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WESTERN Tanager

May-June 2017 | Volume 83, Number 5

Brown-eyed Primrose | Photo by Read Howarth



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On The Cover

Brown-eyed Primrose
 Photo by Read Howarth



About the Photographer

Read Howarth is a disability insurance broker who lives in Los Angeles County. He moved here in 2009 from New Jersey. His then moderate lifelong interest in birding was given a jolt with his observation of a Surf Scoter in Marina Del Rey, while sailing. His first Audubon Field Trip was three years ago, on a Kurt Leuschner led trip to Anza-Borrego. It was to become the first of many Audubon walks and field trips since. Birding, sailing and volunteering as a Docent in Topanga State Park keep him out in nature and provide springboards for more educational opportunities in the natural sciences.

Members of Los Angeles Audubon are invited to the 2017 Annual Membership Meeting



MEETING LOCATION
 Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook
 Theater Room
 6300 Hetzler Rd
 Culver City 90232

DATE: Sat., June 17, 2017
1 - 2 PM

MORE INFORMATION: carolbabel@laaudubon.org | (917) 923-9166

L.A. AUDUBON'S ANZA-BORREGO FIELD TRIP MARCH 2017

By Read Howarth, LAAS Member and Field Trip Participant

Photos by Read Howarth

March 18 and 19 were the dates for Los Angeles Audubon's Field Trip to see the Swainson's Hawk Migration and other birds in Anza-Borrego. In other years the wildflowers have been well past their prime, but the late rains this year made for wildflower viewing at its peak coinciding with our visit. Having signed up months ago, I was excited to experience the super bloom at the same time as the Swainson's Hawk migration, and so was everyone else.

Some were able to arrive Friday in time to watch the hawk migration come in for a landing in the desert. Different from other migrating raptors, Swainson's Hawks migrate in large flocks. Friday afternoon and early evening over 300 hawks were counted in the "kettle" of birds, that some described as a "tornado" because of the number of birds. As the hawks descend in the evening and ascend in the morning they form a shape loosely described as a kettle, narrower at the base and wider at the top.

The hawks visit the Anza-Borrego Valley to eat the caterpillar of the White-line Sphinx Moth as they migrate north. The caterpillar eats the wildflowers before burrowing into the sand of the desert to pupate. Kurt Leuschner informed us that the moths particularly like the Brown-eyed primrose.

Hal Cohen leads the Hawk Watch in Anza Borrego and his a blog announces numbers counted as they arrive in the evening to feed on the caterpillar. As the desert heats up in the morning, the Borrego Hawk Watch records the numbers that leave in the morning as the hawks rise in "kettles" on the thermals that develop as the sun warms the desert. The morning of Saturday, March 18, they recorded 3,713 hawks migrating out of the valley, continuing on their journey. That was a new record for the Hawk Watch.

From Hal's entry in the Anza Borrego Hawk Watch blog:

<http://borregohawkwatch.blogspot.com/>

March 18 (3,713) Swainson's Hawks

Discussion

Today started off as any other day with kettles beginning to form around 8:30a hawk time. By the end of the first hour hawks began to stream. By the end of the second hour over 800 Swainson's Hawks had passed us. The next hour went crazy. We spotted a large kettle to the east. It finally emerged closer and as we clicked off the SWs another kettle formed to the east. Rose raised the cry that hawks were streaming in at an alarming rate. As one kettle formed near Pyramid and streamed away, another kettle formed in the same area. This continued for more than an hour. At times the stream was too dense to count. We believe we missed a few hundred hawks! With a cramped hand from clicking, I had to switch to my other hand. This figure surpasses our previous record by over 2,000 hawks.

Swainson's Hawk Kettle at Anza-Borrego, CA | Photo by Mary Freeman

If you search on YouTube you will find some of Hal Cohen's videos. Understandably, they were too busy counting to videotape the exodus Saturday morning.

Our group was led by Kurt Leuschner, Professor of Natural Resources at the College of the Desert, in Palm Desert, California. Kurt has a broad knowledge base in natural sciences and was equally able to identify the many blooming flower species, along with the birds. Besides his regular college curriculum on birds, reptiles and entomology, he teaches a number of seminars or workshops during the year at ZZYX, Joshua Tree, in Arizona, and at the Channel Islands and the Salton Sea, and other areas. If you email him he can send you a list of the extracurricular classes: KLeuschner@collegeofthedesert.edu



Watching for Sheep

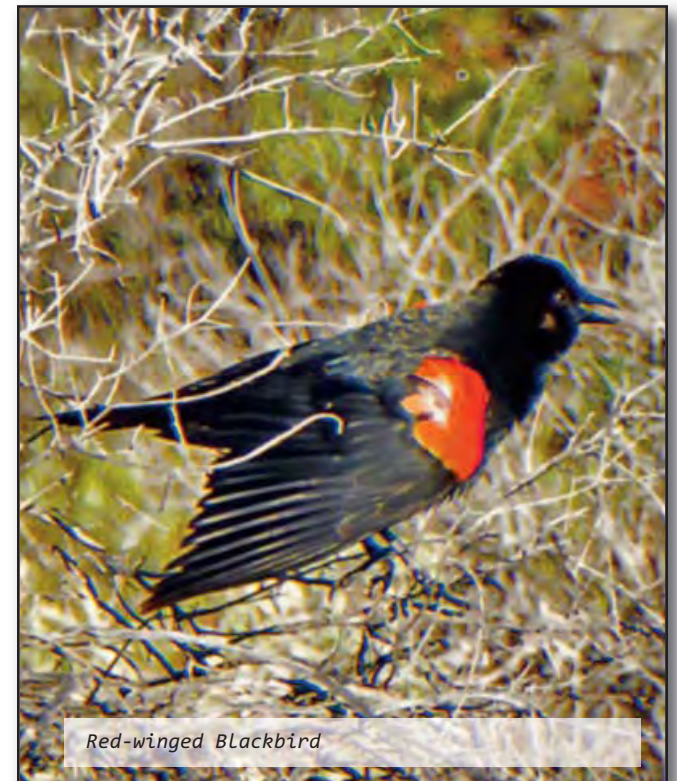


Verdin

On a beautiful Saturday, we used the back way out of the valley to avoid the worst of the traffic drawn to Anza Borrego by the wildflowers. Our first stop was the Borrego sink, a sewage overflow pond, where we saw a Black-tailed Gnatcatcher and three Sora. Birds, and so Birders, love these sewage fields wherever they are. We also saw Red-winged Blackbirds, Costa's Hummingbird and my first Yellow-headed Blackbird.

Next stop was the Tamarisk Campground where two of the birds we saw were an early migrant Western Kingbird and a Verdin. The Verdin was particularly beautiful with its yellow head on a grey body with rusty red accented shoulders.

Though Borrego Bighorn Sheep had been reported in the hills across the road from the campground, we scanned the hills



Red-winged Blackbird

with our binoculars without luck.

We headed toward Julian, stopping at Yaqui Well where we saw many Phainopepla, Tawni saw a Scott's Oriole that Kurt had heard. Kurt later described how some seeds are germinated after being deposited in the tetraskata (pyramid shaped scat) of the Phainopepla. It was here that Kurt pointed out my first view of a pink Bigelow's monkey flower. It is strikingly different from the yellow Sticky Monkey Flower of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Between Yaqui Well and Julian we stopped at Sentenac Canyon, where we heard a Nuttall's Woodpecker and saw a Cooper's Hawk through the trees. Listen here:

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Nuttalls_Woodpecker/sounds

On to Scissor's Crossing where Kurt showed us a Cowbird trap, described the invasive nature of the Cowbird which lay their eggs in other birds' nests and, in turn, the larger cowbird chicks monopolize the food meant for the nesting bird's chicks. A Ladder-backed Woodpecker made an appearance.

More on the Brown-headed cowbird at The Cornell Lab of Ornithology – Nest Watch

<http://nestwatch.org/learn/general-bird-nest-info/brown-headed-cowbirds/>



Monkey Flower



Cowbird Trap

In Julian we stopped at The Birdwatcher to use their facilities and do a little shopping in their terrific store. Linda bought some bird earrings. I headed down the block to pick up a sandwich for lunch from the market and after a half hour we all headed to Kurt's secret lunch spot, a home owned by friends with daffodils and bird feeders. We had our lunch break at their beautiful home, made by his friends. I would gladly live there. The feel of the home and location was peaceful and beautiful.

After lunch we stopped at the Volcan Mountain Preserve where we saw Mule Deer, a Coot and a Mountain Chickadee. From there we went to Lake Henshaw, on the way back to the valley, where we saw White Pelican, a Red-tailed Hawk, Red-winged Blackbird, Western Meadowlark (singing away) and a Bald Eagle surveying his kingdom from a high perch on a tall spire of a bare tree trunk.

We drove back past the Tamarisk Campground looking for the reported Peninsular Bighorn Sheep herd. We didn't see any across from the campground above the Cactus Loop Trail but, farther along



Peninsular Bighorn Sheep

in Yaqui Pass, Tawni spotted a white sheep up on another ridgeline. Once we stopped, we were treated to a view of at least 6 ewes and four young on the hillside above us.

Next was a visit to the Hawk Watch for the afternoon arrival of the Swainson's Hawks. While we were waiting, Rhonda found some of the White-lined Sphinx Moth caterpillars for us to photograph.

Returning to Borrego Springs we stopped at the Anza-Borrego Desert Natural History Association - Desert Nature Center. They have their own wildflower report and reference an app that is available: <http://www.abdnha.org/pages/03flora/reports/current.htm>.



White-lined Sphinx Moth Caterpillar

Many purchased books.— I did.— I'm hoping *Botany in a Day, the Patterns Method of Plant Identification*, may help with my botanical pursuits; but I doubt it will only take a day.

Dinner that evening was Mexican at the very friendly Borrego Grill, just off Christmas Circle. Participants came from near and far; Glendale, San Diego, Riverside, Santa Monica, West LA, Palm Springs, San Francisco Bay Area and Seattle. After some camaraderie, we split up, early to bed to be ready for the next day.

The next morning Kurt had another treat in store for us at the Club Circle Resort and the Borrego Springs Country Club. A friend and resident pointed out a Great Horned Owl on a nest with two chicks.

Also there was a Sora, Cinnamon Teal, Wigeon, a Kestrel, Boat-tailed Grackle and an uncommon Common Ground Dove among others. Of course I had turned away from the Cinnamon Teal in the pond to just miss seeing the Roadrunner....running.

By then it was time to get over to the Hawk Watch area to see the kettles form. They were developing on the far eastern and southern area of the valley. We posited the crowds of wildflower viewers had caused them to overnight farther away from the usual morning Hawk Watch area on DiGiorgio Road. They saw over 500 lift off that morning.

After watching hawks rising on the thermals, we headed out to Henderson Road for prime wildflower viewing.



Great Horned Owl with chicks



Henderson field



Desert Lily

Among other flowers, Kurt found us a Desert Lily.

The rest of the group headed out to find LeConte's Thrasher and possibly Badger at Old Springs Road while Rhonda, Tawni and I headed back to try to beat the worst of the crowds on the roads. On the way out I couldn't help stopping to take a few more pictures of the cactus including the Ocotillo, Beavertail and Fishhook.

It was another terrific Los Angeles Audubon field trip. Thank you Mary and Nick for organizing it. 🐦



Sand Verbena



Beavertail Cactus



Ocotillo Cactus

BIRDS AND OTHER WILDLIFE SEEN ON ANZA-BORREGO FIELD TRIP MARCH 18-19, 2017

By Kurt Leuschner, LAAS Member and Field Trip Leader | KLeuschner@collegeofthedesert.edu

76 BIRD SPECIES

LH = Lake Henshaw

TG – Tamarisk Grove

YQ Yaqui well

CCR Club Circle Resort

BSR Borrego Springs Resort

American White Pelican – **LH**

Mallard – **CCR**

American Wigeon – **CCR**

Northern Shoveler – **LH**

Cinnamon Teal – pair – **BSR**

Wild Turkey – **Julian area**

Clark's Grebe – **LH**

Great Blue Heron – **LH** two

Turkey Vulture – **BS, LH**

Osprey – **BSR**, Friday

Bald Eagle – **LH** 1 adult

Cooper's Hawk – near Scissors Crossing

Red-tailed Hawk – Sentenac Canyon
Birding Trail

Swainson's Hawk – Henderson

Canyon Rd 500+ Sunday morning.

Note: (Saturday morning they set a record with other 3,700 lifting off)

American Kestrel – Julian

American Coot – **CCR, LH**

Sora – 3 at Borrego Sewage Pond, 1 **CCR**

Killdeer – Borrego Sewage Pond

Ring-billed Gull – **LH**

Band-tailed Pigeon – heard only, Julian

White-winged Dove – **BS**

Common Ground-Dove – **CCR**, one

Mourning Dove – **BS**

Eurasian Collared-Dove – **BS**

Rock Pigeon – **BS**

Greater Roadrunner – **BSR**

Great Horned Owl – **CCR on nest**
with two young

Costa's Hummingbird – **BS**

Anna's Hummingbird – **TG**

Acorn Woodpecker – Julian

Ladder-backed Woodpecker – **TG**

Nuttall's Woodpecker – Scissors Crossing

Northern Flicker – Julian – heard only

Say's Phoebe – **BS**

Western Kingbird – **TG**

Cassin's Kingbird – Scissor's Crossing

Steller's Jay – Julian

California Scrub-Jay – Julian, Scissors
Crossing

Common Raven – **BS**

American Crow – Julian

Violet-green Swallow – **LH**

Oak Titmouse – Wynola Rd, Julian (heard)

Mountain Chickadee – Julian

Verdin – **BS**

Bewick's Wren – **TG**

House Wren – one heard near Scissor's
Crossing

Rock Wren – Henderson Canyon Rd.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet – Julian

Wrentit – Julian (heard)

Black-tailed Gnatcatcher – **TG**

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher – heard only, near
Scissors Crossing

Western Bluebird – Julian

Northern Mockingbird – **BS**

California Thrasher – **YW**

European Starling – **BS**

Phainopepla – **TG, BS**

Yellow-rumped Warbler – Julian

Orange-crowned Warbler – **TG**

Spotted Towhee – Julian

California Towhee – Julian

Lincoln's Sparrow – Borrego

Sewage Pond

Song Sparrow – Sentenac Canyon Birding
Trail

White-crowned Sparrow – **TG**

Dark-eyed Junco – Julian

Black-headed Grosbeak – Julian

Western Meadowlark – **LH**

Red-winged Blackbird – **CCR**, Julian

Tricolored Blackbird – from car near **LH**

Great-tailed Grackle – **BS**

Brewer's Blackbird – **CCR**

Bullock's Oriole – near Scissors Crossing

Scott's Oriole – **YQ**

House Finch – **BS**

Lesser Goldfinch – **TG** etc.

Lawrence's Goldfinch – Heard at **TG**

House Sparrow – **BS**

SOME BUTTERFLIES:

Becker's White

Painted Lady

Sleepy Orange

Sara Orangetip

SOME MAMMALS:

Peninsular Bighorn Sheep – 8 ewes

and 2 lambs – Yaqui Pass

Badger (hole)

Desert Tortoise (hole)

Mule Deer

REPTILES AND INSECTS:

Banded Gecko

Side-blotched Lizard

Great Basin Whiptail

Chuckwalla

Fringe-toed Lizard

Sidewinder

Spider Beetle

White-lined Sphinx Moth

Caterpillars

SOME WILDFLOWERS:

Cryptantha or Forget-me-Not

Checker Fiddleneck

California Primrose

Dune Primrose

Ceanothus blooming

Bush Poppy

Daffodils

Wild Heliotrope

Fremont or Desert Pincushion

Brittlebush

Dune Sunflower

Desert Sunflower

Desert Dandelion

Desert Chicory

Whispering Bells

White Sage

Sand Verbena

Desert Lily

Sand Blazing Star

Lots more!



Common Phacelia

SCHREIBER GRANT UPDATE

The role of behavior in isolation: novelty and courtship across a hummingbird hybrid zone

By Brian Myers, Grant Recipient 2015

Historically, the evolution of novel morphological traits, such as the diversification of limb bones in mammals, has been subjected to rigorous study, while behavioral characters have lagged behind. In my dissertation, I am using recombination in a naturally occurring hybrid zone to study how differentiation and behavioral novelty arise between the recently diverged Allen's (*Selasphorus sasin*) and Rufous (*S. rufus*) Hummingbirds. I will determine the genes responsible for a novel courtship behavior and, for the first time, directly test Tinbergen's "Emancipation Hypothesis", which states that behavioral novelty can occur from the duplication of one trait into two, where one character is the original trait, and the other is novel, to investigate *how* this behavior might have evolved. In addition, for the first time, I am investigating how genetics, behavior, and morphology vary across an avian hybrid zone and study the mechanisms of isolation at play within the area of contact.

Allen's and Rufous Hummingbirds are phenotypically similar, but differ in display behavior. In both species, courtship involves a male performing an initial ascent and subsequent J-shaped dive. During the dive, a species-specific sound is emitted by the tail feathers. In addition, Allen's Hummingbirds exhibit a novel behavior occurring immediately before the dive, the pendulum display, where the bird slowly flies back and forth in a shallow U-shape. Both displays can be broken into distinct elements, and some elements of the dive are analogous to those in

the pendulum display. I hypothesize the dive and pendulum displays are behavioral duplications, where the pendulum display is a modified dive with its own character identity.

Because some populations appear to be declining, Allen's Hummingbird is currently listed on the National Audubon Society's Watchlist. Allen's Hummingbird consists of two subspecies: *Selasphorus sasin sasin* and *Selasphorus sasin sedentarius*. *S. s. sedentarius* was previously endemic to the Channel Islands, but is now widespread throughout southern California. *S. s. sasin* is 15% smaller than *S. s. sedentarius* and is found from Oregon south to Santa Barbara County. In addition, the two subspecies differ in their migratory behavior, with *S. s. sasin* migrating annually to northern California and Oregon and wintering in central Mexico and *S. s. sedentarius* remaining in southern California as a year-round resident. My research will clarify which parts of the distribution are undergoing expansions versus declines, and I will compare the phylogeography of Allen's Hummingbird to that of previous studies of co-distributed species in California.

GRANT FUND USE

All of my funds were used towards the 2016 field season, towards camping fees, food, and transportation. With the help of this award, I was able to collect morphological, behavioral, and genetic data from over 100 individuals.

RESEARCH PROGRESS

Chapter 1: Describe the hybrid zone

Thus far, I have collected data from 104 males from the hybrid zone, 6 pure Allen's Hummingbird males from their range, 15 pure Rufous Hummingbird males from their range, and 73 females from the hybrid zone, for a total of 198 birds sampled. Most females were measured, sampled for DNA (blood sample via toenail clipping), and released. Approximately half of the males were collected, and the other half released after data was taken.

To standardize measurements of pure parents, I measured specimens of pure Rufous and Allen's Hummingbird at the San Diego Natural History Museum and the Los Angeles Museum of Natural History. After obtaining 30 specimen measurements each for pure Allen's males, pure Allen's females, pure Rufous males, and pure Rufous females, I will have a basis of comparison for hybrid individuals so that hybrids may be identified in the field based on both morphology and behavior.

Phenotypic analyses reveal a gradual north-south shift from a Rufous-like to an Allen's-like phenotype. For example, the northernmost hybrid locality is Rufous-like, but individuals occasionally perform pendulum displays. Our southernmost hybrid population is Allen's-like, but some individuals perform intermediate dive sounds as a result of mixed tail feather morphology (Fig. 1). I performed a linear discrimi-

nant function analysis (LDA) using Minitab to diagnose individuals sampled from the hybrid zone as pure Rufous, pure Allen's, or hybrid (Fig. 2). I am currently working on the publication for this chapter, which will: 1) confirm the presence of the hybrid zone, 2) assess the degree of admixture of behavioral and morphological traits, and 3) provide the required framework needed for addressing variation in genetic data across the hybrid zone in Chapter 3.

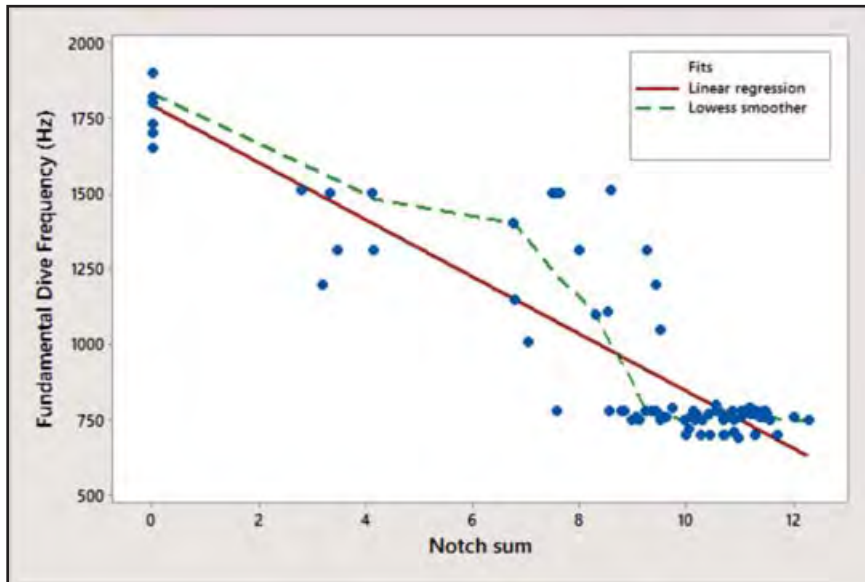


Figure 1. Sum of four rectrix two tail feather measurements (a score of 0=Allen's-like, 12=Rufous-like) versus fundamental dive frequency (Hz) produced by the tail feathers during courtship (1600-1800Hz=Allen's-like dive sound, 700-800 Hz=Rufous-like dive sound). Intermediate tail morphology and dive sounds suggest hybridization

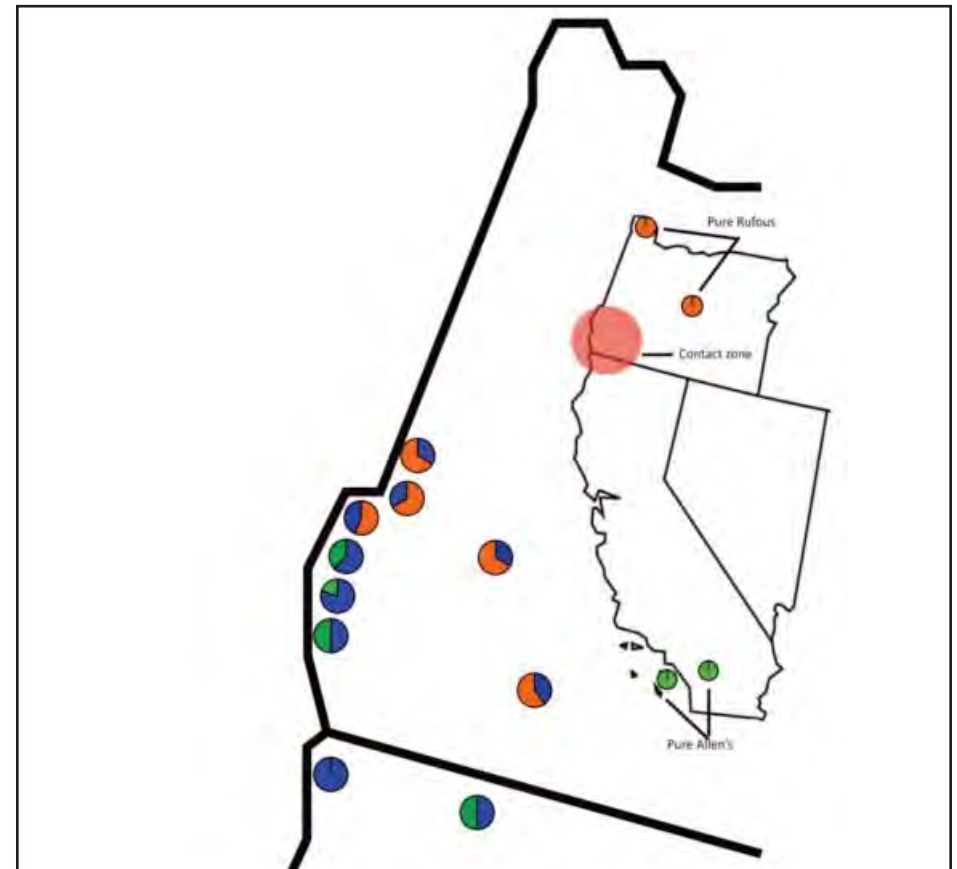


Figure 2. Hybrid and parent localities, showing the proportion of phenotype observed at each locality based on linear discriminant function analysis (LDA) of standard morphological characters and behavioral characters described in this proposal (green=Allen's-like, orange=Rufous-like, blue=hybrid). Pure parent localities are in southern California and northern Oregon, far from the hybrid zone.

Chapter 2: Cline analysis of the hybrid zone using genetics, behavior, and morphology


In this chapter, the goal is to determine which evolutionary forces maintain the hybrid zone, and to investigate whether prezygotic or postzygotic isolation is a larger driver of divergence across the area of contact. To explore potential genetic markers, myself and collaborators sequenced the genomes of eight pure Allen's and seven pure Rufous Hummingbirds far from the hybrid zone. We found our two focal species to be very similar, with only 82 species-diagnostic single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) markers. The vast majority (61) of these markers are located on the Z chromosome (the sex chromosome in birds), and 11 others are located on a single autosome. We will genotype these 82 species-diagnostic SNP markers using PCR-restriction fragment length polymorphism (RFLP)-based analysis. We will also use ddRADSeq to discover additional SNP markers that are variable, but not species diagnostic, from throughout the genome. These data will also be valuable for Chapter 4.

In the 2015 and 2016 field seasons I have nearly completed a north-south transect along the southern Oregon coast. In the upcoming field season, I will finish this transect and begin an inland west-east transect in extreme northern California.

Chapter 3: Phylogeography of Allen's Hummingbird

Various museum specimens and tissue samples are available from throughout the range of Allen's Hummingbird. In addition, I have samples from Riverside, Santa Catalina Island, and Del Norte County from the previous field season. To fill-in the remaining gaps in sampling, I will sample the following counties in 2017: Ventura, Monterey, Humboldt, Mendocino, and south Del Norte.

Chapter 4: Admixture mapping to determine the genetic components responsible for the pendulum display

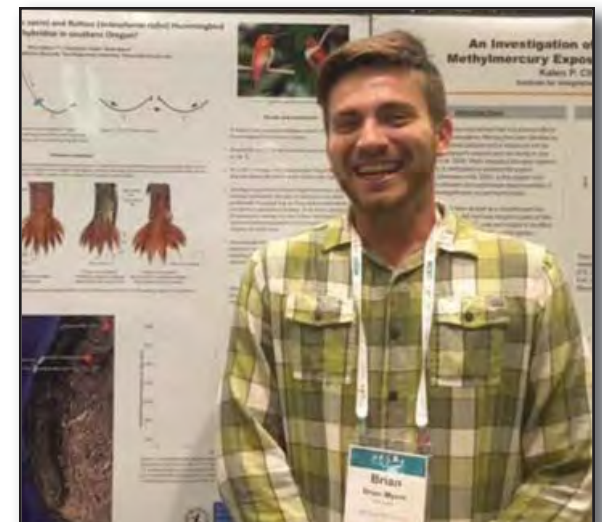
In this chapter, the goal is to determine the genes associated with the pendulum display in Allen's Hummingbird, and to determine whether the dive and pendulum display are paramorphs, where the pendulum display is a modified dive that has attained its own character identity. Chapters 1-3 require completion and all required samples for this project must be obtained before analysis for Chapter 4 can be initiated. 



Photos from the field: Both these birds were captured, sampled, banded, and released.



Obtaining a sound recording from Allen's Hummingbird



Poster presentation at the 2016 NAOO.

INTERPRETING NATURE

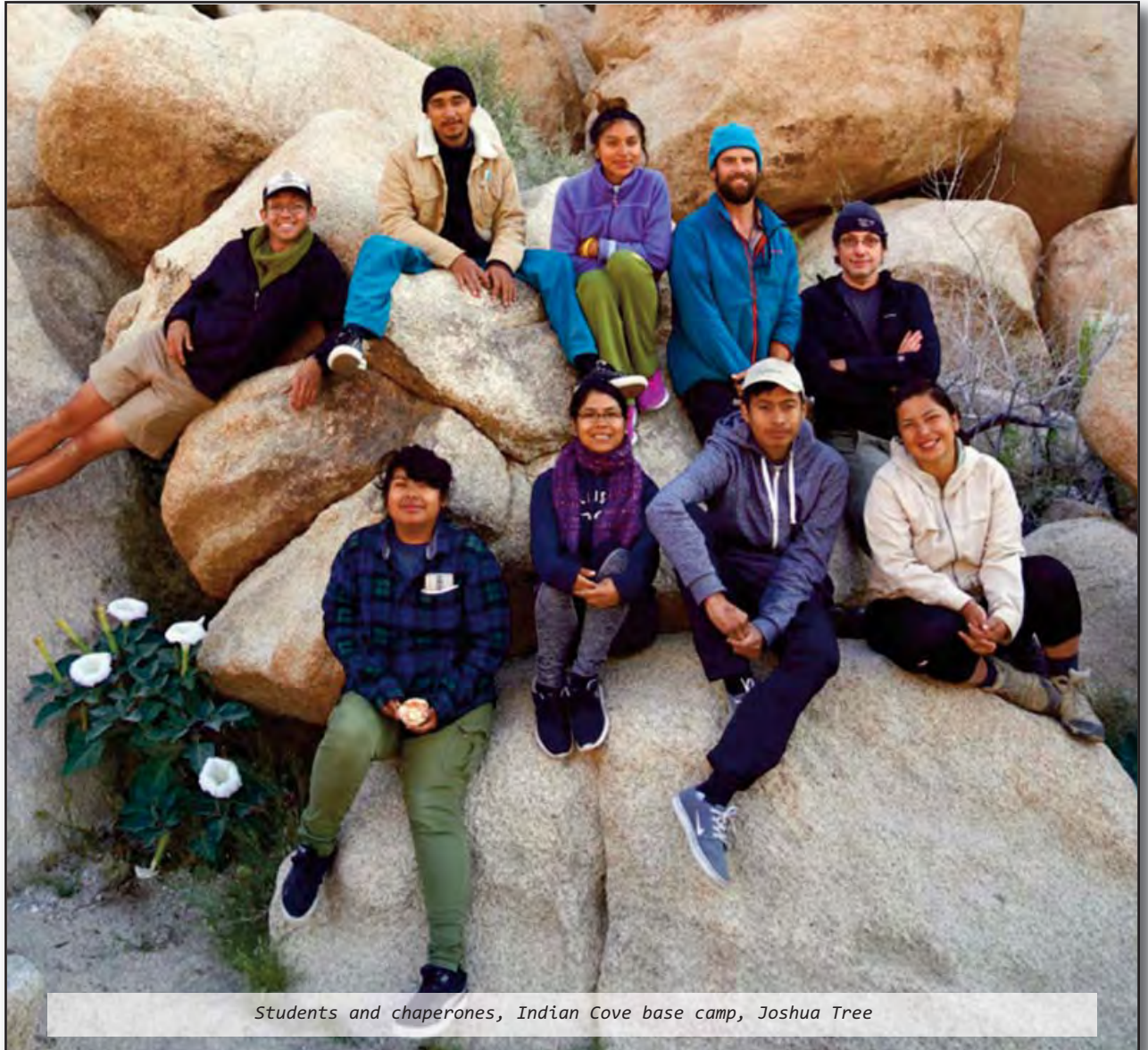
From L.A. to Joshua Tree: Opportunities and Experiences in Nature

By Robert Jeffers, L.A. Audubon Board Member and Joshua Tree Adventure Chaperone, Spring Break 2017

“Did you have a good time?”

“No, it was absolutely great!” clearly announced Marshall High School sophomore Jerry, 2016-2017 Baldwin Hill Greenhouse Program Restoration Leader and Leo Politi School Yard Habitat pioneer and alumni.

Opportunities change people. For youth in particular, they can be transformative. I have known Jerry since LA Audubon and Principal Brad Rumble, then of Leo Politi Elementary School, helped the school community transform a small patch of under-used lawn into one the most important examples of schoolyard habitat in Los Angeles Unified School District. Jerry isn't new to nature in the city nor to birding. Thanks to LA Audubon and Politi Elementary, as a Politi student Jerry had access to nature right on his campus in the middle of the city. But this was a special opportunity: a chance to immerse himself in nature in Joshua Tree National Park for three days, along with students from Dorsey High and nearby Academy for Science and Engineering Charter High.



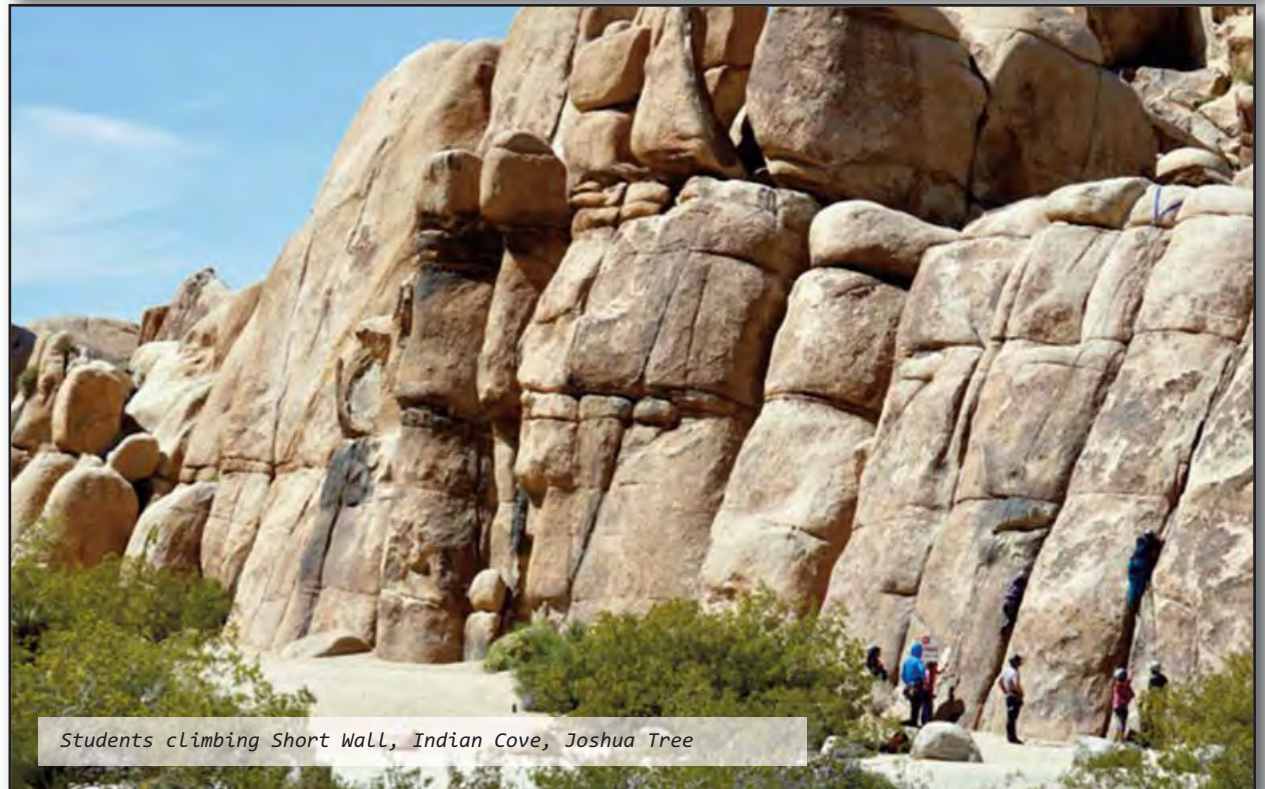
Students and chaperones, Indian Cove base camp, Joshua Tree

Jerry's not boisterous, extroverted, and forward. He's calm, introverted, and a decidedly better birder than many, myself included. When the two professionally trained Outward Bound course leaders he spent three days with in Joshua Tree on a wilderness adventure asked the group of students and chaperones if any creatures could use the Silver Cholla as a home, Jerry quietly but confidently answered, "Cactus Wren" and heads turned. I think the course instructors were both surprised and impressed, but knowing Jerry and the support Jerry's received from LA Audubon, the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program, Stacey Viggallon and many others with a strong environmental ethos – his answer seemed almost inevitable. And, the other students on this course – they could have answered this as well.

I often hear fellow LA Audubon Board member and educational leader extraordinaire Brad Rumble offer the statement, "Build it and they will come." And, while I find this to be true, sometimes nature's already built it and sometimes it's necessary to bring the students to nature as was the case with the Outward Bound led rock climbing and nature hike experience students enjoyed this spring break. For three-days the students learned how to rock climb, how to belay, how to "scramble" over, under, and around boulders, and proper planning for engaging with nature while camping and backpacking. Jerry isn't new to birding --- we can thank LA Audubon and his time at Leo Politi for that – and he isn't new to nature either, but Joshua tree – this was new to him. This experience wouldn't have happened without the support of LA Audubon. Though it's only about 150 miles and a three traffic-hour drive away from where he does his homework, volunteers, and interns, Joshua Tree might very well be the



Jerry rappelling down Short Wall, Indian Cove, Joshua Tree



Students climbing Short Wall, Indian Cove, Joshua Tree



Gerson rappelling down Short Wall, Indian Cove, Joshua Tree



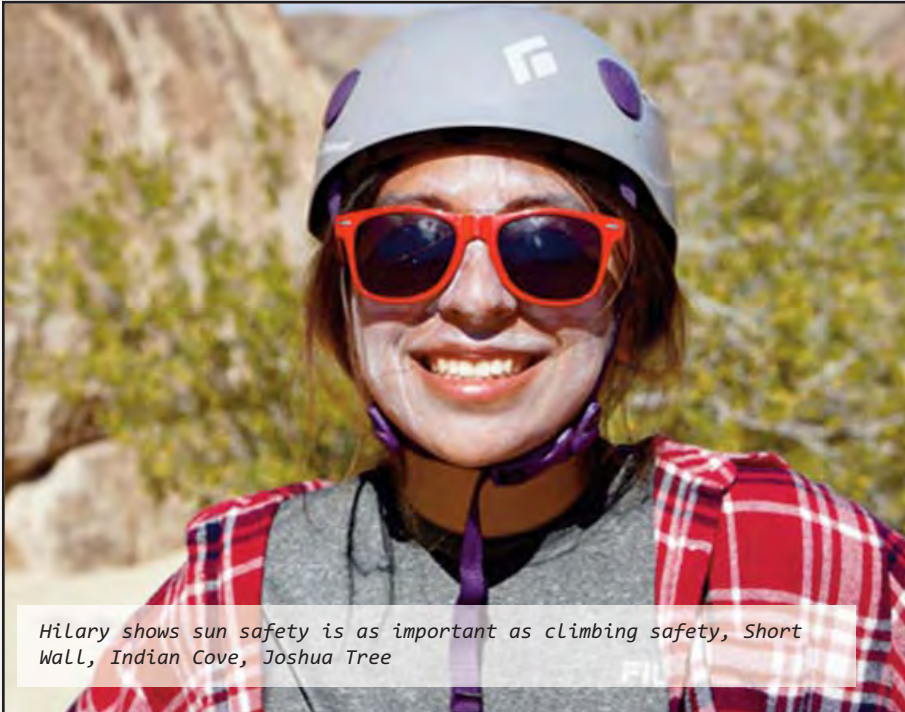
Gerson between two boulders in Gunsight Canyon during a day of scrambling



Silver Cholla flower, Indian Cove, Joshua Tree



A chuckwalla poses for the camera




Hilary shows sun safety is as important as climbing safety, Short Wall, Indian Cove, Joshua Tree



Arely, chaperone and Environment for the Americas intern, smiles for the camera and shows motivations written on her hands for her hike through Gunsight Canyon

alien landscape it so often stands in for across many Hollywood films. During our final night, around the hearth chat, Jerry offered those clear and direct words -- "it was absolutely great"-- about the importance of his individual and collective two days of "scrambling" through Gun Sight Canyon boulders and learning to rock climb 40-50 foot routes at Indian Cove's "Short Wall."

Jerry came to this adventure with some trepidation I learned.

"Did I tell you I'm afraid of heights?" Jerry confided in me moments before he belayed himself down the 45-foot igneous rock face. I couldn't tell. A couple hours earlier he was wedging his hands and feet in a two-inch crack going up the same wall he was descending in full harness and helmet climbing gear. His fellow students along with his instructors noted he was truly excellent at "belaying" (being the safety and support person for a climber) and I can personally confirm this – he belayed for me. Transformative experiences like this Joshua Tree adventure, can have untold benefits for students uninitiated to such experiences. Creating opportunities, moments like this trip not only provide opportunities to test and explore interests and curiosities for students, but they provide confirmation that nature from birds to rocks to trees is something special and worth honoring and protecting. Proof may not materialize immediately in front of us, but our current LA Audubon staff – almost all former Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program Restoration Leaders and Interns – suggests the work we're doing has impacts both immediate and long-term. 



Jerry among boulders, Gunsight Canyon, Indian Cove, Joshua Tree



Jerry by firelight, Base Camp, Indian Cove, Joshua Tree



Students using field guides to identify wildflowers with chaperones and Outward Bound Leaders, Indian Cove, Joshua Tree

We Wish You a Merry Christmas: An Adventure

By Louis Tucker, Los Angeles Audubon Society Member and Field Trip Leader

Well, for those of you who read my previous tale of a trip to Yosemite, and found that the crutch I use to help me get my thoughts online was tragically absent. I have good news, for me at least, my receiver is back. And, my stereo is up and cranking high volumes. Ironically, I have playing on it right now Bach's CHRISTMAS ORATORIO. I can assure you that this was not done on purpose. It just so happens that I made a number of CD purchases over the past week; and this was one of them. I also have a rule: the CD does not get to go and join the others on my shelves until I have listened to the whole thing. Because this piece of music is only two and a half hours long, I will be moving on, listening to other music during this journey. The Bach just happens to be a coincidence that it is playing now, as I will tell you of another road trip taken twenty-five years ago with some dear birding buddies who I've traveled with around the west and south-west searching for birds.

There is a maxim which says: "You can't choose your family, but you can choose your friends." This is a really good thing, since my family takes and took very little interest in any of my hobbies and passions. When I was younger, I did most of my hobbies and passions by myself. And, I was and am perfectly content with that outcome. This way, I don't have to deal with whining and arguing with an unwilling personality. I can do "alone" pretty well; maybe because I enjoy me and what I'm doing. That said, it is also wonderful when you meet up with people who share the same interests. And, my first few years here in California was graced with meeting some terrific people who love to bird. Three of them, I happened to meet going on some of the Los Angeles Audubon sponsored bird trips or some of the bird walks.



Trumpeter Swan Sept91 Jackson, WY

Cosmo Bloom, Peter Shen and Mary Seeger, Pete's wife, and I met some time in the late eighties, early nineties. And, we just "clicked". We did a lot of local birding together. And, the chemistry of this "quartet" was really good. This developed into taking longer trips together; out of town and out of state trips. Some trips ended up being overnights or for several days and sometimes more. Our relationship was easy. We were basically four people who got along rather well. There were no displays of ego-trips, or bullying and sense of entitlement. In a phrase—no drama! If there was drama, it usually came from outside the four of us. We had our confrontations with border patrol almost every time we would go looking for birds in southeast Arizona. These incidents would come up as we traveled in the dead of night from one location to another.



©Larry Sansone

Bohemian Waxwing 23Feb97 Ketchum, ID

Since these confrontations started happening in Arizona, this might be a good time to point out the ethnic mix of this motley group. Pete is an Asian-Hispanic-American, Mary is Caucasian, Cosmo is British-American, and I am African-American. Now, of course, when we were stopped, the car had to be inspected as to what were the contents in the cab and in the trunk. This was always the fun part, possibly because part of basic birding equipment employs binoculars, telescopes, and sometimes cameras with big lenses. To the authorities, the numerous reference books on birds never seemed to matter. The answer to the question: “Why do you have these things and what are they for?” never seemed to make sense to these officials. Identification always had to be checked, still with more questions. So, more than a decade later in Arizona, the “Papers please” law came as no surprise at all to any of us.

Cosmo, Pete and Mary would eventually become international birders. Lacking the funds, I pretty much bird as much as I can in the states. My three amigos have had some great stories to tell; especially Pete. Pete had a really harrowing experience about twenty years ago while birding in Colombia, South America. Trying to find a threatened endemic antpitta, Pete was abducted with several other birders, including a nun. They were in a pretty dicey situation, the abductors who were engaged in civil upheaval, believed them to be spies, given the typical birding paraphernalia, (see previous paragraph). This meant their lives were literally on the line. I think Pete was held for about six weeks. Thousands of miles away, we were on “pins and needles” hoping that he would not be harmed or worse, killed. He returned, thankfully, safe, though he had lost weight out of the ordeal, he seemed to be alright. I couldn’t detect any strong psychological or emotional damage after all of this — which is nothing short of a miracle. He was a lot wiser though.

I really miss them, because they were always ready for adventure; but, they all moved to the East Coast. Initially, they were in New York City, and Cosmo got married and moved to Florida, and Mary and Pete moved to New Jersey. They are now parents. And, Cosmo is even a grandparent. But, when we were all “footloose and fancy free” we did our birding adventures. One of them was during the Christmas season of 1992. That winter, some fantastic birds had come down from the Canadian north into Washington State. Reports circulated about a Northern Hawk Owl coming to a yard in Spokane, flocks of Bohemian Waxwings were in the area, and over on or near the coast were Trumpeter Swans, Marbled Murrelet, Northwestern Crows. But, the big draw for all of us was a Gyrfalcon which would be new for Mary, Pete and Cosmo. It would be my second bird, having seen my life bird in New York at Jones Beach, eight years earlier.

We got ourselves packed with the essentials and ready for the journey. This was going to be a lot of driving for all of us. That's the other good thing about doing these things with good friends and on a small budget: everybody does everything. The first jaunt was from Los Angeles to Spokane. That's a twelve hundred mile drive, making it a twenty hour trip. You do a rotation. Do your shift of driving and then you go to sleep. And, if you're awake, you get to entertain the driver and keep that person awake. So much of the trip up to Washington took place in darkness with winter's shortened daylight hours and you're traveling north where in the afternoon it gets darker earlier. You're also going to the Pacific Northwest where weather is always a factor. Wet weather, be it rain, ice or snow. So, vigilance will be key.

Pete was great. He had the directions and most of the bird information. The trip up the coast of California and part of Oregon, since it was dark seemed uneventful. Then, we headed north east to Spokane. I definitely do not remember any of it. And, suddenly, at daybreak, we arrive in Spokane at the yard where the owl was reported. And, we look into the yard, and at the top of a tall pine tree, directly at twelve o'clock is the Northern Hawk Owl. Tick! That was easy. The first bird of the day was our target bird. Wow! We just sat in the car and watched it for I don't know how long, exhausted, dazed and thrilled. The owl didn't seem at all disturbed by our presence. I think if an artist had an easel set up with a canvas and oil paints, that artist could have made a wonderful painting, the owl was so cooperative. Every defining feature was clearly on display: the long tail, the facial discs defined by light colored feathers around the eyes and bill, with a contrasting black border around the discs. Spots on the head could be seen, and the body underneath from the chest down was barred. White spots are on the wings and back. That was our first

Christmas gift. And, really, it was a gift. After twenty hours of travel, we were rewarded and didn't have to work to try to find this gem of the Canadian north.

With the day barely started, albeit with a bang, we start moving west, exploring the outskirts of Spokane. All of us are in full curiosity, bird finding mission mode; in and out of the car. A stone's throw west of Spokane in a little town called Airway Heights, in the airway, flew a flock of a dozen and a half Bohemian Waxwings. Although I could see their markings, a grayer bird, as well as the size difference to their smaller cousins, Cedar, which is really only an inch, I would like to get a better look at this species. I was content with taking it as a life bird, but, I would like to see the bird in a tree and possibly feeding, instead of flying away. And, a little further west in a farm town called Reardon, traveling on some back roads, surrounded by fields of snow; we came across a group of Gray Partridges, minus the pear tree, foraging through the fields.



©Larry Sansone

Northern Hawk-Owl 20Aug89 Lake Louise, AK

We were looking for Snowy Owls, which had been reported. We looked all over and came up empty. I guess I was lucky, because just before I left New York City in January of 1987, in the metropolitan area in and around NYC, eighteen Snowy Owls were being seen. I got my life bird that winter of 1986-1987. That number seemed quite large, at the time, only to have that record crushed more than two and a half decades later when the east coast was invaded, which is an understatement, by more than two thousand Snowy Owls. They were seen everywhere, even in the big cities, and were found as far south as Florida. However, we were doing pretty well, and the day was still quite young.

We started heading west to the coast, on winding roads, surrounded by mountains, keeping up the driving rotations. At some point during this journey, I fell asleep in the back seat. And, I don't know how long I was out, but, I was jarred awake as I felt the car completely leave the ground. We had "lift off". We were airborne. We had turned into a cartoon! We had flown over the opposing lane and ended up in a snow bank on the other side of the road. This was a good thing, because not even ten yards beyond snow that stopped the car was a ravine with a big drop into a river at the bottom. The launching culprit: black ice! Pete was driving. As an aside, I had asked my three friends permission to write about this adventure. They all gave the green light. And, Pete added: I know you can't wait to tell about flying off the road into that snow bank.

What happened after falls under the variety of ways one handles something that could have been quite tragic, but fortunately not so. I was traveling with my Bible in my bag. And, I took it out and started reading. A car drove up going in the opposite direction. It was a young couple going to the next town and wanted to know if we needed help. Pete asks Mary to go into town with them and hopefully

get a hold of triple A. Now, I didn't quite know how to react to that request and years later when I asked my friends for permission, I spoke to Pete and Mary. And Mary and I had a really good laugh about this. She was a bit confused as to why she was asked. I laughed and told her I was stunned by the request as well. We were in one of the most rural areas in America. She's pretty vulnerable as the only woman of our bunch. But, I was afraid for all of us. I told her over the phone that strangely, in a way, she was the only choice, given Pete's and my ethnicity. And, then adding to that Cosmo's very British accent. I saw the film "Deliverance"—this is something that no matter what, had the potential of not ending well.

So, I'm back reading my Bible, praying that this Christmas Eve day, won't be our last. We are trying to get the car out of being locked in this heap of snow. Mary is now gone for a good while. And, we of course worry when two giant monster trucks show up with Mary in tow. There were four burly, bearded, giant lumberjack types that pop out of the trucks and they are in great spirits. I couldn't tell what that meant, at first. Mary didn't seem the worse for wear. So, we knew she was alright; literally thank God! When Mary had gone into town, entered a bar and tried to get a listing for Triple A and a pay phone (remember those?) And the guys told her that that request was impossible on Christmas Eve. So, they offered to come out and help us. These guys were joking about their friends who on black ice in this very spot kissed the side of the mountain. The big rock face that when we were flying in the air and veered left, how lucky we were that we didn't go straight into this ominous vehicle destroyer. They threw a couple of chains around the rear axle of our car, pulled us out with one of their massive trucks, in a matter of seconds. And, we were free. I think we tried paying them something for their troubles. They instead wished us a "Merry Christmas" and drove off laughing and just as jolly as when they arrived. With

that, I put my cynicism to rest. The true meaning of Christmas was revealed in their act of kindness. There are some really nice and kind people around. And, we were blessed by them. And, even with this mishap, which ended up being not as serious as it could have been, we still had daylight left.

Now, there is a sequence of events about which I have no idea of the order in which they occurred. The one thing I know is as we reached close to the coast on this Christmas Eve the idea pops in one of our heads to go into Canada; into Vancouver and try and find the Skylark on Vancouver Island. It is now very dark and the roads are empty as we head to the US/Canadian border. Around midnight we reach the border. We check in at the Canadian border patrol. They want to see our identification, and we comply, handing over our drivers' licenses. And, now this is where the drama begins. We all check out, except Cosmo, who has a DUI on his license. We are refused entry to our "friendly neighbor" to the north. So, we make a U turn and now have to check in with the American border authorities.

This is where the fun begins. There is no one on this road but us. No one for hours. And, the border authorities have nothing to do. Do you think they would let us go through, without a hitch? Think again. Now, of course, they have to check our ID's and they single out poor Cosmo for interrogation. And this inquisition gets very personal. Too personal. Finding out that he is British-American, they want to find out which of his parents were from which country. He politely told them of his American mother and his British father. This is taking quite a while and in the meantime the other officers are going through our bags and birding equipment in the trunk of the car which, of course, had to be explained several times. But, the "onion", the coup de grace, the insult comes with a question to Cosmo about his conception. Were his parents married

when he was conceived? I had sat patiently during all of this; but, upon hearing that absolutely outrageous question, my New York roots took over and said to the officer: "How rude!" And, it ended.

We were released. This was an example of bullying tactics when on Christmas Eve around midnight; the border patrol has nothing to do. It could have been a good night for them to catch up on some light reading, or play a game of poker. But, no. Making us as uncomfortable as possible was a better game for them to play. This was Christmas 1992. I guess they don't see much action up at that border crossing and so they had their jollies with us. This is before any of the terrorist craziness started overtaking our American way of life. The first World Trade Center bombing didn't take place until a year later. We laugh about it now; but, as it was happening, it was not the least bit funny.

This "O dark thirty" Christmas morning, we head south to Seattle and its environs. We had more birds to look for. There was still the rest of the wish list on our agenda: Marbled Murrelet, Trumpeter Swan, Gyrfalcon, and Northwestern Crow. Deciding that it was probably wiser to get the birds in the furthest direction away from us first, we head toward Olympic National Park. And, stopping at a convenience store in Port Angeles, Washington, we see around us, perched on telephone wires, are Northwestern Crows. This viewing gets a skeptical "what"? The difference is size: an inch and a half smaller. The range: the northwestern coast from Washington up through the southern coast of Alaska. And, the voice apparently is hoarser, lower; but, I don't remember hearing any of them. And, in this range, the American Crow is not where the Northwestern Crow is. Their ranges don't overlap. Good to know? They look identical. Seriously. Identical.

We continue west to Crescent Bay, Tongue Point, along the Straight of Juan de Fuca to find a tiny alcid, the Marbled Murrelet. And, we see this sea bird a number of times during the day. But, the best look we got was in a boat marina swimming right under our noses. It was all by itself swimming and feeding. The bird seemed not at all disturbed by our close presence. It is dressed in its winter plumage; which is basic black and white. The back of this bird is very subtly scalloped or seeming like scales. It has a white collar. And, on the back on the scapulars a sort of reverse parenthesis in white. I would love to see this bird in breeding plumage, where the marbled aspect in the feathering gives this bird its name. And, I would love to see this sea bird nesting in a hole in a tree in the middle of a forest. This is one of the great solved biological and ecological mysteries. Which is one of the reasons why conserving and preserving habitat is so critical not only to creatures' lives, but, also to our own. We need to learn this lesson and fast. Our forests are important whether they be old growth, temperate coastal rain forests, like this one, or a forest in the interior of the country. We can't destroy them. We can't cut them down. We need them for all sorts of reasons; not only



Marbled Murrelet 01Dec14 San Diego Co., CA



Gryfalcon 23Feb97 Gannett, ID

close enough to test that notion. And, I certainly wouldn't want to do that.

In this same field, was Mary's, Pete's, and Cosmo's life Gyr Falcon—standing on the ground. I think it may have flown around a little, not exactly intimidating the swans; but, the other birds in the field were wary. This was my second Gyr, also my first adult Gyr. It was a grey race bird. And, the color of the feathers were of a soft hue of light blue/grey on this fierce predator. It was a beautiful specimen. This was a beautiful scene: the swans, the falcon and the light mist. And, during our time birding Washington, this was the first bit of precipitation we had.

We drove away from that beauty and went back down to Seattle, where it was clear and not that cold. What was a bit exciting, at least for me, while walking along the marina, there were so many Bald Eagles, flying, sitting in trees, sitting on railings. They were of all ages. Some of them were calling, making that high pitched cackle, or

housing the flora and fauna. They also help to soak up some of the toxins, the carbons that are causing our planet to heat up at such a rapid pace. And, I know I'm being a bit simplistic, but, we need to somehow figure out how to stop this lust of big corporations making profits much more important than the lives and well-being of every living thing which graces our planet. How about helping living things to live and prosper? How about we all try to make everything that lives better without the powers that be thinking about how many gazillion dollars they can make?

There is a Biblical directive to Adam, man: paraphrasing it, we have been directed to "tend the garden", be stewards of the treasures of this planet. And our treasure is rapidly slipping away. What will our children and grandchildren inherit? I have digressed; but, I will have more to say about this during our return trip back to LA.

We took a cursory tour of Olympic National Park. I wish we had more time. This is a wonderful place that from our look, on the surface, one could find it to be a cross between a fairy tale and a real gothic kind of forest. It is amazingly beautiful. One thing that slipped my memory, and in correspondence with my friends, Cosmo reminded me that we were hearing a lot of Winter Wrens singing in this forest and this is where he got his life Winter (now Pacific) Wren. There is no question that if you need to find that species, and if you're in the area, this forest is the place to look.

We had to go back east toward Seattle and places north of that city. We had two target bird species to try and get. It is now the day after Christmas and heading north of Seattle, we come to the town of Burlington. There, we found agricultural fields and our first little bit of precipitation. It was only a light mist. Out in the fields were our two target birds: Trumpeter Swans were feeding and flying around. My goodness, this is a behemoth bird. It is also quite majestic. As I watched these birds, I wondered if they had a similar temperament as Mute Swans. I know that Mute Swans can be a pretty feisty bird when approached. We weren't

whistle, or I don't know what, whimper? I have to confess, whenever I hear the bird that is our national symbol call, I am amused beyond belief. This ferocious looking bird sounding almost fragile or even desperate. Almost every time you see a Bald Eagle in a movie or a commercial, the sound department decides to use the voicing of a Red-tailed Hawk. Because Red-tails actually sound ferocious. At any rate, seeing so many in a city is something really special.

During dinner, there was a discussion about another bird in the area which had a few of us a little more than curious – a Yellow-billed Loon. I don't know why or remember why we decided not to pursue this bird. But, we decided not to check it out. After feasting in Seattle and after getting a well-deserved good night's sleep, the next day we headed back home to LA. We had another possible check point for another life bird in Oregon: an Emperor Goose. But, after a good lengthy search, we turned up nothing. We were also faced with the first bit of big rains that the northwest is famous for driving home. For most of our trip in Washington, we had excellent weather except for a morning of a little mist while watching the falcon and the swans. This was a good rain and fortunately it wasn't really cold, so, there was no fear of slipping and sliding on any ice.

Since it was daylight, we got to see the "scenery" of the northwest. Those of you who have travelled these roads may know what I'm about to say. I'm talking about the "Potemkin" stands of trees close to the freeway. There is created a notion that the area is not a product of extensive clear cut logging. What they do is have several rows of trees near the road, so as


you travel, you fail to see that behind this faux forest are acres upon thousands of acres where there are extensive examples of the practice of clear cut logging. I personally was horrified.

So, now back to the point which I began to make several paragraphs earlier. And, admittedly I haven't been up that route, except by plane, in twenty-five years. And, even then, I was there for work and in the city of Portland. So, I have no idea if new saplings were planted and the native forests are bouncing back. My hunch says "no" to that idea. Twenty-five years ago was before Al Gore's "Inconvenient Truth" which warned of the dangers of a world heating up. We are now faced with a president and law makers who boldly deny solid science. These treasures of this planet are disappearing right before our very eyes. Species are losing numbers faster than night turns into day. We now have an administration that is trying its best to do away with every regulation that has been put in place to keep us from being poisoned by the water we drink, and or asphyxiated by the air we breathe. If that is a possibility for us, what about the creatures that roam this planet, swim in the oceans, or fly in the air? To what degree does corporate profit serve, if some chemical plague hits the billions of humans and we can no longer exist in a healthy way? Where is happiness then? Where is a sense of contentment? What can those extra profits do for you, if our lives are so radically altered as to not be able to function any longer?

As I humbly preach to the choir, we are so behind in this struggle, I wonder if we will ever get a grip on it. Each new year is hotter than the last one which preceded it. In

retrospect a hint of what we would have in store for us was evident on our ride home from a wonderful Christmas road trip finding some beautiful birds in a very beautiful place. Seeing forests annihilated. Thinking about that twenty-five years later, the severity of that destruction, in terms of what that means now is really quite frightening. My memories of that wonderful trip, even with the Christmas Eve border patrol hassle, go from the discovery of such gorgeous things that raise the human spirit, to something of an apocalyptic nightmare. We, who want to do things to save this planet from the lusts of corporations and the greed of fools, have a lot of work to do. The task may seem daunting, but, we must be persistent and continue to persevere. Generations following us have to be able to see, enjoy and be refreshed by the treasures that are here. It must be passed on. It behooves us to follow that Biblical mandate to "tend the garden". If we are conscientious, if we care about things other than ourselves, later generations following would be able to enjoy these gifts. And, those gifts will continue to elevate the human spirit. Who would not want that?

I must give a shout out to my dear friends Pete Shen, Mary Seeger and Cosmo Bloom whose input and help have been invaluable in the writing of this article. Thanks for your help and most of all for your friendship.

And, a big thank you to Larry Sansone, whose photos are so wonderful and great, they really enhance this article. And, I am grateful for his generosity." Larry may be reached at: catbird2@pacbell.net. Louis can be reached at: pazzoluigi@yahoo.com. 

YOUNG BIRDERS

The Red-crowned Parrot

By Dessi Sieburth

If you step outside at sunset in the San Gabriel Valley, you have a good chance of seeing and hearing Red-crowned Parrots, the most common Parrots in Los Angeles County. The Red-crowned Parrot is an introduced species from northeastern Mexico. We do not know exactly how the species came to Los Angeles. A common theory is that some parrots escaped from a pet store, but it is most likely that many parrots were brought into Los Angeles by legal and illegal pet trade. Red-crowned Parrots can be identified by their deep red crown, blue nape, and distinct red wing patches in flight. They are distinguished from other similar parrots like the Lilac-crowned Parrot by their large red crown patch and larger size. One of the reasons they have thrived in Los Angeles is that their primary food includes fruits, nuts and seeds, and they can feast on the bounty of non-native fruit trees planted here. They nest in cavities, often in dead palm trees, made by woodpeckers, and lay two to five eggs a year.

In Los Angeles, the Red-crowned Parrot is common throughout the San Gabriel Valley. For example, in Pasadena, they can be often found roosting in the hundreds in the evenings. They can also be found west to San Fernando and Zuma Canyon, and east to San Dimas. The first known sighting of a Red-crowned Parrot in Los Angeles was in 1963, and they were still considered rare into



Two Red-crowned Parrots fly to roost at sunset. Photo taken in Pasadena, Los Angeles County

the 1970s. There is evidence of breeding in Temple City, as well as probable evidence of breeding in Zuma Canyon. There is also a large population in San Diego. In total, the estimated population of Red-crowned Parrots in California is over 3000. Elsewhere in the United States, small numbers can be found near Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach, Florida (less than 300) and near Brownsville and Harlingen, southern Texas (nearly 1000). The Red-crowned Parrots in California and Florida certainly represent introduced birds. However, the distance between the parrot's range in Texas and the parrot's native range in Mexico is just about 300 km, so it is possible that the Texas birds could be wild. More research is needed to answer this question.

Although the Red-crowned Parrots seem to be thriving in our urban environment, they are listed as endangered in Northeast Mexico. There, their range extends from Tamaulipas to San Luis Potosi. The estimated population is between 3000 and 6500 birds, down from over 100,000 birds in the 1950s. The population density decreased from 25 birds per square kilometer in the 1970's to 5.7 birds per square kilometer in 1994. Red-crowned Parrot's decline in Mexico has been so steep that they went from being listed as threatened in 1988 to endangered in 1994.

One of the largest threats to the Red-crowned Parrot in Mexico is the pet trade. Nestlings are taken out of their nests and smuggled across the border to places like San Diego, California, and El Paso, Texas. People often smuggle them across the border in vehicles, or they swim across the Rio Grande River and hide the parrots inside tire tubes. Only one in five parrots survive the journey, as they are hidden in small spaces for long periods of time. Therefore, smugglers will often take extra parrots to ensure that they have enough to sell. In 1982, Mexico passed a law that made the smuggling of wild animals illegal. However, there is little enforcement of the law. When smugglers are caught, the parrots are often placed in zoos and rehabilitation centers. Many of them cannot be released back into the wild due to injury or because they have not learned how to survive on their own.

Another major threat to the Red-crowned Parrot in Mexico is habitat loss. The Red-crowned Parrot's primary habitats include tropical deciduous forests, gallery forests,

floodplain forests, and semi-open areas. Deforestation and agriculture, as well as housing development, have had a severe impact on the Parrots. The destruction of habitat causes a lack of nesting, roosting, and feeding sites. Because new roads have been created for logging, smugglers have more access to parrot nests.

There have been several conservation efforts to help the Red-crowned Parrots in their native range. For example, in 2016, Congress passed the Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt (END) Wildlife Trafficking Act. This Act seeks to end illegal smuggling of wildlife across international borders. However, the Act does not apply to borders within states. States such as New Mexico and Arizona are beginning to impose criminal punishments for people caught smuggling wildlife. The Mexican Government has made efforts to protect Red-crowned Parrot habitat, but the protection is not sufficient and habitat loss continues. The best way to help these parrots is to educate people about the illegal wildlife smuggling and to not buy parrots



The Red-crowned Parrot is distinctive with its red and blue crown. Photo taken in Montrose, Los Angeles County



A pair of Red-crowned Parrots in a fruit tree. Photo taken in Montrose, Los Angeles County




The primary food source for Red-crowned Parrots is fruits and nuts. Photo taken in Montrose, Los Angeles County

without proper documentation from pet shops. Young birds bred in the US might still be the offspring of parrots that were smuggled. If there is no demand for parrots that come from the illegal pet trade, the illegal smuggling will stop and the parrot population can increase. Customers can make the biggest difference. Instead of buying a parrot, you can adopt one from a bird rescue organization. Parrots are beautiful and intelligent, but they are wild animals.

Can Los Angeles support such a large population of Red-crowned Parrots? Not many studies have been done on how the Red-crowned Parrot affects native species. Some people are concerned that introduced parrots might compete with native birds for cavities to nest in. Our parrots in Los Angeles do not have the protection that our native birds have. However, our Red-crowned Parrots need to be protected because they may help to repopulate their native range if the wild population in Mexico becomes extinct.

To listen to a Red-crowned Parrot recording, go to:

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S35962761>

Photos were taken by Dessi Sieburth (<http://protectingourbirds.my-free.website/>), except last photo was taken by Beatrix Schwarz. Population numbers were from “National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America”, “BirdLife International” and the “Associated Press Article: Parrot species in US cities may rival that in native Mexico”, by Julie Watson. 

BIRDS OF THE SEASON

April 2017

by Jon Fisher



It may seem counterintuitive that Los Angeles County, the most populous in the United States, remains one of the best for birding. Including a handful of introduced species, the county's bird list now stands at 523 species. As regular readers of this column will already know, that number inexorably ticks upwards. Stretching optimism a bit, one of the benefits of overpopulation is that many avid birders reside in the county. And they have been adding new species at a steady pace.

A major reason for this is Los Angeles County's varied topography, which also includes coastline, offshore waters and islands, creating a diversity of habitat and birds matched by few places in North America. As examples, consider the thirty-nine species of shorebirds, fifteen woodpeckers, and forty-two wood-warblers that have been recorded. Members of seventy different bird families have occurred here.

Spring invariably showcases this avifaunal variety, with winter birds lingering, summer visitors arriving, resident birds busy with breeding activities and migrants passing through on their way north.

For practical purposes our rainy season ended with February. March was dry, barely making a dent in the two and a half inches of

precipitation normal for the month. Still, winter was good to the county and the state as a whole.

Spring was evident everywhere, but it was especially obvious on the deserts. Brown and gray for so much of the year, the Antelope Valley was carpeted with greenery and wildflowers. While it was aesthetically pleasing it was also great for rodents, lagomorphs, insects, arthropods and for everything that preys on them.

As usual, a number of wintering vagrants stayed well into April, allowing plenty of opportunity for birders wanting to see them. Following the always early swallows, Neotropical migrants began appearing by mid-March, with numbers and variety slowly but steadily increasing.

Noteworthy waterfowl included a **Tundra Swan** at Pierce College in Woodland Hills from February 19–March 22, a "**Eurasian**" **Green-winged Teal** continuing on the LA River in Glendale through February 20 and up to four **White-winged Scoters** and as many as three **Black Scoters** off Dockweiler State Beach in El Segundo between February 24–April 5 (Richard Barth).

Though some years are exceptions, **Calliope Hummingbirds** are generally quite scarce as

migrants in immediate coastal areas. Thus one at Malaga Dunes on the Palos Verdes Peninsula on April 5 was worth noting (Philip Carnehl).

Rare was a **Sandhill Crane** observed flying over the Antelope Valley on March 12 (Joseph Dunn).

Continuing to dominate as the best place in the county for rare gulls, the Rio Hondo spreading basins in Pico Rivera produced an apparent **Iceland Gull** on February 18 (Jon Dunn). Based on plumage differences, a presumed second individual was present there from March 2–4 (Jon Feenstra). These would constitute the first two records of this species in the county, but muddying the waters is the fact that Iceland and Thayer's Gulls are increasingly viewed as geographic forms of a single species.

At least two presumably continuing **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were also present intermittently at the basins from February 18–20 and again on March 18.

As stationary as gulls appear when resting, they do move around... a lot. The **Yellow-footed Gull** continued at the Rio Hondo basins through February 22, but it was also seen on the lower LA River near Commerce from March 9–12 (John Garrett). The **Slaty-**

backed Gull previously at the Rio Hondo spreading basins was found at Junipero Beach in Long Beach on February 19. Because they are conspicuous, it's often vagrants that reveal the degree of bird movements.

It should be noted that records of both the Iceland Gulls and the Slaty-backed Gull are still going through the CBRC review process and have thus not yet been accepted.

A **Brown Booby** in San Pedro from April 7–10 may have been the same rehabbed individual released there in mid-January (Scott & Linda Terrill).

The county's second **Neotropic Cormorant** was at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on April 2 but was not seen again (Michael San Miguel Jr.). Bonelli also hosted the first which was present from February through April of last year. Additional records are to be anticipated.

A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at Bixby Marshland in Carson on March 4 was the only one reported during the period (Philip Carnehl). Likewise Sycamore Canyon in Whittier produced the only **Northern "Yellow-shafted" Flicker** during the period on March 5 (Larry Schmahl).

Rare in the county was a "**Black**" **Merlin** spotted at Echo Park on February 23 (Dan Cooper). At the other end of the color spectrum for this species was a pale "**Prairie**" **Merlin** at the Piute Ponds on March 23 (Devon DeRaad, James Maley, Whitney Tsai).

A **Least Flycatcher** found on March 17 behind the Whittier Narrows Dam in South El Monte continued there through April 10 (John Garrett). This bird almost certainly spent the winter at this location, undetected until recently.

Hammond's Flycatchers included one continuing at Valley Plaza Park in North Hollywood through February 21 and one at the South Coast Botanic Garden in Rolling Hills Estates from March 12–26 that probably wintered locally. Other Empidonax were a **Gray Flycatcher** at Valhalla Memorial Park in North Hollywood on February 21 (Rebecca Marschall) and a **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** continuing at the William Andrews Clark Library just west of downtown Los Angeles through February 27.

Wintering **Eastern Phoebes** continued at Madrona Marsh in Torrance through March 15 and at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas through March 12.

A handful of **Vermilion Flycatchers** were scattered over the coastal slope as records of this species there increase.

The wintering **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** at Creek Park in La Mirada was reported through March 22 while another was at John Anson Ford Park in Bell Gardens from March 10–15 (John Garrett). Nearly as rare in winter were **Ash-throated Flycatchers** at Madrona Marsh in Torrance through February 26 and at the South Coast Botanic Garden in Rolling Hills Estates on February 26 (Alejandra Cedillo).

Following a three month absence of sightings, the **Thick-billed Kingbird** wintering at Horsethief Canyon Park in San Dimas was reported again from February 19–March 6.

Tropical Kingbirds continued at the Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area in Willowbrook through February 26 and at El Dorado Park in Long Beach through March 20. A new bird discovered at Lake Balboa on March 30 almost certainly wintered locally (Mike Stensvold).

Very rare was a **Black-tailed Gnatcatcher** on Edwards AFB on March 23 (Jon Feenstra). A small population exists in Kern County just southwest of Mojave and this species is common on the eastern deserts. Though these are relatively close to us, there is but one previous county record; a bird west of Lancaster in 1938.

In addition to several continuing birds, **Black-and-white Warblers** were found at La Mirada Park on February 20 (Jonathan Rowley) and along the LA River adjacent to Elysian Park on April 7 (Kimball Garrett).

A **Nashville Warbler** at American Gold Star Manor in Long Beach on March 15 probably wintered in the area (Philip Carnehl).

Palm Warblers were at the LA National Cemetery on February 26 (Richard Barth) and continuing at Entradero Park in Torrance through March 7. The most recent report was of one at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on April 9 (Darren Dowell).

The **Pine Warbler** wintering at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale continued through April 2 and the **Yellow-throated Warbler** at the Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area in Willowbrook continued through March 12.

A **Painted Redstart** in Rolling Hills Estates on the Palos Verdes Peninsula continued through February 21.

Wintering **Green-tailed Towhees** were at the South Coast Botanic Gardens in Rolling Hills Estates through March 18 and at the West SGR Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood through March 4.

A **Clay-colored Sparrow** continued in Exposition Park in Los Angeles through March 9 and one was at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale from March 26–April 8 (David Bell, Luke Tiller).

San Clemente Island produced a **Black-throated Sparrow** on March 24 (Alison Nevins).

Other sparrows of interest included a **“Red” Fox Sparrow** continuing at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena through March 27 and a **Swamp Sparrow** along the Playa Vista Riparian Corridor observed through February 28.

Quite rare in the county was a **Harris’s Sparrow** found along Thompson Creek trail in Claremont and present from February 22–April 8 (John & Linda Baker).

Linden H. Chandler Preserve in Rolling Hills Estates held a **Dark-eyed “Pink-sided” Junco** on February 14 (Philip Carnehl) and other new birds turned up at Loyola Marymount University on March 25 (Russell Stone) and at Grant Park in Pasadena on March 30 (Naresh Satyan). Apollo Park near Lancaster hosted a continuing bird through March 7.

Summer Tanagers included birds in Pasadena from February 15–26 (John Garrett), in La Canada on February 18 (Kyle Adams) and at Wardlow Park in Long Beach on April 8 (Jeff Moore).

A **Black-headed Grosbeak** in Trancas Canyon on February 17 was certainly a wintering bird (Jo Ruggles).

Orioles included an **Orchard Oriole** continuing at the LA County Arboretum in Arcadia through February 27, and **Baltimore Orioles** at La Mirada Park in La Mirada on March 7 (Jonathan Rowley) and continuing at Elysian Park through April 5. Coastal slope **Scott’s Orioles** were at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas from February 20–21 (K.D.) and near West Los Angeles on March 26 (Amanda Keating).

As we approach the end of April and there’s still much to come. This is the peak time for migrant passerines. In May, our later migrants such as Willow Flycatchers and Swainson’s Thrushes will be passing through in numbers. Vagrants are possible throughout the migration period, but the odds for wayward birds typically increase in late May.

Rejuvenated by rain, the San Gabriel Mountains should be good in spring and early summer from their many foothill canyons to higher elevations. These mountains are loaded with birding potential but tend to suffer disproportionately during droughts compared to other parts of the county.

The deserts too should support above average numbers of breeding birds and any green or wet patches will attract migrants. This is a good year to see if migrants will be less concentrated than they were during drought years, since food and water will be more widely available.

I would be remiss not to mention the excellent and recently released Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas. This book contains so much useful information that a copy should be on the shelf of every birder who covers the county. One might be misled by the title, but this volume goes far, far beyond a compendium of maps.

Additionally, the atlas serves as a timely reminder that we should always be watching for breeding behavior and document it when submitting our field lists in eBird. Birders are doubly fortunate to not only do what they most enjoy, but to be able to contribute to the scientific record. As threats to birds inevitably continue to increase, documenting our observations is ever more important. 🐦

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

May 6 & June 3

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

May 7 & June 4

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)

May 20 & June 18

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. It is spring and we are likely to see the resident birds such as Nutall’s Woodpecker, Black and Say’s Phoebe, Cassin Kingbirds, California and Spotted Towhee, Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper’s Hawk engaging in nesting activities. Besides looking for spring migrants such as vireos, warblers and flycatchers we will search for summer visitors that nest in the park such as Hooded and Bullocks Orioles, Barn Swallow, Western Kingbird and Western Bluebird.

Directions: The park entrance is off of La Cienega Blvd. between Rodeo Rd.

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.

and Stocker St. After passing the entrance kiosk (\$6.00 parking fee) turn left (leading to the “Olympic Forest”) and park in the first available spaces. | **Binoculars provided.**

Upper Franklin Canyon Sooky Goldman Nature Center

2nd Sunday of the month

May 14 & June 11

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. It is spring and we are likely to see the resident Wood Ducks and as well chaparral bird species such as California Quail, Common Raven, Red-shouldered Hawk, Spotted and California Towhees and California Thrasher engaging in nesting activities. We will look for migrants such as flycatchers, vireos, warblers and orioles some of which will be staying in Franklin Canyon to nest.

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)

May 21 & June 18

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, May 6

Tejon Ranch

SUGGESTED \$20 DONATION, LIMITED SIGN-UP REQUIRED

Leader: *Louis Tucker*. Visits to the Ranch are by special arrangement with escort only. This is peak time for spring bird migration. This will be a great time to see various passerine species: warblers, flycatchers, bluebirds, and other songbirds. 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. There is also a chance of catching sight of reintroduced Pronghorn Antelope on the ranch. 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 am to be at the 300 St. West Gate at 8 am. At the Tejon gate, we will then transfer to the Ranch's vehicles. New for this trip, a 20 dollar donation is suggested. Bring lunch, as we will be out most of the day. Rain cancels, but only at Denny's by leader. Limit: 12 participants. Confirmed sign-ups for January date, who inquire before May 1, shall receive priority. Please register with LA Audubon by phone (323) 876-0202, and provide phone number, & e-mail. FRS radios and scopes useful. **FULLY BOOKED**

Friday, May 12

Small Owls of the San Gabriels #2 NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP

Leaders *Mary and Nick Freeman*. We will be looking for Flammulated, Saw-whet, Northern Pygmy and Western Screech-Owls. Sign up, and meet at 5:00 p.m. on the frontage road for Angeles Forest Hwy just north of the 210 Fwy in La Canada. Turn N on ACH, take the second right (Milmada Dr.), and a quick left (Flanders Rd.). Meet along the first 50-yard stretch, fed and gassed up, and we will carpool from here. Plan to stay out until 11 or 12 p.m. 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. **FULLY BOOKED**

Friday & Saturday, May 19 & 20 Mojave Area with Galileo Hills & Butterbret Springs SIGN-UP REQUIRED, 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. 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.

SIGN-UP: Mandatory sign-up with LAAS. Call (323) 876-0202 or email membership@laaudubon.org to sign-up. Provide your cell phone # & e-mail address. 12 max.

Sunday, June 4

Santa Anita Canyon

NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

Leader: *Tom Miko*. Take the 210 Fwy toward Arcadia, and take Santa Anita Avenue N to the parking lot at the very end of the road. Meet at the Gabrielino Trail trailhead at the bottom of the lot. 4 mile pleasant to moderately strenuous walk through chaparral and oak canyons. Good selection of breeding

birds including warblers, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western Tanager, and Band-tailed Pigeon. Slim possibility of Dipper. Tom is easily one of our most enthusiastic birders, and hails from nearby Claremont. Pack in a lunch and plenty of water. Meeting time 7:00 a.m. A Forest Service Adventure Pass is necessary for the parking lot.

Friday, June 9

Small Owls of the San Gabriels #3

NO FEE, LIMITED SIGN-UP

Leaders *Mary and Nick Freeman*. We will be looking for Flammulated, Saw-whet, Northern Pygmy and Western Screech-Owls. Sign up, and meet at 5:30 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. Plan to stay out until 11 or 12 p.m. 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. FULLY BOOKED

Saturday, June 17

San Gabriel Mountains / Mt. Wilson Observatory **TOUR FEE: \$10/head (\$8 over 62) payable at Mt. Wilson, SIGN-UP MAX: 16**

Leader: *Mary Freeman*. Meet at 7:00 a.m. on the frontage road for Angeles Forest Hwy just north of the 210 Fwy in La Canada. We will bird the morning away up in the conifers, buy

lunch at Newcomb's Ranch (the Biker Bar) and end up at Mount Wilson Observatory after noon, to take the guided 2-hour tour around the grounds and facility, including the 100-inch telescope. The one-mile walking tour is unsuitable for individuals with respiratory and heart problems or with limited mobility. Please visit the observatory website at www.mtwilson.edu for more exciting and cautionary details before the trip. A Forest Service Adventure Pass is required. SIGN-UP: To reserve with LAAS, call (323) 876-0202 or e-mail membership@laaudubon.org by June 15 with name, cell phone number, and e-mail address and await confirmation. No sign-ups without tour, please. Meeting details coming soon.

Saturday thru Monday, July 1-3

Montane Birds and Owls of Dinkey Creek and Yosemite Valley

FLAT FEE \$75 (reduced), LIMITED SIGN-UP of 12 MAX., 7 MIN.

Leader: *Kevin Enns-Rempel*, past president and trip chair for Fresno Audubon, will have some help from the Freemans. Includes evenings of owling on July 1 & 2. Pencil in June 30 and July 3 as travel days. Great warblers, grosbeaks, woodpeckers, flycatchers, mountain wildflowers, and hopefully Sooty Grouse and owls! Great scenery and (hopefully) bird photo ops. We will spend a day and evening around Shaver Lake / Dinkey Creek; one day along Glacier Point Road in Yosemite NP, and nearby areas; and one day heading over Tioga Pass

to the Owens Valley (for those interested, IF the Pass is open). The Freemans will escort those still with them down the Owens Valley to L.A. on July 4. Accommodations in Clovis on June 30 and July 1, Oakhurst on July 2, and Lee Vining or June Lake on July 3, are not covered, are the responsibility of participants, and may be difficult to arrange on this holiday weekend! Park admission is not covered. We will be staying up late to very late, waking up early to very early (to avoid the worst of the traffic), and seeing many to very many birds, so 2 drivers in each vehicle please! This very scenic trip is NOT a "Yosemite sightseeing trip", and we will NOT be able to visit the Yosemite Valley, which will be a parking lot! We will be packing some meals with us. Provide Mary (mnfreeman@earthlink.net) with your lodging info ASAP, so we know you are settled. NOTE: This price was reduced from the "Tickler" price due to revised expense estimates. 80% refunds after May 26, no refund after June 16. O.K. to head back to L.A. early, or turn in early, but same flat fee applies

SIGN-UP INSTRUCTIONS

Call LAAS telephone (323) 876-0202 or e-mail (membership@laaudubon.org) to check availability. Mail \$75 per person registration fee to: Los Angeles Audubon, PO Box 411301, Los Angeles CA 90041-8301 and wait for confirmation email. The first 12 people whose registration fees are received will be confirmed.

Saturday, July 15

Big Bear Lake Vicinity Field Trip NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

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

Sunday, July 30

Lower LA River Shorebird Migration NO FEE, NO SIGN-UP

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

Sunday, August 13

Salton Sea \$15 FEE, SIGN-UP 8 CARS LIMIT

Leaders: *Nick and Mary Freeman*. Anticipate 95-105°F, and bring plenty of water. We will see Yellow-footed (only place in the U.S.) and Laughing gulls, Black Tern, Abert's Towhee, and Gila Woodpecker. We may also see Wood Stork, Lesser Nighthawk, and Stilt Sandpiper. Lots of driving, so come with a friend, as singles will be bumped if we fill up the trip. Brawley Inn (760) 344-1199 offers a better continental breakfast, \$80, and there is a decent restaurant next door. America's Best Value Inn in Westmorland (760) 351-7100 is \$70. Ask for AAA discount. Continental breakfast. Meet at Cattle Call Park at 5:30 a.m., and bird until about 3 p.m. Bring lunch, FRS radios, scope, sunblock, minimum 1 gallon of water each, and a big hat. Other lodging suggestions and information in e-mailer.

RESERVE with LAAS by e-mail to: membership@laaudubon.org; and mail \$15 to Los Angeles Audubon, PO Box 411301, Los Angeles CA 90041-8301. Provide your cell phone # and your address.

WFO Conference August 16–20 in Pueblo, Colorado. Check www.westernfieldornithologists.org for details.

Monthly Program Presentations

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2017

BIRDING AND DRAWING AS PATHWAYS TO OBSERVATION

PRESENTER: STACEY VIGALLON

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

WHEN: May 10, 2017

TIME: Optional Outdoor Sketching at 6:15 p.m.; Presentation 7-8:30 p.m.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Join LAAS for a presentation exploring the connections between birding and drawing, learning how both activities can enhance your observation skills. We will demystify the drawing process and recall the thrills of being a beginning birder. This is an interactive presentation – we encourage audience members to bring their curiosity and a willingness to try something new. For the adventurous, we will also be offering some outdoor sketching activities prior to the start of the presentation (art supplies and binoculars provided).

Stacey Vigallon is Los Angeles Audubon's Director of Environmental Education and serves as a project biologist for the organization's threatened and endangered species monitoring programs. She coordinates a range of student-related projects, including the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program, Snowy Plover field trips, and science illustration workshops. Also a LACMA Teaching Artist, she is keenly interested in the nexus of conservation, community-based projects, and science communication. She has an MS in Wildlife Science from the University of Washington and completed the UC Santa Cruz Science Illustration Graduate Program.

Contact Nicole Lawson, nicolelawson@laaudubon.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.

Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook - please be aware that there is construction on Hetzler Road (the park road). It may appear that the road is closed — but we have permission to access it for the meeting. Please proceed with caution and park in the upper lot adjacent to the visitors center located at the very top of the hill. Visitors who arrive early should tell park staff they are there for the LA Audubon event- the staff will then give them a parking pass to put in their car.



Monthly Program Presentations

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 2017

MEMBERS' PHOTO NIGHT

PRESENTER: YOU!

WHERE: Audubon Center at Debs Park

WHEN: June 14, 2017

TIME: 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Tonight, the limelight is on you, come show off your work! Before we take our summer break from monthly programs, we would love to see the amazing photos, videos, and sketches you've been doing documenting resident and migrating birds since last summer. Your photos, videos, and drawings don't have to be perfect, they just have to be recognizable images of birds you saw in person, anywhere in the world!

If you would like to share your work, please email no more than 5 of your own photos, videos, and sketches to Program Chair Nicole Lawson, nicolelawson@laudubon.org, no later than June 1. They will be integrated into a group powerpoint so you can say a few words about your images during the presentation. If you miss the deadline, bring your images in hard copy or on a USB flash-drive to the event by 6pm; if we have time we'll be sure to add yours into the presentation.

Audubon Center at Debs Park
4700 North Griffin Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90031
Phone: 323-221-2255

Directions and Map to Debs Park
<http://debspark.audubon.org/directions-audubon-center-debs-park>

Members of Los Angeles Audubon are invited to the
2017 Annual Membership Meeting

MEETING LOCATION

Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook
Theater Room
6300 Hetzler Rd
Culver City 90232

DATE: Sat., June 17, 2017
1 – 2 PM



MORE INFORMATION: carolabeli@laudubon.org | (917) 923-9166