run out of birds. There are picnic tables and facilities, for those who bring food.

Sunday, March 6

Ventura County Game Preserve

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: *Irwin Woldman*. The private duck hunting club in Ventura has a long history of producing the kinds of birds that most rich, well-birded and disappearing habitats can lay claim to, including Virginia rails, American Bittern, occasional Ruff, Solitary Sandpiper, and single Lesser Sand-Plover and

Wood Sandpiper. Emphasis on this date will be late raptors and waterfowl, with shore-birds starting to move through. Get to the preserve by taking the 101 Fwy W to Rice Avenue S, following the Rice Ave. prompts to the T-intersection terminus, then take Hueneme Rd. west (Rt.), take the first left turn, Casper, to the end, proceed through the gate and park across the street from the barn (6500 Casper Road, Oxnard). Meet here at 8:00 a.m. We will walk the property, so good hiking/mud shoes with energetic legs inside a plus. We may have one car. Scopes & FRS radios helpful. There is a slight chance of cancellation, so please check the LAAS website for trip status the day before.

Saturday, March 12

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

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

March 19 & 20 Weekend

Anza-Borrego State Park

\$20 LAAS MEMBER FEE / \$40 FOR NON-LAAS
LIMITED SIGN-UP OF 20

Leader: *Kurt Leuschner*. Kurt is a professor of desert ecology at College of the Desert in Palm Desert, and knows all of our deserts very well. This will be peak time for both wildflowers (did somebody say El Niño?) and Swainson's Hawk migration! On Saturday and Sunday we will caravan in and around Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, from Julian to the desert floor. This is a peak time for both wildflowers and the annual migration of Swainson's Hawks! High points over the years include: hundreds of Swainson's Hawks in migration, LeConte's Thrasher, Bald Eagles nesting, Wild Turkeys, Peninsular Bighorn Sheep, Desert Lilies, Long-eared Owl, Chuckwalla, Baja Collared Lizard, Great Purple Hairstreak and Silvery Blue. Every year is different. Scenery is spectacular! Reserve your accommodations at Hacienda del Sol (760-767-5442), Stanlund Motel (760-767-5501), the Palm Canyon Resort (800-242-0044) or others in Borrego Springs well in advance!

We will meet at 6:45 a.m. at the **Anza-Borrego Desert Natural History Association** (652 Palm Canyon Drive, Borrego Springs) just west of Christmas Circle; and finish up around lunchtime on Sunday. Reserve the trip by mail with \$20 LAAS / \$40 non-LAAS fee; cell #, and E-mail address for more details to be sent later. Net profits go to the Ralph Schreiber Grant Fund.

March 27 – Easter!!

Saturday, April 2

Techniques for Better Bird Photography

Marina del Rey / Santa Monica

\$40 FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP OF 10

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

During the field lab, shorebirds and gulls should highlight. Christopher will be addressing a basic approach to one of the most difficult arenas of photography. Christopher does not typically use flash at all, and he'll explain why, and how to compensate in various light and wind conditions. He'll also offer guidance on when it's best to hand-hold a shorter lens and when it is best to use a tripod and more magnification. He will discuss how to make your photographs more captivating by incorporating habitat into your frame. Learn how to use bokeh effects to help emphasize your subject. He will cover different aperture, lighting and metering techniques to help make your photographs POP! Bring your **DSLR camera and telephoto lens (required)**. Meet at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot at 7:30 a.m. 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. Early morning lot or street parking is usually not a problem.

After a nearby lunch (with Christopher if you wish), we will meet in a classroom setting at a Santa Monica office, where Christopher will review basic post-production Photoshop techniques, and tips to make good photos great and

great photos truly eye-catching. A charged laptop with Photoshop loaded, and the day's photos downloaded, is useful but not required. Office directions will be provided before the lunch break. Finish up around 4:00 p.m.

Saturday, April 9

Wind Wolves Preserve

NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP OF 20, Before Mar. 31st
Leaders: *Guy Commeau*, with a guide from The Wildlands Conservancy. The 95,000 acre preserve stretches from rolling grassland and salt-bush on the valley floor (west of Grapevine), to California blue oak and valley oak, transitioning to juniper, pinyon pine, and eventually ponderosa pine and big cone spruce. Some riparian habitat. The 200 elk that now roam the preserve may eventually expand to 2,000 animals, helping California Condors live in a more natural state. Guy has visited the Preserve many times, and is drawn to the spectacular and varied scenery. Resident birds such as Burrowing Owl and Golden Eagle, migrant songbirds, as well as real possibilities for big cats and other wildlife. Those wishing to camp or stay nearby Saturday night and join Guy for Sunday too (please mention in sign-up). Meet at the Preserve headquarters located about 17 miles west of Grapevine off of Hwy 166 at 8:00 a.m. Smartphone address is Fort Tejon State Hist Park, San Emigdio Rd, Frazier Park, CA 93225. Follow the following directions if there is a conflict: I-5 north to Maricopa Hwy (CA-166) west for 10.3 miles, turn left at a small Preserve sign and continue for 3 miles, and turn right at sign and continue straight for 1.7 miles to the Preserve headquarters. Meet here at 8:00 a.m. Leave LA around 6:00 AM if you drive fast, or camp at HQ Saturday evening (well-

equipped, visitor's center, small optional donation), or hotels in Lebec or Maricopa. Best Western Lebec is \$85-100 (good, but ask for a room away from Fwy), Motel 8 Maricopa (good reviews) is \$48. Sign up by phone, letter or e-mail with LAAS. We will carpool into high clearance vehicles. Bring FRS radios and lunch.

The last day to sign-up is Mar. 31st. Only the first 20 will receive a confirmation email with a form that you are required to bring with you on the day of the event. This form grants permission to members of our group to enter a preserve of The Wetlands Conservancy.

Friday, April 22

Small Owls of the San Gabriels #1

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.

April 29 thru May 1 Weekend

Owens Valley Grouse and More

\$55 FEE for 1-2 days, \$65 for 3 days,
LIMITED SIGN-UP of 20

Mary and *Nick Freeman* lead. Friday through Sunday (s.i.c.), to commemorate Mary's 25th

year guiding us to the grouse lek! On Friday, we will meet at the Jawbone Canyon Ranger's Station at 8:00am (stay in Mojave the night before or drive in from the LA area), 20 minutes north of Mojave just west of Hwy 14. This will be some of our best shots at Mountain Quail and Chukar! Very early on Saturday, we will meet at the Crowley lek turnoff ("the Green Church" at 34 Benton Crossing Rd, Mammoth Lakes) for Sage Grouse photos and viewing, and later on possible Black-backed Woodpecker and Evening Grosbeak! Sunday, plan to meet in Bishop at Jack's Restaurant (437 N Main St.) for Sooty Grouse, Grey-crowned Rosy-Finch, perhaps another Chukar spot, and Bank Swallow. Mailer with a few possible hotels will be sent out to the participants who have signed up for this trip.

Saturday, May 7 (Rescheduled from Jan. 9) Tejon Ranch

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

Leader: *Louis Tucker*. Visits to the Ranch are by special arrangement with escort only, as one could easily get lost on the web of gated dirt roads covering this huge working ranch. Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk all likely in the rolling hills of the ranch. California Condor and Lewis' Woodpecker also possible. Bring lunch, as we will be out most of the day. Take the 5 Fwy. north to the Roxford St. turnoff, and meet at the Denny's in Sylmar, visible off the east side of the freeway (12861 Encinitas Ave., Sylmar). Be prepared to depart from here at 7:00 a.m. High clearance vehicles

recommended, as we will carpool into these and ranch vehicles at the ranch. Rain cancels. Limit: 12 participants only, confirmed Jan 9 sign-ups get 1st priority. Please register with LA Audubon by phone (323) 876-0202, and provide phone number, e-mail, high clearance Y/N, #spare passenger seats. FRS radios and scopes useful.

Friday, May 13

Small Owls of the San Gabriels #2

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.

Sunday, May 15

Mojave Area

SIGN-UP REQUIRED, NO FEE

Leaders: *Nick* and *Mary Freeman*. Western warblers and flycatchers should headline. Reptiles may be encountered! Veer right heading north out of Mojave, take Hwy 14 for about 20 miles, just over the riverbed, and take Jawbone Canyon Road on the left. Meet right at the turnoff at the ranger station park-

ing lot at 6:30 a.m. (restroom). 6:30 a.m.???

Birds start shooting up this canyon at first light, so even this will get us into Butterbreedt a tad late, but if we happen to hit migration on the nose, it will be magical! We will car-pool to Butterbreedt Springs, back-track to California City environs for lunch and more birds, and possibly finish the day at Apollo Park. 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. Those wishing to night-herp, meet Saturday evening at 5:30 p.m. at Gloria's Mexican Restaurant, 7027 California City Blvd.

June 10 thru 13 Long Weekend Birds of the Southern Sierra and Kern River Valley

LIMITED SIGN-UP, 12 MAX,
FEE (SEE BELOW)

Leader: Bob Barnes. Bob has led over 300 formal birding field trips to the Kern River Valley, Southern Sierra, and Kern County Mojave desert oases for Audubon groups, bird clubs, and Kern River Valley nature festivals, plus served as the local guide for two WINGS Kern River Valley and Southern Sierra Nevada trips led by Jon Dunn. Since 1977, Bob has been a prominent leader in securing private land, Wild & Scenic River (2), and Wilderness (9) protection throughout the Kern River watershed.

*** BASIC "NO FRILLS" ITINERARY ***

Subject to change depending on birding conditions at the time including access and where the birds are.

Friday, 6/10/16 - Kern River Preserve (HQ), Southern Sierra East Side (Chimney Creek, Troy Meadows)

Saturday, 6/11/16 - Kern River Preserve (Fay Ranch Rd), Lake Isabella (south and west side), Southern Sierra West Side (Greenhorn Mountains)

Sunday, 6/12/16 - Kern River Preserve (Sierra Way), Lake Isabella (east end overlook), Giant Sequoia National Monument (Holey Meadow, Quaking Aspen)

Monday, 6/13/16 - South Fork Valley, Walker Pass, Indian Wells Valley (Inyokern, Ridgecrest).

As part of the carpooling process at the beginning of each day, participants will be expected to vie for the honor and privilege of chauffeuring or riding with the leader hither and yon, enjoying a personal play-by-play of the Sierra, devoid of dust; gas expenses shared with the driver. Min. 8 participants, max. 12 participants. Sat & Sun \$35 ea., Fri & Mon \$25 ea. (i.e. F-M is \$120 ea.). Bring FRS Radios if you've got 'em. Meet at 5:30am Friday, and as determined with participants the evening before for each subsequent morning. Pack lunches each day. More details in the confirmation flyer.

July 2 thru 5 Long Weekend Southern Sierra Owls at Ponderosa

Leaders: *Mary and Nick Freeman.*

SIGN-UP (6 MIN / 10 MAX),
\$100 — BUDGET PRICED!

(3 NIGHTS CABIN, 1 HOT DOG BBQ DINNER, & OWLS INCLUDED)

Leaders: *Mary and Nick Freeman.* Saturday through Tuesday. Ponderosa is above Porter-

ville in the southwest Sierra. Owling by night, bird walks by day! Must be a night owl (1 - 2AM?). We always see (yes, see) Flammulated and Spotted owls, and almost always see Saw-whet. We may have Pygmy Owl as well! Days wandering in the Sequoias are delightful including a walk through the Trail of 100 Giants National Monument. Pacific Wren, Pileated Woodpecker and Goshawk are all possible. We have presently arranged for a nice big cabin. Our first dinner will be potluck, others provided or eat out. Meet Saturday 3:00 p.m. at the cabin at 5701 Tamarack Drive, Ponderosa (directions in confirmation flyer), finally leaving the mountains late Tuesday morning. To reserve, send phone, \$100 check for cabin, and e-mail. 10 sign-ups maximum, including leaders. The leaders pay too, to bring this price to you! No small children or pets, please. And please plan to stay around for the Tuesday clean-up!



BIRDEROGRAPHIES | Insights into the lives of LA Audubon's bird walk guides.

Profile: Eleanor Osgood | By Lisa Freeman



LA Audubon former board member and volunteer/outreach coordinator, Eleanor Osgood has been leading bird walks for more than a decade.

Hometown

Los Angeles/Culver City

Career

Speech and language pathologist/teacher

First Time She Identified as a Birder

"It was 1988 and I was changing jobs at the time and being mentored by a woman who happened to know birds. I saw an interesting bird and asked her what it was and she said it was a European Starling. She was surprised I didn't know the name of such a common bird. That was the moment I realized how ignorant I was of urban birds. I wanted to learn more."

Favorite Bird

Western Scrubjay

Favorite Bird Book

"When I was a beginning birder I was hungry for information about birds. My bedtime reading was the *Birder's Handbook* by Paul R. Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin, and Darryl Wheye, a wonderful collection of short essays on all aspects of birds and brief species accounts of birds of North America. It is still in print.

Life-changing Birding Experience

"When I first joined Los Angeles Audubon, one of the events I attended was an open house hosted by Kimball Garratt, the manager of the bird collection at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. I enjoyed looking at the drawers of study skins; but what intrigued me more was watching two volunteers. Both were carefully working with a dead bird in hand. Their responsibility was to transform these lifeless birds into the beautiful study skins that I saw in the drawers, many of them over 100 years. I wanted to be able to do that and it wasn't long before I became a volunteer. After almost 25 years I've prepped 545 specimens and learned more about bird anatomy and life cycles than I could ever have learned by being in the field only."

Binding Franklin Canyon | Photo by Randy Ehler



Year Joined LA Audubon

1988

Biggest Birding Accomplishment

"In 1995-2000 I had the opportunity to participate in the LA County Breeding Bird Atlas – a five-year volunteer project, the goal of which was to map out the breeding areas of birds across LA County. I was one of 12 Regional Coordinators. I was still pretty much a novice birder but bird I.D. skills weren't critical for this position. And besides, I was willing to take on one of the least desirable areas for birding—hard-core urbanized L.A. neighborhoods, which included my own. I was to recruit volunteers to survey one or more of three-mile by three-mile "blocks" that corresponded with a quadrant of a USGS map. I spent five years immersed in this project and had the opportunity to work with some of the best and most knowledgeable birders in the county. By the end of five years, due to the efforts of so many volunteers, we have important information about the nesting habits of our local breeding birds. The documentation we compiled is being used by researchers, biologists, and conservationists to further both our knowledge of bird biology and assist in conservation efforts.

Favorite LA Audubon Role

"I love introducing non-birders or beginning birders to the world of birds through various outreach activities. Leading bird walks, giving presentations to other organizations, tabling at various events - these all provided me opportunities to talk to the public about birds, about the need to protect and provide open space and save existing habitat for wildlife and to encourage people to open their eyes and see the nature that shares our urban neighborhoods."

Other Significant Birding Accomplishments

"Back in 2008 I was introduced to Linda Navroth, another L.A. Audubon member. We were both in a state of anguish; the month was May — a prime month for breeding birds. She had just observed wanton trimming and spraying of trees at and around UCLA where she worked; I had just observed the same activities at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area where I led bird walks. We both had been observing birds nesting or searching for nest sites in both locations. Our frustration and anger led the two of us to collaborate on what became a Los Angeles Audubon publication titled "Bird-Friendly Guide to Tree and Shrub Trimming and Removal." It can be found in both Spanish and English on the LAAS website. We weren't able to stop the carnage at our respective locations but through subsequent outreach to places such as Culver City, Beverly Hills, the eastern section of County Parks and Recreation and many others, we were able to raise awareness. In Culver City, Lisa Fimiani (of L.A. Audubon and Culver City) and I were even successful in getting some bird friendly wording into the City of Culver City's tree trimming contract."

Visit laaudubon.org for updates and more

Eleanor consulting field guide | Photo by Randy Ehler



Lisa Fimiani, Attendee & Eleanor Osgood at Culver City Garden Club | Photo by Rich Waters

Bird Guide Experience

"I first got involved in leading bird walks when Garry George and Pat Heirs, both L.A. Audubon board members at the time, approached the City of Beverly Hills Parks & Recreation in 2005 to suggest that L.A. Audubon teach a bird watching class and lead bird walks as part of their recreation program. They liked the idea; we did our first bird walk in Roxbury Park. I expanded the walks to Greystone Mansion. The walks were well received, but rapid development was occurring throughout the area, especially adjacent to the Greystone Mansion; after a while, we weren't seeing enough birds to excite beginning birders, hence the move to Franklin Canyon. It took a year and a half to build a good group. I'd go, but sometimes, no one, or one person, would show up. That's hardly the case today. On one recent drizzly Sunday, I looked out at the weather and thought, no one will show up today. I'll just skip it. A few beats later, I was dressed and out the door, knowing that at least a handful of diehard birders would be there. When I drove up saw and saw several of the regulars walking around in the rain with their binoculars raised, I just had to laugh; actually it turned out to be a pretty birdy day."

What Keeps Her Excited About Birding

"When I have those 'wow' moments: a pair of Northern Pygmy-owls popping up in front of me just as I round a bend in the trail, or I sight an Anna's Hummingbird engaged in an aerial display, or I simply catch the reddish gleam on the under wing feathers as the sun light shines just right on a Northern Flicker flying overhead. Those are the moments that keep me going back for more. I used to take birds, (actually all wild life), for granted. I don't any more. Over the years, I've learned that if I can just be observant and respectful, I can share a tiny part of the world they live in. Now, I look for nature everywhere: in nooks and crannies, at stop lights, in vacant lots, in the open sky, on my patio chairs, or under the eaves of outdoor bathrooms. I remember when lizards and salamanders, beetles and bumble bees were common. I wish I had paid more attention when wildlife was easier to find. My hope is that more people will find an intrinsic value in the wildlife that remains to us, both small and big, before it all disappears." 🐦

Besides leading bird walks Eleanor continues her conservation work through habitat restoration (a fancy name for weeding of invasive plants) at Kenneth Hahn Park in the Baldwin Hills. She also invites anyone who is interested in the on-going effort to distribute the tree trimming guide and to raise awareness around the impact on birds of improper tree trimming and removal within the urban basin to contact her.

Join Eleanor Osgood on the Upper Franklin Canyon Bird Walk, the 2nd Sunday of each month, from 8:30 a.m.–11:30 a.m. For more information, contact Osgood at birdwalks@laudubon.org. or call (310) 839-5420



Birding Franklin Canyon | Photo by Randy Ehler



Eleanor at the Natural History Museum with study skin of an albatross.

Habitat Restoration Continues at Baldwin Hills | By Carol Babeli, Director Communications and Development

On January 23, Los Angeles Audubon hosted a habitat restoration event in partnership with Ballona Creek Renaissance at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook. More than 65 volunteers comprised of young students, local residents, and business leaders turned out to plant native coastal sagescrub species that will benefit wildlife and improve the overall health of this magnificent urban park. And the view, what a glorious view we had of the surrounding area, with snowcapped mountains framing downtown LA!

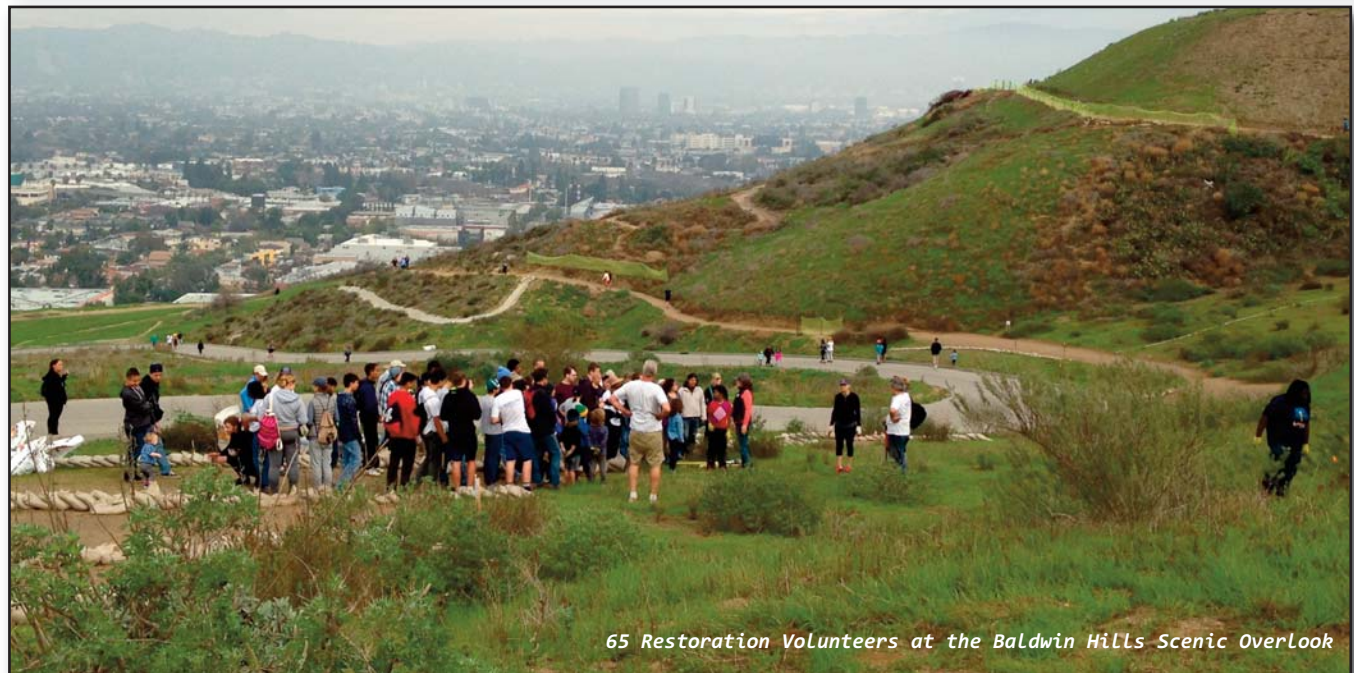
Los Angeles Audubon's ongoing restoration work is led by college and high school interns and many park goers comment that they are inspired seeing the students at work and marvel at the transformation as the native plants take hold across acres of park landscape. In fact, many park goers who regularly workout here, tell us that they want to "give back" and are signing up to be volunteers for future events. The community is embracing stewardship of their park and our students have played an important role in activating that community spirit!

If you, your family, or your work colleagues would like to volunteer for a future habitat restoration event, send me an email. It's really a fantastic way to start your morning. 🐦

Carol Babeli — carolbabeli@laaudubon.org



Brian Young Leading restoration



65 Restoration Volunteers at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook

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

March 5 & April 2

Time: 9:00–Noon

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

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

Topanga State Park Birdwalk

1st Sunday of every month

March 6 & April 3

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

(Except for July and August)

March 19 & April 16

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

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

CARPPOOLING IS ENCOURAGED!

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

left (leading to the “Olympic Forest”) and park in the first available spaces. |

Binoculars provided.

Upper Franklin Canyon

Sooky Goldman Nature Center

2nd Sunday of the month

March 13 & April 10

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 early spring migrants such as warblers, flycatchers, swallows, orioles. Resident birds have begun to nest providing a whole new way of watching birds. 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)

March 20 & April 17

Time: 8:00 a.m.–noon

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

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

Program Presentations



The Los Angeles Audubon's monthly program presentations will be held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at the Audubon Center at Debs Park.

Wednesday, March 9, 2016

California Birds: Annotated in Haiku | Presented by Kimball Garrett



Combine a tolerably competent birder and a lousy poet and you'll get this month's quirky take on birds and birding in California. You'll hear selections from the speaker's work (unpublished, fortunately) on California's birds accompanied by his observations on bird and birder behavior that inspired the book's haiku. Those unable to tolerate bad puns or allergic to alliteration and other insults to the English language might consider staying away. Lots of bird images will be shown to take your minds off the "poetry."

LOCATION: 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.

Wednesday, April 13, 2016

FACE TO FACE: THE MAMMALS AND BIRDS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Presented by Tom Stephenson



Southern Africa is home to a huge range of stunning and unique birds and mammals. It's one of a few places on earth where you can be surrounded by a herds of wild animals and feel like you're at the beginning of time.

Tom Stephenson, author of The Warbler Guide book and app, will show photographs and discuss the range of species and habitats that make southern Africa so special. Come see a range of birds including stunning Sunbirds, colorful rarities like Rockjumpers and Rockrunners, raptors, cranes, kingfishers, barbets, albatross, penguins, Spurfowl, Korhaan, Bustards, Bee-eaters, Mousebirds, Waxbills, Canaries, Scrub-robins, Robin-chats, Prinia, Camaroptera, Larks, Pipits, and, of course, warblers...(warning...they are mostly brown...!)

A full range of mammals will be also be on display, along with a scary, 2-minute-long recording Tom made of a lion's midnight sequence of territorial roars.

There will also be photos of the some of the local pastoralists, panoramas of the oldest desert in the world, the Namib; and some of southern Africa's unique ecosystems, including the Fynbos, with the highest number of plant species on the planet.

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