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WESTERN TANAGER

March – April 2017 | Volume 83, Number 4



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher | Photo by Mary Freeman



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On The Cover

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
 Photo by Mary Freeman

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia by Mary Freeman, January 8, 2017. Taken with Canon D40 with a Canon 400mm telephoto lens.

About the Photograph

Nick and I stayed home the weekend of Jan. 8th, taking care of domestic chores (with an impending storm coming to southern California.) We both wanted to get out to bird and visited the Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia. Though it was quiet, a pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were foraging in the willows – chattering to each other. This little bird is aptly named for the male is truly blue-gray!

Mary Freeman

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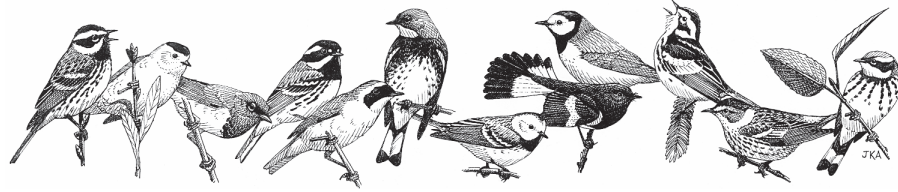
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BIRDS OF THE SEASON

February 2017

by Jon Fisher



For those of us who may have forgotten, this is what a typical southern California winter looks like. While last winter's El Niño was mostly a bust, 2016-2017 is at last bringing us above normal precipitation. It's been a long time coming... six years since we've had anything close to average rainfall.

Where birders and their pursuits are concerned, it's about more than filling reservoirs and piling up the Sierra Nevada snowpack to see to California's water needs through the summer and beyond. Lakes, ponds and streams will be fuller, seasonal wetlands will persist later and habitat from the desert to the coast will benefit. Increased essential resources- food, shelter and water- will attract more birds and increase reproductive success.

In addition to the welcome rain, this winter produced the usual trove of interesting birds. Although many previously discovered vagrants continued, new birds kept turning up, especially from mid-December through early January when local Christmas Bird Counts were held.

The saturation of count circles and coverage of spots that are often overlooked almost always generates a handful previously undiscovered rarities.

Irruptive species continued to be conspicuous by their absence this winter. As far as true red letter birds, gulls stole the limelight with some remarkable sightings. With the continuing trend of more birders taking to the field and changing lifestyles putting more birders in the field throughout the week, the inevitable result is an increased number of records.

A "Eurasian" Green-winged Teal was back for another winter along the San Gabriel River in Pico Rivera as of December 26 and was reported through February 11 (John Garrett).

Diving ducks included a lone White-winged Scoter at the expected spot off Dockweiler State Beach in El Segundo on December 27, with up to five present there between January 4 and 26. A Black Scoter was at this location on January 26 (Richard Barth) and at least one of each species continued through February. Scarce along the coast was a Com-

mon Merganser at Malibu Lagoon on December 26 (Luke Tiller) with two there from January 24-29 (John Garrett).

The only White-winged Dove was at Wheeler Park in Claremont on January 23 (Tom Miko). Castaic Lagoon hosted a Red-necked Grebe from December 31-January 21 (Kimball Garrett).

Scarce in the county was a Red Knot at the Ballona Creek Mouth from January 1-29 (Marc Better).

The San Gabriel Coastal Basin Spreading Grounds in Pico Rivera and the adjacent Rio Hondo basins have rapidly become the hottest spot in the county for gull-watching. To put it charitably, most gulls have a very low bar for what qualifies as food. The nearby Puente Hills Landfill is thus a magnet for them, with the basins offering a convenient place for them to rest and sleep. The only problem here is the often wildly fluctuating water levels and numbers of birds.

More than proving their value this winter, these basins hosted an extremely rare **Yellow-footed Gull** off and on from December 26 through February 11 (John Garrett). This may well be the same bird that was found here in March of 2016.

Though not quite as rare in the county, a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at the spreading basins on December 26 was an excellent find. The following day produced an astounding *five* there, with at least two continuing through February 11 (John Garrett). These records virtually doubled the total previous number for the county.

The gull extravaganza didn't end there. The least expected- and a first for the county if affirmed by the CBRC- was a **Slaty-backed Gull** at the basins on January 31 and still present as of February 11 (John Garrett). This species wasn't added to the state list until 2005, with records having increased substantially since that time and about five dozen now accepted.

While it's tempting to avoid learning the sometimes overwhelming complexities of gull identification, it seems inevitable that birders will encounter more such rarities in the county. Being familiar with their field marks- and documenting any likely vagrants

with photographs- is a prudent course of action.

Owls of interest included a **Short-eared Owl** at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB on December 19 (Joe Lepisto), one in the west Antelope Valley on February 11 and a **Long-eared Owl** in the Sepulveda Basin on December 17 (Alexander DeBarros).

A **California Condor** was east of Quail Lake on January 9 (Kerry Ross).

A **Swainson's Hawk** over Almansor Park in Alhambra on January 6 was either wintering or a very early migrant (John Garrett).

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers included a continuing bird at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles through December 20 and new birds at the Bixby Marshland in Carson on January 7 (Philip Carnehl) and at the LA County Museum of Natural History from January 24-25 (Kimball Garrett).

Northern "Yellow-shafted" Flickers included one at Lower Arroyo Park in Pasadena on January 26 (Mickey Long) and one at Inglewood Park Cemetery on February 10 (Richard Barth).

Scarce on the coastal slope was a **Prairie Falcon** at Santa Fe Dam on De-

ember 17 (Andrew Lee) and one at Bonelli Park in San Dimas from January 8-14 (Michael San Miguel).

Five **Hammond's Flycatchers** was a good number for winter. Birds were noted at Valley Plaza Park in North Hollywood from December 14-February 11 (Richard Barth), at the Huntington Gardens in San Marino on December 17 (Sarah Ngo, Jon Fisher), on the Palos Verdes Peninsula from January 1-19 (David Barton), at the SCBG through February 12 and at Occidental College from January 24-25 (James Maley, Whitney Tsai, Devon DeRaad).

Pacific-slope Flycatchers - also rare in winter - were at the West SGR Parkway Nature Trail through February 12, at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library in Los Angeles through February 10 and at Hansen Dam near Lake View Terrace on December 20 (Rebecca Marschall).

Wintering **Eastern Phoebes** continued at Madrona Marsh in Torrance through February 11 and at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas through February 12.

Vermilion Flycatchers are being increasingly encountered away from the deserts, and about ten were present during the period from the Santa Clarita area to the coastal slope.

The **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** wintering at Creek Park in La Mirada was reported through February 11 and **Ash-throated Flycatchers** included a continuing bird at Madrona Marsh through February 4 and one at the Sepulveda Basin in Van Nuys on December 22 (Daniel Tinoco).

The **Tropical Kingbird** at the Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area in Willowbrook continued through February 11. A wintering **Western Kingbird** at Madrona Marsh in Torrance from January 27–February 12 was the only one reported (Manuel Duran, Alejandra Cedillo).

The **Verdin** – a species extraordinarily rare away from the deserts – at White Point Nature Preserve on the Palos Verdes Peninsula remained through January 19.

The only **Pacific Wren** reported was in Monrovia Canyon from December 17–January 2 (Ron Cyger).

Back for its second winter, the **Gray Catbird** continued at the West SGR Parkway Nature Trail through December 17 and may well still be present. **Lapland Longspurs** were on San Clemente Island on December 23 and again on January 18. Remarkable were no fewer than seven there on February 6 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole DesNoyers).

Rare but regular in winter, over a half dozen **Black-and-white Warblers** were reported over the period.

Nashville Warblers included one continuing at the West SGR Parkway Nature Trail through December 12, one at DeForest Park through December 17 and one in Long Beach on December 20 (Richard Barth).

Hansen Dam near Lake View Terrace hosted a rare **Blackburnian Warbler** from December 17–19 (Kimball Garrett).

A **Yellow-throated Warbler** continued at the Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area in Willowbrook through February 11.

Back for a second winter was a **Pine Warbler** at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale from December 17–29 (Andrew Lee). Much less rare were the half dozen **Palm Warblers** reported during the period.

Two **Painted Redstarts** were found. One returned for its second winter in Mar Vista as of December 21 (fide Richard Hedley) and was reported through February 11. Another was on the Palos Verdes Peninsula from December 26–February 11.

The wintering **Green-tailed Towhee** at the West SGR Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood continued through

February 10. Another was at the South Coast Botanic Garden in Rolling Hills Estates from February 9–12 (Manuel Duran, Alejandra Cedillo).

A **Clay-colored Sparrow** continued at the West SGR Parkway Nature Trail through January 21. Another was at Exposition Park in Los Angeles on February 8 (Kimball Garrett).

Rare were “**Red**” **Fox Sparrows** at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on December 17 (Darren Dowell) at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas from mid-December through January 8 (Michael San Miguel) and continuing in Porter Ranch through February 4.

Swamp Sparrows included a continuing bird along the Playa Vista Riparian Corridor through February 12 and a new one discovered at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on February 14 (Don Sterba).

Over a dozen **White-throated Sparrows** were present during the period, while much rarer locally was a dark-colored **White-crowned Sparrow** was in Pasadena on February 10 (John Garrett).

Rare junco subspecies included **Dark-eyed “Pink-sided” Juncos** at Elysian Park on January 3 (Brad Rumble), at Apollo Park in Lancaster from January 17–February 5 (Jon Fisher), at Rancho Sierra Golf Club on January 17 (Luke Tiller) and at Gloria Heer Park in Rowland Heights on February 2 (Richard Barth). A **Dark-eyed “Gray-headed” Junco** was at Charlton Flat in the San Gabriel Mountains on February 3 (Bernardo Alps).

The **Summer Tanager** at the Bette Davis Picnic Area in Glendale continued through February 12 and was the only one reported during the period.

Rare winter **Black-headed Grosbeaks** were at Cheviot Hills Park on January 2 (John Garrett), at the Playa Vista Riparian Corridor on January 3 (Manuel Duran, Alejandra Cedillo) and in Topanga on January 22 (Scott Logan). A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at the Palos Verdes Golf Course on December 26 (Jim Pike).

An **Orchard Oriole**, present since early November but its identity not confirmed until later, was at the LA County Arboretum in Arcadia through February 11 (Tom Wurster).

Nine **Hooded Orioles** present during the period was a good number. Rarer was a wintering **Baltimore Oriole** in the Holmby Hills area of Los Angeles on January 2 (Kimball Garrett).

Worthy of mention was a **Eurasian Tree Sparrow** in Wilmington from February 8–15. While some unusual birds raise the question of provenance, this one surely did not. This bird clearly did not get here on its own, with a ship-assisted crossing being the most likely scenario. With arrivals at Los Angeles ports from all over the world, there is a long list of species that could potentially turn up here, either as hitch-hikers or escapees.


While many vagrants are assumed to be naturally occurring, a number of them do not fit easily into that category. The Painted Bunting is a good example, with escaped birds occurring along with natural vagrants. Great care is taken by county reviewers and the CBRC to eliminate records of birds that definitely or likely arrived with human assistance.

With so many “continuing” birds remaining through the winter, spring migration will offer a refreshing

change. The first arrival of even our more common species gives birders satisfaction. It’s the rebirth of the seasonal cycle.

Though every season in southern California offers great birding, this is one of the most enjoyable. Not only is breeding activity in full swing, but songbirds and others in breeding colors are especially attractive. Northbound migrants are everywhere and the avian landscape is continually changing.

Viewing from coastal areas typically produces numbers of loons, scoters and others heading north. Any wetland area can hold shorebirds, gulls and waterfowl. Patches of flowering plants will attract hummingbirds. The coastal slope, foothills and deserts can all be great for migrating songbirds.

Well before migration in the lowlands winds down, the San Gabriel Mountains ought to be worth visiting this spring and summer and activity there should be robust in comparison the recent drought years. Finding time to visit all the places we want to bird is often the biggest challenge. 

A WET, WET, WETLAND

Cindy Hardin, Director of Outdoor Education & Volunteer Coordinator

The long wished for rains of this winter have wrought amazing changes in habitats statewide. Record snowpack, overflowing reservoirs, mudslides and swollen rivers and streams are all astonishing visual and statistical reminders that as of February 13, California has received double the average amount of rainfall at this point in the season.

Our region is often referred to as “the L.A. Basin”, due to its topographical features. The Santa Monica and San Gabriel Mountains curve around the coastal plain, forming the high sides of the “basin”. The plain can be thought of as a bowl of sediment, washed down from these mountains over millennia, up to 8,000 feet deep in some spots. For this “basin”, the Ballona Wetlands acts as the drain. The rain has had significant impact on the landscape at Ballona, including the appearance of vernal ponds and temporary flooding of low spots that have not seen this kind of inundation in years.



The Salt Pan, which is dry during the summer months, has been completely covered by water since mid-January. Hundreds of Black-Bellied Plovers, a handful of Black Neck Stilts and even a few White Pelicans have been present ever since the water began accumulating.



The riding ring, which is a remnant of the wetland's former life as a stable, looks more like a lake at the moment. A variety of ducks are often here in the mornings, paddling about.

The rain has had some impact on our school tours. On the positive note, students are treated to a variety of wildflowers already in bloom, lush vegetation and lots of birds. We have had to do some adjustments of our regular routes, due to flooding of certain trails.

It is interesting to note that many of our young visitors have never experienced a true rainy season, or are at least able to remember such a thing. They are truly drought babies, and were not even toddlers the last time Southern California saw significant rain. All of this water is exciting stuff for them!

Biological Soil Crust (BSC) is present at Ballona. This is a crust of soil particles that is bound together by organic material, which includes cyanobacteria, green algae, microfungi, mosses, liverworts and lichen. This fascinating stuff goes dormant during dry periods, and revitalizes when exposed to moisture. It

then begins to photosynthesize almost immediately.

The appearance of all of these organisms, which one volunteer dubbed “tiny miracles”, inspired our docent naturalists to do a bonus training session on February 21st. The components of BSC are collectively known as Bryophytes. Their presence has inspired a new learning station for visiting students — the Magnification Station. Each child is issued a magnifying glass, and sent out to hunt for mosses, lichen, fungi, flower blossoms, and animal tracks in the mud. After their search they spend a few minutes making illustrations of their finds.

The vascular plants at Ballona are exploding with new growth as well. We are seeing a very early bloom of Bush Sunflowers, Bladderpod, Lemonade Berry and Willow Catkins, which is instigating lots of insect activity.



This is the path that we normally take to our Migration Station. It looks as though this will not be passable till late spring.

Beautiful Green Moss is forming a virtual carpet in many sections of the wetlands.



Lichen is found near the patches of moss, after growing on the branches of bushes. There are four different types of lichen visible in this photo!



Different types of fungus are showing up all over as well. These mushrooms were peeking out from the base of a dead Dune Lupine plant, and helping out with the decomposition process.



The Earth Star is another type of fungus. We have found several examples along the dune trail. The spores are contained in the round, disc-like center.




In the right light, the Willow Catkins cast a golden glow over the grove of trees.



The Bladderpod is blooming like crazy!



The Bladderpod is the host plant for the stunning Harlequin Beetle. The Harlequin Beetle pierces the stem of the plant to imbibe its (currently abundant) moisture contained inside.

The above photos are mere pieces of a beautiful wetland puzzle. You can come and see all of this and more for yourself on Saturday, March 4th. That is the date of our next Open Wetlands at Ballona. The wetlands will be open from 9 a.m. to noon on that morning. You can stop by for a few minutes, or stay for the entire morning. Our volunteer naturalists will be on hand to show you around, and binoculars and magnifying glass will be available on loan to help you see the latest developments. Come celebrate the rain and its aftereffects with us. We hope to see you on the 4th, and the first Saturday of every month! 

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Los Angeles County's *Breeding Bird Atlas* Now Available

Los Angeles Audubon Society is pleased to announce the publication of the *Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas*, reporting on the first-ever project to map the distribution of all of the county's breeding birds. To celebrate this event, the Society is hosting a reception on March 8th, 2017 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Eaton Canyon Nature Center, Pasadena. Complimentary beverages and light snacks will be served commencing at 6:30 p.m. Kindly RSVP to: nicolelawson@laaudubon.org or (323) 876-0202.

The reception will feature a presentation by the authors on the contents of the volume and its value to scholars, naturalists, environmental consultants, land-use planners, permitting authorities, conservationists, and the birding community. Copies of the hardcover *Atlas* volume will be available for sale (\$49.95 plus sales tax), and two of the authors will be available to sign your volume and answer questions.

The *Atlas* was written by Larry W. Allen and Kimball L. Garrett, with species-distribution maps compiled by Mark C. Wimer. In its 660 pages, this compendium addresses 228 species found with evidence of breeding during the Atlas field work 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, extracting data from over 5600 egg-set records, and analyzing trend data from eight county Breeding Bird Survey routes and eight county Christmas Bird Count circles.

As a result, our *Atlas* is able to present a view of each species' local breeding biology in detail unprecedented in a work of its kind: county-specific habitat, nest-site, and breeding phenology details; a county population estimate; population trends where data available; seasonal occurrence and migration timing; conservation notes and threat assessments, the subspecies present here, and even fossil records where they exist. The extensive use of ornithological literature and museum collections has enabled authors to present extensive historical and range-wide comparisons for many of these life-history traits.

The Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas is a project of the Los Angeles Audubon Society in cooperation with the Natural History Museum and other county Audubon Chapters: El Dorado, Palos Verdes/South Bay, Pasadena, Pomona Valley, San Fernando Valley, Santa Monica Bay, and Whittier.

To order the Atlas from the LA Audubon Society website:

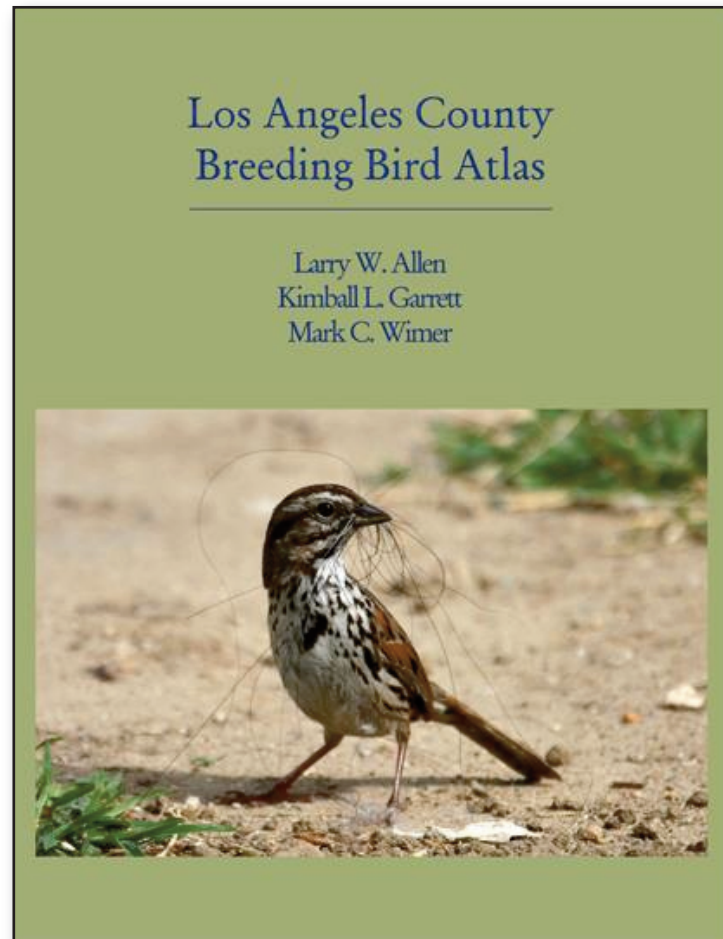
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Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas Now Available

INTERPRETING NATURE

Being a Biologist for a Day is a Great Excuse to Get Out to the Beach!

Stacey Vigallon, Director of Environmental Education | Photos by Stacey Vigallon

During the past three school years, the seasonal Snowy Plover Field Trip Program has brought over 1,300 LAUSD students to the beach to be “biologists for the day” and to enjoy time in nature. Though Los Angeles, and California as a whole, maintain many miles of public beach, a recent report by UCLA and San Francisco State University highlighted the challenges that many residents face in actually getting out to the beach, particularly lower-income residents (see KCET’s online interactive summary of the report: <https://www.kcet.org/redefine/access-for-all-an-interactive-report-on-challenges-to-coastal-access>). The LAUSD schools we work with are classified as Title 1, meaning that a large number of students face financial hardship. Even more troubling is the fact that about 1 in 45 LAUSD students are dealing with issues of homelessness (J. Resmovits, Los Angeles Times, Nov 24, 2016). This makes access to nature more important than ever, as studies continue to underscore the beneficial effects of time spent in nature on mental and physical health (visit childrenandnature.org for an lengthy list of sources). Los Angeles Audubon’s field trip programs to the beach, to Ballona Wetlands, and to Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area are providing a much-needed community service.

During the 2015-2016 school year, we opted to move the Snowy Plover Field Trip location to the beach directly in front of the Dockweiler Youth Center. While spotting a Snowy Plover is a little less of a sure thing at this site, it has enabled us to substantially expand the scope of our field trip curriculum. Students now get to scan the open ocean through scopes and

binoculars with the guidance of volunteers, comb the wrackline to study kelp, invertebrates, and micro-trash, hunt for animal tracks mid-beach, and discuss earth science concepts in the dunes. Students take notes and sketch in their own field notebooks and give short presentations about their team’s adventure to the group as a whole at the end of the tour. Perhaps the most important part of the day, however, is the hour-long lunchtime at the beach. This is an opportunity for students to engage with nature on their own terms — a time for supervised but unstructured play. It is fascinating to watch the students organize themselves: soccer players establish teams and referee their own games, engineers and architects work together to build cities in the sand, and artists create work from what they find along the wrackline. Ending the day this way is an essential component to the field trip program, as it provides students with much-needed exercise, fosters imagination and innovation on the part of students, and helps students see natural areas as places that are fun and rejuvenating.

The following photos provide a glimpse into the Snowy Plover Field Trip Program. Many thanks to the volunteers who assist each school year in getting kids out on the beach to learn about nature!

We also wish to thank the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, the Disney Conservation Fund, and donors for supporting this program.

Background Image

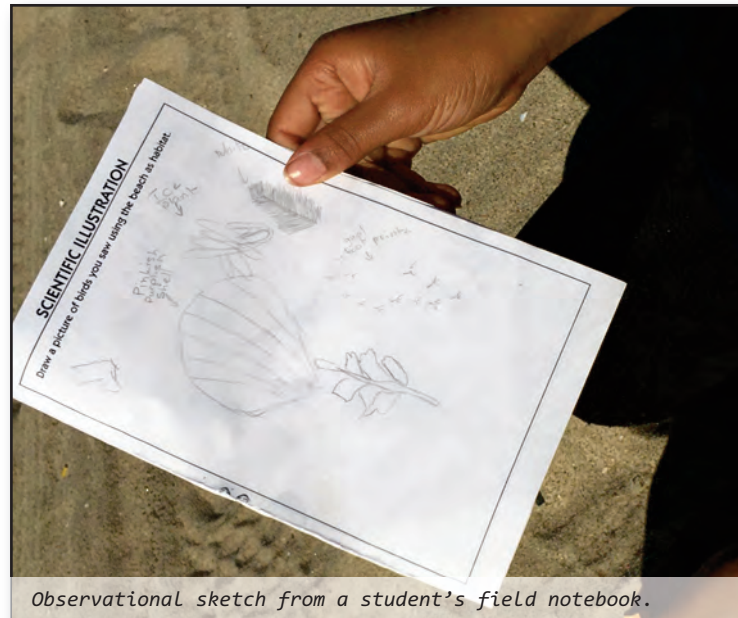
As students hike through the mid-beach, they are asked to keep an eye out for evidence that animals were present. This helps to keep students engaged, offers lots of opportunities to compare and contrast animal tracks, and gets students thinking about what wildlife is doing when humans aren’t present.



This is the view that greets students when they arrive at Dockweiler Beach for the Snowy Plover Field Trip Program. California native plants are incorporated in both the building landscape and can be found in the dunes.



You never know who you might find in the dunes! This egret hung out with a team of students for over twenty minutes, and we were able to observe it hunt (and catch) lizards. Predation in action!



Observational sketch from a student's field notebook.



Students explore the wrackline under dramatic clouds. Kelp, invertebrates, tiny shells, and trash all make great objects to sketch in a field notebook.



In a short walk along the wrackline, students were able to see just how much trash can accumulate on beaches after a storm event. These were some of the single-use straws we removed and threw into a nearby trash can. Experiences like this give students a real-world understanding of how daily actions in the middle of the city, like littering, can impact habitat miles away.



A team of student artists spent their lunch time creating ephemeral artwork with natural objects they found along the wrackline.



Students use binoculars to check out birds on the beach and the open ocean. Hosting the field trips in the fall and winter months maximize opportunities to see grebes, scoters, godwits, plovers, and more. Students are always thrilled when they spot sea lions or dolphins as well.



Taking good notes requires teamwork! In addition to writing down observations about wildlife and habitat, students are also required to sketch an object they found along the wrackline and sketch a bird they observed with their own eyes.

Hang in There; I'll Get to it in a Bit

Louis Tucker, L.A. Audubon Field Trip Leader



I'm humbly going to let you in on a little conceit. A glimpse into my strange process of putting thoughts on paper; or, in this case cyberspace. The very gracious editor of this online magazine, Linda Oberholtzer asked me about three weeks ago if I had anything written to contribute to the *Western Tanager*. Well, I quite honestly had nothing. Days go by, weeks go on and still nothing. The deadline for the issue is February 15, and nothing is occurring to me. Nothing is inspiring me. I am an incredible procrastinator, which makes this problem much worse than it should be. To make matters worse, if I lose focus, I can be distracted for days on end. And, I was distracted.

One of the things necessary in my life to help me focus is music. Not just any music. Classical music. And, not just any classical music. Vivaldi's "Seasons" is nice, Beethoven symphonies can be fun, Chopin piano music can be transporting; but, those things are not my remedy. It's gotta be OPERA! Strataspheric sopranos, raging tenors, bellowing baritones and rumbling basses — that's what cures me from being distracted. The heavier and darker the story — things of murder, suicide, illicit love trysts, duels: swordfights, pistols, even physical combat will keep me focused for hours on end. And, the heroine soprano losing her mind, or swallowing

poison — I am good to go. Send in the operatic "big guns": Giuseppe Verdi, Richard Wagner, Richard Strauss, W. A. Mozart, and Gioacchino Rossini for example.

Here comes the "onion". Shortly after the writing request was made, my receiver on my magnificent stereo, broke down. So, here is yet another "sidebar". Some 38 years ago, while I was on a national tour with the Broadway show, *TIMBUKTU*, the show in which I had my first professional acting job on Broadway, I thought I would do some research and purchase components to put together a really good sounding stereo system. Having grown up in and near NYC, and having the best concert halls and opera house at my disposal; and having gone to college in Boston, and being exposed to one of the best concert halls in the world, Symphony Hall, I have very critical ears. So, the research not only involved reading critical stats about stereo components and also visiting listening rooms that sold top of the line equipment. I did this with selected recordings I owned. That proved invaluable, since the sales people will play for you music and recordings in which you are not familiar; but, they will dazzle you with their idea of some exciting sonic burst. And, you may be dazzled, but, the sound you are listening for is not what's

been put before you. This search took almost the better part of a year. And, I did end up with a system that sounds exactly like the sound I heard in Symphony Hall in Boston and the Metropolitan Opera in NYC.

I'm not going to throw around the brand names, mainly because this equipment is no longer being made. Suffice it to say that the speakers were designed specifically in Boston by Deutsche Grammophon for the Boston Symphony Orchestra. And, the company that makes them didn't have big success selling them on the commercial market. Needless to say, they are no longer made, actually about two years after I purchased mine. And, I got the receiver strong enough to be able to drive these speakers. So, I'm in constant "musical heaven". (Relax, I'm getting there!) The receiver is broken and must be repaired. The nature and age of this unit means that I have to have an audio technician knowledgeable enough to make the repairs. And, because the quality of this receiver is top notch, the technician advised me some twenty-five years ago to never get rid of this unit. Equipment like this is no longer made, for a number of reasons — coupled with the fact that it's expensive. The "art" of repairing "vintage" equipment is rapidly shrinking. And, people no longer listen to music the way we did many decades past. The quality of equipment being made today, unless you want to pay "boat loads" of money is, quite truthfully, inferior.

So, where does that leave me? I have to use my "walkman" with headphones. Although now even the walkman is "ancient" technology, I had made many, many cassette tapes of selections from the operas I've collected to use in my gym workouts or driving in LA traffic. And, this doesn't necessarily produce the same effect as being "washed over" by the open concert sound my stereo would give me, it will have to be my musical "stand-in". I still don't have a topic

to write about, and I'm three days away from a deadline. Ugh! Then, in the wee hours of "0 dark thirty" Monday morning, before I try to get some sleep, I'm flipping over to the current dates on my Audubon, and Sierra Club Engagement Calendars, and I'm also changing to the current date on my Audubon Birds page a day calendar, and I'm hit with a spectacular picture of a bird, which you will read about when you hopefully continue reading this.

Twenty-nine years ago, deep in the bowels of the San Fernando Valley, I lived in a house with two other actors. We all came out here from NYC, not all at once, but, found each other and decided, because two of us had dogs, to live in a house in Van Nuys. My roommate had just purchased a brand new SUV and wanted us all to join him on a "road trip". Places of interest were thrown out and we cheerfully agreed to go to Yosemite. This park was number one on my "bucket list" and we did some fast shopping for food and beverage for a weekend of camping in Yosemite.

I don't remember much about the trip up to the park. But once through the south entrance at Mariposa Grove, I can't contain my excitement. While there is still great light we make our way up to Glacier Point and get out and walk around. And, I am overwhelmed at this lookout. I have been in "wild" places before touring around the country; but, I have never been struck by the beauty of a place, as hard, as I was by the beauty and magnificence of my first views of Yosemite. Words really are inadequate to describe what's happening to me emotionally, psychologically, and physically. Looking out, from Glacier Point, at the valley, the magnificent peaks, Half Dome, the Merced River — I am completely overcome. And, I'm sobbing — being struck with and by the beauty that is before me. It also becomes a religious experience for me — and I thank God for this.

There had been some controlled burns, over the summer, in the park, and walking around, a very busy pair of woodpeckers fly in. This wasn't necessarily going to be a "birding" trip; but, when it comes right at you ... Fortunately, I never travel around without my binoculars. And my roommates, although they are not birders, carry theirs as well. We were observing a pair of Black-backed Woodpeckers, a male and a female, foraging through the charred trees for grubs and insects. They were doing this and communicating with each other in a very intense way — chattering and pecking and checking every inch of what ever part of the tree they were on. Often times they were opposite each other, next to each other, exchanging positions in total cooperation with each other. They thoroughly checked every inch of their burned "diner" before moving on to the next charred tree. Watching their work was like watching a well choreographed dance. It contained a special beauty and "artistry" specific to them.

Before we would lose well needed light, we decided to go up to Crane Flat and secure our camp site. I think I had a hand in the choice of the camp site. I wonder why? At this point, we are grateful for summer light night hours. We arrive at the camp site with time to set up the tents and get a quick bite to eat before the onslaught of dusk and darkness. I casually mention that there should be a great bird over at Crane Flat Meadow and would any of my friends like to go over with me to check it out. "Great bird" — really? I'm talking about an owl; not just any owl — but an owl of the northern woods and meadows in northern hemispheres around the world. So, good meadow etiquette is to walk on the very outside edges of the meadow. While doing this, it becomes apparent that we are in a "war zone" ruled by mosquitoes. Growing up in the north east, this is something, in spring and summer months you get used to. In Southern California, this isn't such a big deal. But, here, in Crane Flat, at this moment, it is

time to break out the only weapon you have to fight this “buzz/bite” fest. Deet! Toxic as hell, but, you don’t put it on every day, so, you go with it.

In the northeastern outskirts of the meadow, we see people with tracking devices. Scientists, biologists, researchers? We slowly quietly walk up to them, as to not create too big a disturbance. My heart is pounding with a bit of excitement. We introduce ourselves and ask questions concerning whether we are in the right “neighborhood” for the owl. And, the answer is much better than expected. The owl is back! Wait — what now? We then get her story. This female owl had set on a nest during the latter part of the winter. Her partner was off foraging for food and never returned. There was a bad snow storm during this time and when he didn’t return, she aborted the eggs. She was very hungry and needed food and had to find it for herself. She left the nest, the meadow those woods for months. And was absent until this night. The night we happened to come across biologists keeping track of her whereabouts. We now just have to be patient. By the way, it was later discovered that her partner was out foraging for food for her and was accidentally killed by a motorist as the owl was chasing down prey while flying across a road.

And after about a half hour, and buzzing/biting annoying mosquitos – Incoming – wait for it – she made her appearance. The “Phantom of the north”, a “feathered ghost”, The Great Gray Owl. She silently flew to a tall tree at the edge of the meadow. An enormous ball of heavily patterned gray feathers perched on a bare branch of a conifer. She was quite at home. And like the other two north American owls of the Strix genus, she has facial discs which have dark rings and the discs seem to be two incomplete discs that meet in the center of the bird’s face. At the center of the face surrounding the bill and separating the eyes are two light gray crescents mirroring each other as if back to back. The eyes of this species are a

different color than the two smaller Strix owls which have dark eyes. It has two of the most haunting almost piercing yellow eyes that seem to be glaring out as it looked around. This is a huge bird. It looks intimidating and mysterious and would probably be the perfect bird for a ‘round the fire ghost story at a camp site. We watched her for quite a while. She even flew to a low tree stump, possibly seeing or hearing a rodent. She flew up and came down in the meadow, but didn’t come up with anything. We were in awe. And we thanked the biologists for sharing their subject with us. It was a wonderful scene.

As it was getting late, we went back to the camp site and had a little celebration with some chilled champagne, PERRIER-JOUET anyone? It might seem a little arrogant to think that we would hit the jackpot the first day in the park. It certainly was serendipitous. I have no recollection of getting any sleep our first night. I don’t think I did. I was much too excited. There was a great sense of euphoria going around. I also think that my friends caught a little of my birding bug. At the crack of dawn, we set out on Tioga Pass Road headed toward Tuolumne Meadows. Of course, we were making scenic stops along the way. We went to White Wolf camp ground for a walk around, just soaking up the splendor of this wonderful place. We were entertained by a Pileated Woodpecker and a gregarious flock of Pine Siskins. Around the camp grounds in the woods, I kept hearing the calling of a Northern Goshawk, which I would have loved to have seen, but, it didn’t want to make its physical presence known. It was loud enough to almost seem that it was right around us, but we had no luck with it.

Moving on, we made a stop at the look out at Olmsted Point, where you can look south and see Half Dome and parts of the Yosemite Valley. The view you can get on a clear day here is astounding. In a way you almost seem like you’re at the top of the world,

although you’re only around 3000 or so feet high. We are gaining altitude. Olmsted Point is full of mischievous rodents — namely marmots. Marmots are famous for getting under the car and start chewing away at the rubber hoses under the hood. In a brand new SUV that has to be pretty tempting for the little buggers. There are tales of hikers returning to their cars and driving away and their engines are overheating and they wonder why. The chewed away rubber causing water and other fluids to drain out. This is not anyone’s idea of fun so far away from any road assistance. The marmots at this lookout are fairly tame, because people make the mistake of feeding them. I don’t know if that’s a good trade off; feeding the marmots so they can’t sabotage your car when your back is turned.

Onward and upward to Tuolumne. When we arrived there, I was not prepared for the great expanse of this meadow. The meadow seemed to also be the place for a lot of people. As we were preparing our return to LA we didn’t have enough time for a big hike but we did stop to walk around a bit. Along the trail, there was a coyote which was not disturbed by any of the people walking around. He seemed not to care that there were people around at all. He was looking for rodents, chasing ground squirrels and little chipmunks. It just seemed that he just wanted to run around. It was pretty funny, actually. While he was running around, one Red Crossbill flew down from a tree on the side of the trail. This surprised me, and I looked around for others. It was just this one which hopped around on the ground for a while and then took off. At this point I have three life birds from this trip: Black-backed Woodpecker, Great Gray Owl, and now Red Crossbill — a male. I’m feeling pretty good about myself right now.



Pine Grosbeak | Image courtesy of Jacob Spendelow | jacob@tringa.org

Grosbeak. He is incessantly singing, the russet variant of this species. A female is lower down in the tree, foraging through pine cones. (There's a surprise – and a fourth life bird for me). The bodies are mostly gray, with a kind of dirty, dusty gold head and the wings are brownish, with white wing bars. The Nat Geo book says that young males can have this russet color and the females have similar coloration. Both the Nat Geo and the Sibley say that their song is short. This song was not. Nat Geo also suggests that there can be a musical warble. This song was a celebration. I just stood there watching and listening, transfixed. What I heard was a serenade that sounded just magical. And it was the perfect musical wave good bye — 'til next time, to end our time in Yosemite.

This was a great “road trip”. In subsequent years I would lead a few Los Angeles Audubon trips to see the Great Gray Owl. For a while, this was a no fail trip for people who wanted to see this bird. A couple of times we even saw the parent birds at the nest, at the top of a high hollowed out stump about thirty feet up. The top of the tree had broken off for some reason and the pair were guarding their young owlets which were most probably several months old, by the size of them. More recently the Great Grays have moved around

We continue to head out of the park toward the Tioga Pass gate. But, we see another beautiful meadow, Dana Meadows, to be exact, as you can look up at Mount Dana, all some 13, 000 plus feet of it. We get out of the car again and walk around. There was something very peaceful and serene about this meadow. I couldn't put my finger on it whether it was one of the higher altitude parts of the park, or that it was so beautifully green – and then I hear music. Sweet music. A stunning aria, sung with such perfection and full of joy. Bird music. A song, so light and ethereal, I had to follow this sound and find its source. So, I walk as if hypnotized to the back of the meadow which is lightly peppered with conifers. This area was not thickly wooded and the trees were not very close together at all. I follow the sound up a slight incline and look around. At the top of a conifer is I am assuming a male Pine

in the park. And, I understand that a number of them were seen out of the park altogether. It also has been quite a while since I've been up to Yosemite. I'm going to have to pay another visit soon. I miss that majestic beauty. This year could be a great year to go, since we've had some great episodes of needed rain falling on our parched earth out here. Also, given our present political climate, we are probably going to have to fight hard to keep these wonderful wild and pristine places free from people and corporations who want to exploit these parks for financial gain. I know I am probably “preaching to the choir” but we must protect these parks and the real inhabitants of them. I would love for the next generations to go to Yosemite and possibly have the truly magical time that I had when I first visited. 🐦

YOUNG BIRDERS

Birds are Citizens of the World: Protecting our Migrating Birds

By Dessi Sieburth



The Western Tanager is a migrant that can be found in Los Angeles in the summer and in Mexico during the winter.

Many birds migrate long distances across international borders. The Pectoral Sandpiper, for example, migrates from Alaska to central South America. The Bar-tailed Godwit migrates from Alaska to New Zealand. On its way back to Alaska in spring, it stops to feed in the Yellow Sea region of China and Korea. Most migrants rely on available habitat in several separate geographic locations, including their wintering grounds, breeding grounds, and stop over locations. However, many migratory birds are inadequately protected for at least one or more of their stops, which contributes to the rapid decline of migrants around the world. A recent study by Runge et al. (2015) in *Science* shows that 91% of migratory species face threats somewhere along their migration route. For

example, the Great Knot is only protected in 7% of its regular migration route. The Red-spectacled Amazon, a migratory parrot of Brazil, is only protected in 4% of its range. Both species are listed as vulnerable. Countries vary in their efforts to protect migrating birds. For example, Germany which is known for its conservation efforts, protects 98% of the areas where migratory bird species occur within its borders. However, only 18% of these migrating birds are protected outside the German border. China and India only protect 10% of regions which have migratory birds. International collaboration will be necessary to make conservation efforts successful.

Western Mexico is one location where many migrants from the U.S. spend their winters. San Blas is a small coastal town located just north of Puerto Vallarta in Western Mexico. With its mild climate and variety of habitats, including mangroves, grasslands, and mountains, it is home to many species of endemic and migratory birds. On my recent December birding trip to San Blas, our group found over 300 species in just over five days.


Migrating birds we observed include Nashville Warbler, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Pacific-Slope Flycatcher, Blue Grosbeak, and Dusky Flycatcher, all of which can be found in the Los Angeles Area during summer, but winter in Mexico and Central America. The Nashville Warbler, the most common warbler we saw in San Blas, breeds both in the northwestern and northeastern U.S., and migrates to Mexico and Belize. Western Tanagers, which we saw feeding in tall fig trees,

breed across the western U.S., but their wintering grounds are solely in southern and western Mexico. The Black-headed Grosbeak, which we also saw feeding in blooming fig trees, breeds in western North America and northern Mexico, but only winters in western Mexico. The Blue Grosbeak, which we found in riparian habitat, breeds throughout the southern U.S., but its wintering range is restricted to Mexico and Northern Central America.

We also saw both subspecies of the beautiful endemic Golden-cheeked Woodpecker (*flavinuchus* and *chrysogenys*) and the Northern Potoo, a Poorwill-like Nightjar. We needed to take a boat ride at night to find the Northern Potoo, which was perched motionless in a tree. The Northern Potoo is nocturnal and its primary food source is moths. Two of my favorite birds were the Bumblebee Hummingbird, the second-smallest bird in the world, and the Yellow-winged Cacique, which would travel in the hundreds every evening to roost in bamboo stands.

We found many migrants including Orioles, Tanager, and Warblers at “bird friendly” coffee plantations in San Blas. Bird friendly coffee plantations use native tropical forest to shade coffee plants. Many migrating bird populations have been declining because of deforestation. The native tropical forests at coffee plantations provide important habitat for migrating and endemic birds. Many countries including Mexico, Peru, Guatemala, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ecuador have coffee plantations that grow shade-grown bird friendly coffee.

One way we can help to promote bird friendly shade-grown coffee plantations is to buy coffee that is grown in one of these plantations. Coffee which is solely labeled as “shade -grown” is not necessary bird friendly, as non-native trees may be used to shade the coffee plants. Coffee with the Smithsonian Bird-Friendly label is currently the only coffee guaranteed to be organic and bird friendly. Smithsonian certified Bird-Friendly Allegro coffee can be purchased in your local Whole Foods stores here in Los Angeles. Because birds are citizens of the world, they need to be protected globally.

Thanks to Mark Stackhouse, our excellent San Blas guide, and John Sterling, who took me to San Blas. All photos taken by Dessi Sieburth (<http://protectingourbirds.my-free.website/>), except the Blue Grosbeak taken by Beatrix Schwarz. 



This Nashville Warbler is a common migrant in San Blas in winter (photo taken in Los Angeles County)



The Blue Grosbeak winters in San Blas, Mexico (photo taken in Los Angeles County)



The Greater Pewee summers in Arizona and was common in coffee plantations in San Blas in winter



Golden-cheeked woodpecker (subspecies chrysogenys), an endemic species to western Mexico



A Northern Potoo at night in San Blas

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

Mar. 4 & Apr. 1

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

Mar. 5 & Apr. 2

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

3rd Saturday of the month

(Except for July and August)

Mar. 18 & Apr. 15

Time: 8:00–noon

4100 S. La Cienega Blvd
Los Angeles 90056

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

Mar. 12 & Apr. 9

Time: 8:30 a.m.–12:00 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)

Mar. 19 & Apr. 16

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.

Field Trip Listings

Please visit www.laaudubon.org for updates to Los Angeles Audubon's field trip listings.

For more information: (323) 876-0202 or membership@laaudubon.org



Nick & Mary Freeman
Field Trip Chairperson
& Trip 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.

CARPPOOLING

For ride sharing purposes, your contact information will be shared with the 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

Saturday, March 4 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 of digital SLR camera 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! Meet at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot at 8:00 a.m. with your DSLR camera and telephoto lens (required).

DIRECTIONS: Take the Marina Fwy (90) to Culver Blvd and turn left for a mile. Turn right on Pacific Ave. Turn into the lot 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 3 or 4 p.m. Please register with Susan at membership@laaudubon.org, providing name(s), cell phone number, and e-mail; and mail a check for \$40 each.

March 18 & 19 Weekend (FULLY BOOKED) Anza-Borrego State Park \$20 LAAS MEMBER FEE / \$40 FOR NON-LAAS MEMBERS 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 (high hopes on this wet year!) and Swainson's Hawk migration! On Saturday and Sunday we will car-caravan in and around Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, from Julian to the desert floor. 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.

Please register at membership@laaudubon.org providing name(s), cell phone number, and e-mail address; and mail

a check for \$20 LAAS member / \$40 non-LAAS fee. MAIL TO: Los Angeles Audubon, PO Box 411301, Los Angeles CA 90041-8301. Net profits go to the Ralph Schreiber Grant Fund.

Sunday, March 26
Malibu Lagoon & Zuma Creek
NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: *Irwin Woldman*. This transitional date should still see ducks, gulls, raptors, sparrows, and some early land migrants. Take PCH N over the bridge in Malibu to the stoplight, and either park on PCH, or turn left from PCH into the lagoon fee lot, or turn right on Cross Creek Road for free parking (and Starbucks) along the road, and cross PCH to meet at the kiosk in the lagoon parking lot at 8:00 a.m. There may be a parking fee at Zuma or elsewhere. Bring lunch for a full day of birding here, and perhaps at Legacy Park in Malibu, and Zuma Creek up the coast.

Saturday, April 1
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.

Friday, April 21
Small Owls of the San Gabriels #1 (of 3)
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. (See also: Owls #2 May 12, Owls #3 June 9)

April 29 & 30 Weekend
Owens Valley Grouse and More
\$55 FEE LIMITED SIGN-UP of 20

Mary and Nick Freeman lead. Friday (April 28) evening in Bishop, a grouse biologist will present a slide show on the Sage Grouse at the BLM headquarters building. She's really knowledgeable! We will meet at the Crowley lek turnoff ("the Green Church" at 34 Benton Crossing Rd, Mammoth Lakes – GPS address) very early on Saturday for Sage Grouse photos and viewing, and later 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, Bank Swallow, and perhaps Chukar. An e-mailer will be sent out to the participants who have signed-up for this trip. Net profits go towards the Ralph Schreiber Grant.

COMING IN MAY

Saturday, May 6
(Re-scheduled from Jan. 7 date. January's confirmed participants must re-confirm with LAAS before April 1st & will be given priority.)
SUGGESTED \$20 DONATION (To Tejon Ranch)
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. On this new date, hopefully the ranch will have dried out from the winter storms we've so desperately needed. The bird life will be quite different from the wintering birds that were promised for January. The good news is that this is spring bird migration peak time. This will be a great time to see various passerine species: warblers, flycatchers, bluebirds, and other song birds. The rain and snow will also mean that the resident birds should also have plenty to feast on. There are resident Red-tails, Burrowing Owls, Golden Eagles, and Prairie Falcons are all out there to be found. Even Swainson's Hawks may be passing through or nesting! California Condor is also a possibility if it's a bright sunny day. There also is a chance of catching sight of some Pronghorn Antelope.

We will meet at Denny's in Sylmar. Take the Roxford Exit off of the 5 Fwy. Denny's can be seen on the east side of the Fwy. (12861 Encinitas Ave. Sylmar.) Be prepared to carpool and leave from there at 7 a.m. to be at the 300 St. West Gate at 8 a.m. At the gate at Tejon we will then transfer to the Ranch's vehicles, for a number of reasons — first and foremost, safety — as there has been a lot of weather this winter, and roads on the ranch can be treacherous.

Also, NEW for this trip, a \$20 donation to Tejon Ranch is suggested.

Bring lunch, as we will be out most of the day. **Rain cancels.**

(Re-scheduled from Jan. 7 date. January's confirmed participants must re-confirm with LAAS before April 1st & to be given priority.

Please register with LA Audubon by email to membership@laaudubon.org or phone (323) 876-0202, and provide your cell phone number, & e-mail for each participant. FRS radios and scopes useful.

Friday, May 12

**Small Owls of the San Gabriels #2 (of 3)
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.

(See also: Owls #1 Apr. 21, #3 June 9)

**Friday & Saturday, May 19 & 20
Mojave Area with Galileo Hills & Butterbredt Springs
SIGN-UP REQUIRED, LIMITED 12 Max., NO FEE**

Leaders: *Nick and Mary Freeman*. Western warblers and flycatchers should headline. Reptiles may be encountered!

On Friday morning we will meet at Galileo Hills main parking lot. Head east from Hwy 14 through California City, turn N after the end of the golf course onto the Randsberg Mojave Rd., take the right fork just out of town onto 20 Mule Team Parkway, continue 15 min. or so to a paved left turn marked "Silver Saddle", make two paved right turns, and a paved left turn, continuing around the pond to the parking lot. Park and meet near the car bridge at 7:30 a.m. To meet Saturday, veer right heading north out of Mojave, taking 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 parking 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 Butterbredt a tad late, but if we happen to hit migration on the nose, it will be magical! We will carpool to Butterbredt 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, we will meet Friday evening at 6:00 p.m. or so after a group feast at Gloria's Mexican Restaurant, 7027 California City Blvd.

COMING IN JUNE & JULY

Friday, June 9

**Small Owls of the San Gabriels #3 (of 3)
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 5:30 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.

(See also: Owls #1 Apr. 21, Owls #2 May 12)

**Sunday & Monday, July 2 & 3 (tickler)
Montane Birds and Owls of Dinkey Creek and Yosemite Valley
FEE UNDETERMINED, LIMITED SIGN-UP of 12**

Leader: *David Yee of the Central Valley Bird Club*, and long-time coordinator of the Central Valley Birding Symposium. Likely to include evenings of owling on July 2&3. We are still working out details, but pencil this into your calendars!

Monthly Program Presentations

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2017

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS LAUNCH CELEBRATION!

PRESENTED BY LARRY ALLEN AND KIMBALL GARRETT

WHERE: Eaton Canyon Nature Center, Pasadena

WHEN: March 8, 2017

TIME: 6:30 - 9 p.m.

RSVP: nicolelawson@laaudubon or (323) 876-0202

Los Angeles Audubon Society is pleased to announce the publication of the Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas, reporting on the first-ever project to map the distribution of all of the county's breeding birds. To celebrate this event, the Society is hosting a public reception on March 8th, 2017, 6:30–9p.m. at Eaton Canyon Nature Center, Pasadena.

The reception will feature a presentation by the authors on the contents of the volume and its value to scholars, naturalists, environmental consultants, land-use planners, permitting authorities, conservationists, and the birding community. Copies of the hardcover Atlas volume will be available for sale (\$49.95 plus sales tax), and two of the authors will be available to sign your volume and answer questions.

The Atlas was written by avid birder Larry W. Allen and Natural History Museum of Los Angeles ornithologist Kimball L. Garrett.

Complimentary beverages and light snacks will be served commencing at 6:30 p.m.

Presentation 7–9 p.m. *Kindly RSVP to: nicolelawson@laaudubon.org or (323) 876-0202 (please leave voice message if no answer.)*

DIRECTIONS TO EATON CANYON NATURE CENTER: Eaton Canyon Natural Area is located at 1750 North Altadena Drive, one block north of New York Drive in Pasadena, California. There is a sign on the east side of the street which clearly marks the entrance to the Park. From the 210 Freeway eastbound, exit at Sierra Madre Boulevard/Altadena Drive. Turn left (north) at the first light (Altadena Drive) and go 1.6 miles to the park entrance. From the 210 Freeway westbound, exit at San Gabriel Boulevard/San Marino. Turn right (north) at the second light (Altadena Drive) and go 1.5 miles to the park entrance.

Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas

Larry W. Allen
Kimball L. Garrett
Mark C. Wimer



Monthly Program Presentations

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12, 2017

TERNs AND CROWs: LESSONS IN ENDANGERED SHOREBIRD MANAGEMENT FROM VENICE BEACH

PRESENTER: ERICH EBERTS

WHERE: Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook, 6300 Hetzler Rd, Culver City CA 90232.

WHEN: April 12, 2017

TIME: 7–9 p.m.

American crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) play an important role in the reproductive failure of the Venice Beach colony of endangered Southern California least terns (*Sternula antillarum browni*). Over the last five years, numerous non-lethal predator control systems (including chemical emetic and mild electrical shock conditioning) have been developed and implemented at the Venice Beach colony with the goal of deterring the crows from eating tern eggs and chicks. Initially, breeding success was observed, however, due to extensive peanut caching in the ungroomed nesting site (associated with local wildlife feeding), crows were encouraged to persistently search the nesting site, neutralizing the negative conditioning of the shocking system. In analyzing the effectiveness of these non-lethal predator control systems, we find it is important to recognize the significant role anthropogenic factors have in affecting the ecology, behavior, and dispersion of various species in urban ecosystems. This talk will therefore discuss crow and least tern interactions at Venice Beach, the effectiveness of non-lethal predator control systems, and the role people can play in contributing to urban wildlife conservation and management.

Erich Eberts bio

I graduated from Loyola Marymount University in December 2015, where I studied biology with a concentration in ecology. As an undergraduate, my primary research projects included Photosynthetic Characterization of Invasive Plant Species in Los Angeles County, Predator (American Crow) Electrical Shock Aversion System for Endangered California Least Terns, and Urban Hummingbird Biodiversity and Behavior. After graduation, I spent three months in Ecuador working on hummingbird research, and backpacking in the Peruvian Andes. Upon my return, I was excited to continue my research in urban wildlife biology, and especially in crow cognition and hummingbird behavior and physiology, at the LMU Center for Urban Resilience, where I spent three years as an undergraduate researcher. As the CURes Research Fellow, I primarily guide and mentor 20 undergraduate researchers on their urban wildlife and social science research projects. I plan to pursue a Ph.D. in Ecology to further develop my interests and experience in avian physiological and behavioral ecology, and to pursue a career in field biology through academia.

Contact Nicole Lawson, nicolelawson@laudubon.org to RSVP or volunteer to help set up chairs in advance (at 6:00 P.M.) of the program. Come early to enjoy the terrific views and birds at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park.

