

WESTERN TANAGER

Native-plant landscaping in residential yards provides habitat and refuge for birds in Southern California

by Noriko L. Smallwood, Eric M. Wood

As an ecologist, the mega sprawl of cities such as Los Angeles has always made me wonder what happened to wildlife native to the land before development. In the 20th and 21st centuries, humans in Southern California have converted vast natural ecosystems into buildings, houses, roads, agriculture, and other infrastructure and land uses. How did these drastic changes to the environment affect wildlife? How can we mitigate the negative effects of urbanization on wildlife? One opportunity to bring back habitat for wildlife within the cityscape is residential yards, which cover a large percentage of the suburban land cover throughout Greater Los Angeles. However, residential yards

throughout the California southland are typically landscaped with exotic trees and shrubs with manicured lawns (hereafter: conventional yard). Conventional yards typically have lower vegetation complexity, a similarity of plant species composition, and increased levels of impervious surfaces. Most wildlife species native to the region are not adapted to the exotic plants and altered conditions in conventional yards. Therefore, one opportunity to potentially mitigate the effects of urbanization and increase the abundance and richness of birds and other wildlife species is to return the yard to a more natural ecosystem by planting native plants (hereafter: native yard) (Photo 1).



Photo 1: Example native yard in coastal Southern California. | All photos: Noriko Smallwood

Studies in the eastern United States and across the world have begun to show the positive benefits of landscaping with native plants to local fauna, especially during the breeding period. Native yards that provide more complex habitat elements can provide refuge and more effectively interconnect patches of habitat throughout the cityscape. However, few have studied the relationships between native yards and wildlife, including birds, in Southern California, which was a gap that we intended to fill with our research.

Beginning in August 2019, I embarked on a study of how native yards influence urban avifauna. I worked under the guidance of Dr. Eric Wood at California State University Los Angeles. We sought to understand how birds were responding to native yards compared to conventional yards, and what particular features of native yards were driving patterns of avifaunal abundance, richness, and feeding behavior. An important aspect of our work was that we focused our surveys during the winter non-breeding period, which is a time of the year when birds are busy feeding and getting ready for the eventual spring and summer breeding season. Winter is also a time of the year when Southern California supports millions of migratory birds. Therefore, our work was designed to understand whether native yards provided valuable habitat and feeding opportunities to the overwintering bird community, which is critical in ensuring our region is doing its part in supporting bird populations. I surveyed birds and their habitat in native yards and conventional yards from the late fall to early spring of

2020/21. In addition to bird counts and vegetation surveys, I observed and recorded bird foraging behavior on various species of native plants.

We were not surprised but encouraged to find that bird species richness and bird abundance were greater in native than conventional yards (Figure 1A). Further, larger yards with a higher cover of native plants, and natural habitat features, such as bare ground and leaf litter, supported greater numbers of feeding birds, with individuals focusing their foraging behaviors on distinct native trees and shrubs (Figure 1B). One neat finding was that some bird species that are typically associated with natural ecosystems (as opposed to urban environments) were more abundant and only detected in native yards. These included, for example, the California Thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*), the Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*), the Oak Titmouse (*Baeolophus inornatus*), the Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*), and the Red-naped Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*) — with the latter being an uncommon species to Southern California, but one that happened to occur in a native yard of our study.

While completing my surveys, it was always interesting to find that birds utilized native yards in a way that resembled the surrounding chaparral, oak woodland, and other natural vegetation complexes of the region. Native yards indeed felt like miniature natural ecosystems. Observing birds in native yards felt as though I were watching them while on a hike in nearby natural areas. I detected ground-foraging birds such as California (*Melospiza crissalis*) and Spotted Towhees, Dark-eyed

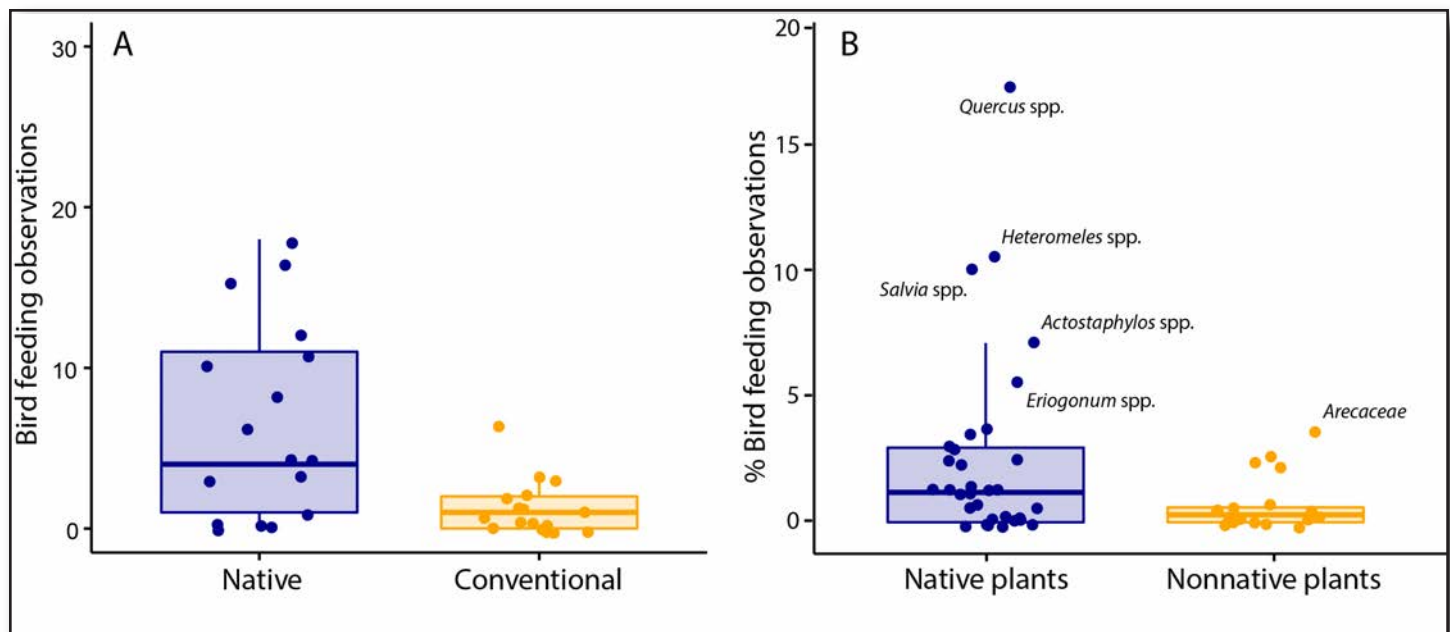


Figure 1: (A) Boxplots of the number of feeding attempts by birds in native and conventional yards, and (B) the relative percentage of bird feeding observations between native and nonnative plants based on our study of residential yards in Greater Los Angeles. Note the higher feeding intensity in native than conventional yards as well as on native plants.

Juncos (*Junco hyemalis*), Hermit Thrushes (*Catharus guttatus*), and White-crowned Sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) scratching at mulch and leaf litter to find hidden insects or seeds or fruits to munch on (Photo 2). I noticed birds perched atop native shrubs quickly retreat into understory foliage, a maneuver that would likely not be possible with most conventional yards dominated by lawns (Photo 3). I observed House Finches (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) and Lesser Goldfinches (*Spinus psaltria*) swing from flower head to flower head to eat the dried seed of sage plants (*Salvia spp.*), California Scrub-Jays (*Aphelocoma californica*) cache Engelmann oak acorns (*Quercus engelmannii*), and Anna's (*Calypte anna*) and Allen's Hummingbirds (*Selasphorus sasin*) (Photo 4) feed on nectar from bladderpods (*Peritoma arborea*), sages (*Salvia spp.*), and fuchsias (*Epilobium spp.*). Within minutes flocks of bushtits (*Psaltiriparus minimus*) would quickly move and forage through shrubs in yards, while Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) gobbled fruit from Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) (Photo 5). I noticed the benefits of native yards not only to birds but to other wildlife as well. I observed many Western Fence Lizards (*Sceloporus occidentalis*) sunbathing and foraging on large rocks and logs in native yards. Bees (*Apidea*), butterflies (*Lepidoptera*), and other pollinators appreciated the abundant floral resources and refugia. My observations and our study supported the notion that, in addition to providing habitat and refuge for wildlife within the

cityscape, native-landscaped yards in the Los Angeles area were important in structuring a robust and diverse food web, benefiting birds.

Results from our study in Los Angeles alongside other studies on native yards around the world indicate that increasing the amount of native landscaping in urban areas will positively benefit wildlife by providing food resources, cover, and habitat, both during the breeding and non-breeding period. Additionally, as indicated, the vast majority of residential neighborhoods in Greater Los Angeles are conventional, or with homes that use alternative forms of landscaping e.g., xeric-scaping, rocks, etc. Our work strongly suggests that increasing the number of native yards, and likely the number of native plantings throughout Southern California would have a hugely positive effect in allowing bird species and other wildlife requiring native vegetation to expand (or re-take) their range inward towards cities. Also, considering the drought that we are currently in, native plants aid in water conservation as many are adapted to the dry conditions of Southern California. Therefore, there is a money and water savings approach to converting a yard from conventional to native, including taking advantage of rebate programs such as bewaterwise (www.bewaterwise.com)



Photo 2: California Towhee (*Melozone crissalis*) scratching through leaf litter under a coyote brush shrub (*Baccharis pilularis*).



Photo 3: White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) perched atop coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*).

If you would like to convert your yard into native landscaping, or if you already have a native yard and want to add additional beneficial elements, here are some recommendations for elements to consider including. The list below is based on our research and is also a portion of the necessary elements to have a yard certified as Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation (<https://www.nwf.org/garden-for-wildlife/certify>).

1. Food resources: Plant a variety of native plants that provide different food resources for birds. For example, choose plants with berries [toyon (Photo 5), coffeeberry (*Frangula californica*), currants and gooseberry (*Ribes spp.*), elderberry (*Sambucus*), etc.], and plants with seeds (salvia, buckwheat (*Eriogonum spp.*), etc.). Plant a variety of plants that flower at different times of the year for pollinating insects and hummingbirds, some examples include: Fall: fuchsia (*Epilobium spp.*), Winter: manzanita (*Arctostaphylos spp.*), lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*), sugar bush (*Rhus ovata*), Spring: salvia, lilac (*Ceanothus*), monkey flower (*Diplacus spp.*), desert globemallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), Summer: buckwheat, penstemon (*Penstemon spp.*), narrow-leaf milkweed, (*Asclepias fascicularis*), California goldenrod (*Solidago californica*).

2. Cover/refugia/places to feed:

a. Tree and shrub cover: Trees and shrubs can provide cover and nesting habitat for birds. Trees are a critical component of several natural ecosystems in coastal Southern California. Therefore, we recommend planting a variety of native trees if desired. In particular, we found a high preference of birds towards oaks (*Quercus spp.*) as feeding substrates. Oaks are one of the most vital trees to wildlife wherever they occur primarily because of the numerous resources they provide e.g., acorns, habitat for insects, cavities for nesting, etc. Our work supports that planting an oak — such as a Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) in the Los Angeles area, or other *Quercus* species that may be native to where you reside — will benefit birds and other wildlife. High shrub cover in yards was also beneficial for birds. Shrubs provide cover from predators, protection from the elements, and foraging locations for invertebrate prey, seeds, and other resources.



Photo 4: Allen's Hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*) feeding on nectar on a Baja Fairy Duster (*Calliandra californica*).

b. Natural elements: Adding additional natural elements such as logs and boulders not only adds aesthetic appeal but also provides cover and potential nesting habitat. Further, an important finding from our work was that yards with patches of bare ground supported high numbers of ground-feeding birds possibly searching for seeds from nearby plants. Therefore, having a variety of habitat conditions would likely support the higher diversity of birds.

c. Leave the leaves: Leaf litter is an important component of terrestrial ecosystems for nutrient recycling and retention and provides a habitat for ground-dwelling invertebrates or hibernacula for insects in various stages of development during the winter months. Our work pointed toward leaf litter being an important feeding substrate for birds. Thus, we recommend leaving the leaf blower at home and allowing the leaves from your native plants to accumulate in your yard where possible.

We highly recommend the following resources for more information regarding native yards and wildlife habitat: California Native Plant Society (CNPS) (<https://www.cnps.org/>) and CalFlora (<https://www.calflora.org>) for endless information on native plants, Theodore Payne Foundation (native plant nursery in Sun Valley (<https://theodorepayne.org/>), California Botanic Garden (botanic garden and native plant nursery in Claremont (<https://www.calbg.org/>), Tree of Life Nursery (native plant nursery in San Juan Capistrano (<https://californianativeplants.com/>), books by Douglas Tallamy ("Nature's Best Hope," "Bringing Nature Home"), bewaterwise for rebates on converting your yard (<https://www.bewaterwise.com/>), National Wildlife Federation for certifying your yard as wildlife habitat (<https://www.nwf.org/garden-for-wildlife/certify>), Homegrown National Park to add your native yard to the map (<https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>).

For more on our work, please view the following paper which is currently been accepted for publication and should be available during the winter of 2022/23.


Smallwood, N. L., and E. M. Wood. The ecological role of native plant landscaping in residential yards to birds during the nonbreeding period. *Ecosphere*, *accepted*. 



Photo 5: Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) eating a toyon berry (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*).



CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Travis Longcore

Goose in the Lights

Sometimes nature outreach opportunities come when you least expect. For those watching the baseball playoffs — I wasn't — the Dodgers-Padres game got a little nutty when a goose settled in on the field round about the 8th inning Wednesday night. It was no local, bread-fed, domesticated park dweller but a bona fide wild Greater White-fronted Goose on the ground in close right field. I picked up on it on the bird app, not eBird but the other one, and thought it might be an open door to reaching the world on an important topic.

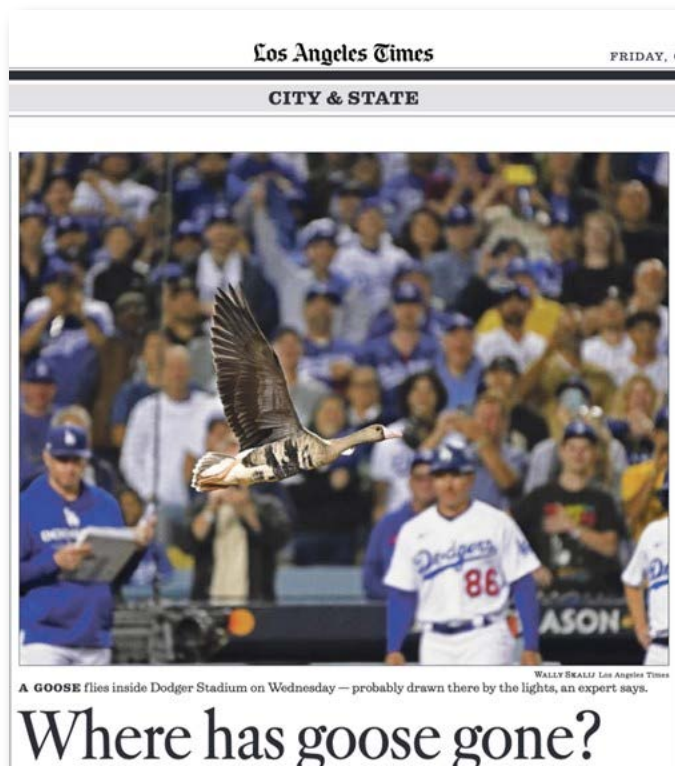
I immediately knew (as much as one can know for certain) that light pollution — the lights of the stadium — had waylaid the bird from its migratory route, since you don't see Greater White-fronted Geese on just any lawn in Los Angeles, but rather at local wetlands as they stopover on migration. Given that World Migratory Bird Day was just a week ago with the theme of "dim the lights for birds at night" I thought some outreach was in order. So I Tweeted on the Los Angeles Audubon account: "The bird at the @Dodgers game was a Greater White-Fronted Goose. Bright lights can disorient birds that migrate at night, which this species does. Learn more [at the Audubon website]." Things took off

from there, because apparently quite a few people watch playoff baseball and had seen "the goose."

By the end of the night the Tweet reached over a hundred thousand people and was quoted in newspaper articles across the country and translated into several languages. I spent most of the next day on the phone and video chat with reporters, with at least three television stations, a local NPR reporter, the Los Angeles Times, and the San Diego Union-Tribune. The goose became an ambassador for migratory species with such a good story. The Greater White-fronted Geese that migrate through Los Angeles breed in Alaska, then migrate to the Central Valley of California, and then some populations migrate again to Mexico for the winter. As much as people in Los Angeles are generally unaware of it, these species and many, many others migrate over nightly during spring and fall migration and this goose happened to get caught in the lights and into primetime TV to remind people of this fact.

"I hope it reminds people that even here in Los Angeles, we are still part of the natural world," Longcore said, "And we can do things to do our part in making it safer for them."

Los Angeles Times



There has been strong support for the goose as well. People are concerned about its welfare — and I was able to confirm and let people know that it was released safely by Dodgers staff after it was ushered off the field in a trash can. I think there is a broader, unmet desire for stories about nature in today's news, at least in the LA market. When interviewing with a news anchor this week for an upcoming story on migratory birds (coincidence that it aligned with both World Migratory Bird Day and the Dodger goose), I learned that a previous nature story we had done together was the story he had gotten the most mail from viewers about in his career. People are hungry for a connection with the endlessly fascinating, wondrous, and occasionally surprising natural world around us. Even in the city.

I bet we could do a story a week about nature in Los Angeles and people would be eager to hear them. But this week, we had the goose. 🦢

Join a Christmas Bird Count

The Christmas Bird Count is the longest running community science project in the nation. Birders, from beginners to advanced, have participated in this once-a-year count effort within established 15-mile diameter circles (see maps). Compilers and participants work together to ensure that important bird habitats are covered, and there is always room to add yard and local patch observations, so long as the number of people observing and the time spent observing are recorded, along with a full list and numbers of all species observed. Los Angeles Audubon Society sponsors three counts, led by experienced compilers.

Lancaster – Saturday, December 17, 2022

Compilers: Mary and Nick Freeman **Contact:** mnfreeman[at]earthlink.net or (818) 636-4361

Contact Mary and Nick to be placed on a team or given an area. Please provide cell phone number, town of residence, and skill level (scribes needed too!). For team-forming purposes, please tell us if you: 1) already have a team put together (and who they are likely to be), 2) wish to survey alone, 3) are willing to share a car with other enthusiastic birders, 4) will survey with others, but prefer to drive your own car, 5) with others in the same car who have had a quick-Covid test, or 6) others with a quick-Covid test who will wear a mask in the car. Prairie Falcon, Mountain Bluebird, Greater Roadrunner, LeConte's Thrasher, and Burrowing and Long-eared owls always to usually reported by someone! We are planning to have the Lunch Compilation at Sgt. Steve Owen Memorial Park at 43063 10th St. West (formerly Lancaster Central Park) at 12:30 P.M.

Malibu – Sunday December 18, 2022

Compiler: Dick Norton **Contact:** richardjnorton[at]yahoo.com or (310) 455-1138

All areas are assigned before the count. Contact Dick by email or telephone to be assigned an area. There is no early morning gathering. Participants meet for lunch and a preliminary assessment at about 1:00 P.M. at Malibu Bluffs Park, located at the southern end of Malibu Canyon Road.

Los Angeles – Sunday, January 1, 2023

Compiler: Dan Cooper. **Contact:** dan[at]cooperecological.com or lathrotriccus[at]gmail.com. On count day, contact by text to (323) 397-3562.

Email Dan if you would like to bird as a "dispersed group" in the following locations: Del Rey Lagoon, Playa Del Rey; Kenneth Hahn Park, near Culver City or Echo Park Lake. Otherwise:

- 1 (Even) if you have done this CBC last year/before, please contact Dan and let him know if you would like to do the same area you covered in the past.
- 2 If you would like a new area, contact Dan and let him know that too.
- 3 If this is your first time on the Los Angeles count (or if you were with a group before and now want to go solo), please either:
 - Count in your neighborhood, or
 - Contact Dan for ideas on where to go.

See CBC Procedures on next page

The CBC procedures on count day is as follows:

- 1 **Count** birds within the Los Angeles Count Circle all morning (see figure; preferably using eBird “hotspots”);
- 2 **Text Dan** at some point to let him know if you got any rarities, or missed any common birds you were pretty sure you would find (we can discuss this in advance)
- 3 **Enter** your sightings – including all photos and details on rarities – to eBird using your own username/account;
- 4 **SHARE** your eBird checklist(s) with the following username: **LosAngelesCBC**
 - Click “Share w/ Others in Your Party” on the right-hand side, and share with the username LosAngelesCBC

Note: Some people continue to count in the afternoon/evening (areas that weren’t well covered, or later for owls), or will chase birds that were found that morning. Just note the time you counted in your eBird checklist.

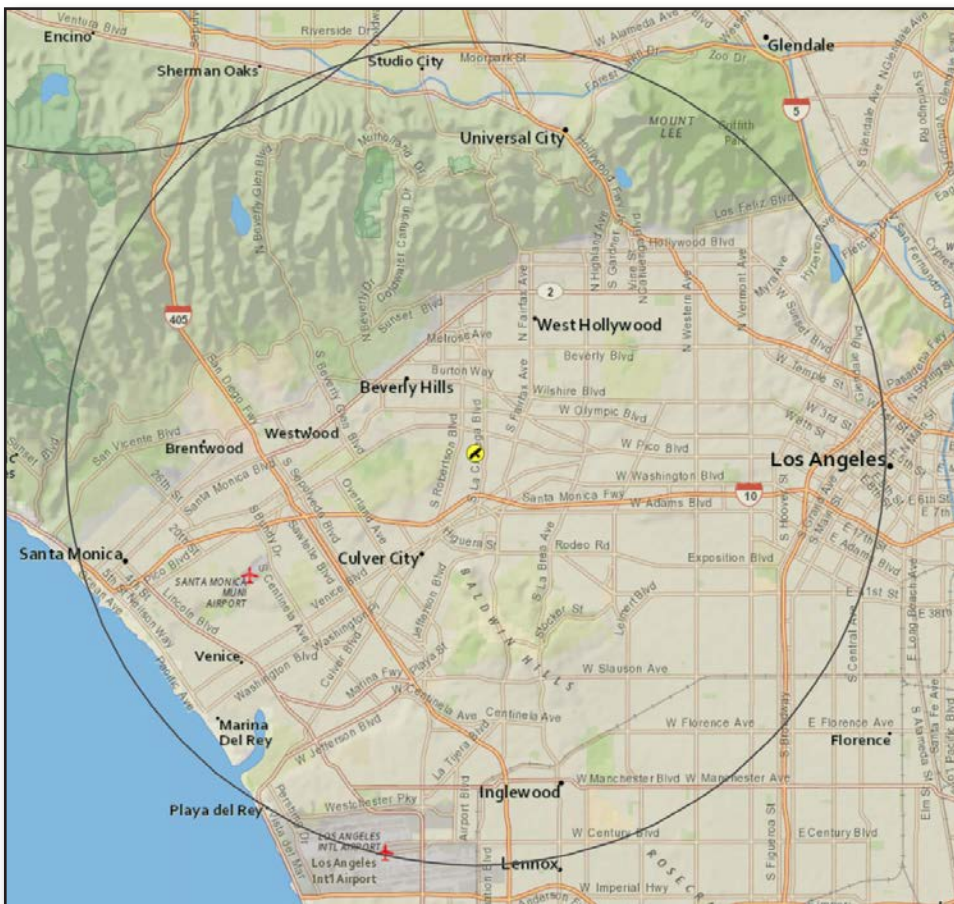
Once again, **share** your count day list(s) with: **LosAngelesCBC**

Please **DO NOT** share your lists with “Dan Cooper”, “lathrotriccus@gmail.com”, dan@cooperecological.com” or “dcooper137”

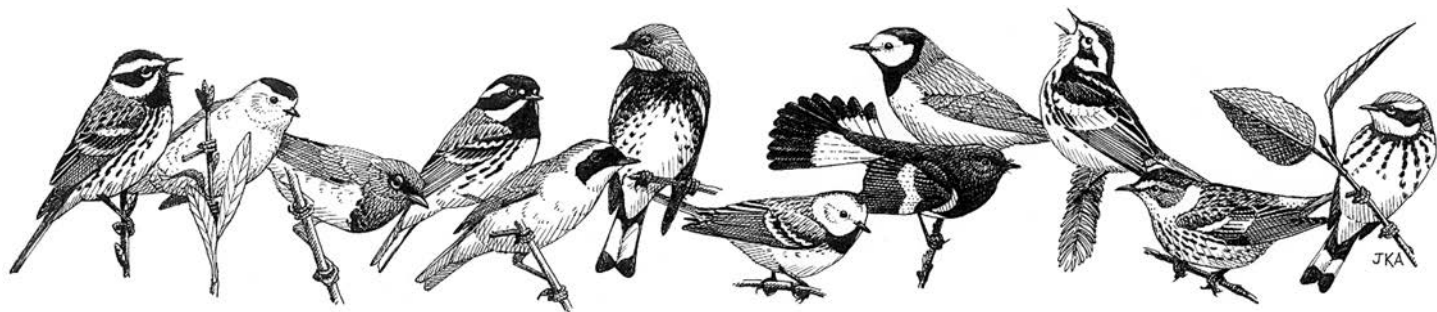
If you cannot figure out eBird, just send Dan a list of your total species and individuals, and he will enter them for you. Dan will post a summary of the count a few days afterward, but you’ll always be able to see your sightings, and others’ who did the count, in eBird.

Participation in the Christmas Bird Count is free. If you would like to support the count and its data management and outreach infrastructure, please consider donating to National Audubon Society:

<http://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>



Los Angeles CBC Circle 2022 (see page 13 for Malibu and Lancaster CBC circles.)
See online pages for larger images.



BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Jon Fisher

Birds of the Season- October 2022

September and October are a time of almost endless potential and anticipation in the birder's world in southern California, with a wide variety of migrants passing through. But it is also a time of uncertainty; each year is different and we never know exactly what to expect. What numbers of vagrants will turn up? What species will be above or below average? Will any ultra-rare Asian strays be found? To avoid any unnecessary suspense, I will state that the fall of 2022 did not disappoint.

After a comparatively mild summer, early September produced a memorable and extended heat wave; but nothing prevented birders from getting out and finding good birds. A few rarities had already appeared by late August, but that was just a modest appetizer for what was to follow. The combination of weather patterns, observer coverage, the birds themselves, and other unknown factors conspired to make this a fall to remember.

While shorebirds may have underperformed this fall (at least in terms of rarities); the opposite was true of passerines. In that regard it was a truly incredible fall. Literally dozens of vagrants were found in the county from late August through October.

As is so often the case, rarities that attracted numbers of birders ended up producing additional good finds at their respective locations. If every square mile of the county were subjected to equal scrutiny, we can only guess what might be discovered.

On October 16- a weather related fallout on Santa Catalina Island produced no fewer than thirteen vagrants in the area around Avalon. Mid-October also produced two species new to the state, one of which was a first record for Los Angeles County, and both of which were Old World Phylloscopus warblers.

In other birding news, a Los Angeles River shorebird census was conducted on August 27 and September 11. Though

nothing unexpected was recorded, the survey created a snapshot in time of the birdlife along this important wildlife corridor. Plans are to expand and continue this survey in subsequent years.

We are still dealing with a prolonged drought, the impacts of which are substantial and widespread. Despite this, the Los Angeles River, city and county parks and much of suburbia manage to maintain good habitat for birds because of water imported for human use. These artificial green patches often become the best places to find migrants and vagrants.

Greater White-fronted Geese were present in above average numbers throughout the county and they seemed to be everywhere. A high count of 360 were at the Piute Ponds on October 14 (Kimball Garrett). Worthy of mention was a single lost and now famous individual that landed in Dodger Stadium in the middle of a Padres game on October 12.

A **Common Ground-Dove** was at the Dominguez Gap Wetlands in Long Beach on October 6 (Joyce Brady). Two **White-winged Doves** were at Malibu Bluffs Park in Malibu on August 26 (Jon Fisher), while others were in the east Antelope Valley from September 4-8 (Joseph Dunn) and from September 4-13 (Steve Harvey) and one was along the lower Los Angeles River in Long Beach on September 11 (Jeff Boyd).

A late **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was in Juniper Hills in the Antelope Valley on October 4 (Kimball Garrett).

An **American Oystercatcher** was at the Los Angeles Harbor on September 11 (multiple observers) and two were observed there on October 8 (Kimball Garrett).

The **Pacific-Golden Plover** at Ballona Creek mouth in Playa del Rey returned for its fifth winter as of August 28 (Layton Pace) and continued there through October 23.

Scarce as a migrant in the county was a **Red Knot** continuing at Malibu Lagoon through September 19. Another was at Topanga State Beach on September 24 (Ralph Carlson).

Semipalmated Sandpipers were tough to find this year, but single birds were at Malibu Lagoon through September 4, along the Los Angeles River in Glendale from September 4-8 (Andrew Birch) and along the Los Angeles River in Maywood from August 11-15 (Mark Wilson).

Sabine's Gulls were at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB from September 5-13 (Femi Faminu) and on October 1 (Kimball Garrett) and a **Franklin's Gull** off the Palos Verdes Peninsula on October 8 was the only one reported (Kimball Garrett).

A continuing **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was along the Los Angeles River in Long Beach from October 1-7, though it had not been reported there since August 27. Others were at MacArthur Park in Los Angeles from September 21-23 (Otto Mayer) and along the Los Angeles River in Maywood on October 12 (Mark Wilson).

Five **Common Terns** were at Quail Lake near Gorman on September 10 (Naresh Satyan), while others were at Pt. Dume in Malibu on September 10 (Andy Birch) and at Lake Balboa on September 11 (Candice Byers).

Los Angeles County waters hosted **Red-billed Tropicbirds** at San Clemente Island on August 28 (Ben Stalheim) and about thirty miles southeast of there on October 2 (Gary Nunn, et al).

If they are going to occur, summer and early fall is the time for **Magnificent Frigatebirds** to show up. This fall two were above the north Palos Verdes Peninsula on September 4 (Jonathan Nakai) and two more were there on September 10 (Mark & Janet Scheel); both sightings due to the effects of Hurricane Kay.

Nazca Boobies were in the Catalina Channel on September 11 and off the Palos Verdes Peninsula on September 13 (Jon Feenstra). Two more were at Thirty Mile Bank near San Clemente Island on September 15 (Dan Jehl), with one there on October 9 (Andy Birch). Another was west of San Diego on October 2 (Gary Nunn). Also of interest was a **Masked/Nazca Booby** near San Clemente Island on September 25 (Kevin Lapp)

Brown Boobies were in the Catalina Channel from September 7-11 and again on September 25 (Ken Reichner) and in San Pedro Harbor on September 11 (m. obs.). Six **Red-footed Boobies** were also recorded between August 28-September 16, with these records probably representing fewer than a half dozen individuals. Boobies, formerly quite unusual, now occur regularly in the Southern California Bight- which extends from Pt. Conception to San Diego- and offshore waters. Warming ocean temperatures- and resulting changes in food resources- are at least partly responsible for the increasing appearance of these tropical birds.

About a dozen **Neotropic Cormorants** were reported over the

period and at least ten **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** were present, with up to seven of these at Ballona Lagoon in Marina del Rey. The increasing occurrence of both these species in the county is also largely driven by climate change.

Broad-winged Hawks were at Las Flores Creek Park on September 27 (Aaron Kreisberg), at Buena Vista Park in Burbank on October 2 (Rebecca Marschall) and at Sycamore Grove Park in the Mt. Washington area on October 9 (Brad Rumble).

Zone-tailed Hawks were at Eaton Canyon in Pasadena on September 9 (David & Holly Coates), in Monrovia from October 23-25 (Karen Suarez) and in Altadena on October 25 (Corey Husic).

An above average fifteen **Tropical Kingbirds** were found during the period. Less expected were **Eastern Kingbirds** at El Dorado Park in Long Beach on August 30 (Steve Turley), along the lower Los Angeles River in Long Beach on September 9 (Jeff Boyd), in Lunada Bay on the Palos Verdes Peninsula on September 18 (Naresh Satyan, onathan Nakai) and again along the lower Los Angeles River in Long Beach from September 18-19 (Jeff Boyd). Also of note was a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale from October 6-7 (Keith Condon).

A first record for the county was a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** on Santa Catalina Island from October 16-17, while a rare but more expected **Least Flycatcher** was there on the same dates (Christopher Hinkle, Adrian Hinkle, Logan Kahle).

Eastern Phoebes were on Santa Catalina Island on October 19 (Chris Dean), at Lake Lindero in Agoura Hills on October 21 (Dan Cooper) and at Sunnyside Cemetery in Long Beach on October 23 (Naresh Satyan).

Rare vireos included a **Philadelphia Vireo** present from October 16-17 and a **Red-eyed Vireo** found on October 16, both on Santa Catalina Island (Christopher Hinkle, Adrian Hinkle, Logan Kahle). A **Yellow-Green Vireo** was seen by many at Eaton Canyon in Pasadena from September 6-18 (Mark & Janet Scheel).

Amid indications of an above average dispersal away from regular areas elsewhere in the state, five Pinyon Jays were seen passing over Juniper Hills on October 22 (Kimball Garrett). Despite being regular not that far outside the county, this species is extremely rare here. That said, they should certainly be watched for this fall and winter.

A **Purple Martin** at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on September 5 (Keith Condon) and three there between September 9 and 10 were the only reports this fall (Keith Condon, Kimberly Dillbeck).

A **Gray Catbird** was on San Clemente Island from October 19-23 (Ben Stalheim, Kandace Glanville).

A stunning find was a **Wood Warbler** at Willow Springs Park in Long Beach on October 15 (Brad Dawson). This establishes the first California record and the first record for the lower forty-eight states. Though a long-distance migrant, to date there have only been a few documented in Alaska. Its nearest area of regular occurrence is 2,500 miles west of the 49th state. As would be expected, this bird attracted hundreds of birders and continued through October 24. Incredibly, a **Willow Warbler**— another state first— was discovered at Rodeo Lagoon near San Francisco on October 18. In the matter of a few days, California increased its bird list by two species.

A **Pacific Wren** was on Santa Catalina Island on October 16 (Christopher Hinkle, Adrian Hinkle, Logan Kahle) and four were along the south fork of Big Rock Creek on the north slope of the San Gabriel Mountains on October 23 (Corey Husic)

Very rare in the county was a **Sprague's Pipit** in the west Antelope Valley on October 19 (Richard Crossley).

Chestnut-collared Longspurs were in Griffith Park on October 8 and on October 23 (Andy Birch) and five were in the west Antelope Valley on October 19 (Richard Crossley).

A **Grasshopper Sparrow** was at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on October 9 (Caitlin Eldridge) and two were at Malibu Creek State Park on October 15 (Eric Shaphran). A rare **Lark Bunting** was at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on September 10 (Luke Tiller) and fifteen **Clay-colored Sparrows** were found during the period.

Another great find was a **Field Sparrow** at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB on October 27 (Chris Dean). This was just the third record for the county.

A **Dark-eyed "Gray-headed" Junco** was at Grassy Hollow in the east San Gabriel Mountains on October 9 (Grigory Heaton). An early **White-crowned Sparrow** was at Willow Springs Park in Long Beach on August 23 and a **dark-lored White-crowned Sparrow** was at Colorado Lagoon in Long Beach on September 11 (Robert Hamilton).

White-throated Sparrows were at the Chilao Visitor's Center in the San Gabriel Mountains on October 9 (Chezy Yusuf) and at the Piute Ponds on October 21 (Kimball Garrett). Two more were on San Clemente Island on October 21 (Ben Stalheim, Nicole Desnoyers, Kandace Glanville).

A **"Large-billed" Savannah Sparrow** was at the Ballona Creek mouth in Playa del Rey on September 1 (Chris Mortenson), while a **Swamp Sparrow** was at the Sepulveda Basin in Van Nuys from October 6-9 (Steve Grasmick), two were at the Piute Ponds on October 21 (Kimball Garrett) and one was at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia on October 26 (Judy Hwa).

Scarce as migrants on the coastal slope, **Green-tailed Towhees** were at the West San Gabriel River Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood from October 6-23 (Jeffrey Fenwick) and at Kenneth Hahn Park from October 17-26 (Eric Brooks).

A **Bobolink** was at Peck Road Water Conservation Park in Arcadia on September 20 (Mark & Janet Scheel) and another half dozen were found on San Clemente Island. A **Baltimore Oriole** was at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on September 15 (Keith Condon).

An incredible twenty-five species of "vagrant" warblers were recorded, this in addition to our nine regular species. An **Ovenbird** was at the West San Gabriel River Parkway Nature Trail in Lakewood on October 5 (Joyce Brady) and a half dozen **Northern Waterthrushes** were reported over the period. About a dozen **Black-and-white Warblers** were found and a well above average twenty-two Tennessee Warblers were recorded.

Lucy's Warblers were at Agua Amarga Canyon on the Palos Verdes Peninsula from September 5-18 (Mark & Janet Scheel), at Heartwell Park in Long Beach on September 16, at El Dorado Park in Long Beach on October 8 (Nancy Salem) and on Santa Catalina Island on October 16 (Christopher Hinkle, Adrian Hinkle, Logan Kahle). In addition eight **Virginia's Warblers** were found.

A **Connecticut Warbler** and a **Mourning Warbler**— both exceedingly rare— were found on San Clemente Island on October 8 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole Desnoyers).

A **Hooded Warbler** was at Granada Park in Monterey Park on September 16 (Jon Feenstra) and ten **American Redstarts** were found.

Very rare was a **Cape May Warbler** in Pasadena on October 24 (Sequoia Ding) and a last-minute addition and county first **Cerulean Warbler** on Santa Catalina Island on October 28 (Laura Vandezande, Mitchell Bailey). This truly is a fall that keeps on giving.

Much more expected were **Northern Parulas** on San Clemente Island on September 12 (Ben Stalheim, Kandace Glanville) and in Elysian Park on September 20 (Otto Mayer).

Seven **Magnolia Warblers** were recorded and seven **Blackburnian Warblers** were tallied. A dozen **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were found, while **Blackpoll Warblers** were on San Clemente Island (Ben Stalheim, Kandace Glanville, Nicole Desnoyers), in Los Angeles on September 20 (Kevin Lapp), at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on September 22, at Santa Fe Dam on October 2 (Marky Mutchler), at El Dorado Park in Long Beach from October 8-9 (Nancy Salem).

A **Black-throated Blue Warbler** was at Polliwog Park in Manhattan Beach from October 19-27 (Layton Pace). **Palm War-**

blers were at Stonehurst Park in Sun Valley from October 4-5 (Naresh Satyan) and at Woodlawn Cemetery in Santa Monica on October 14 (Becky Turley), in Long Beach on October 16 (Bob Schallman). Two more were at Sunnyside Cemetery in Long Beach between October 16-22. Less expected was a **Pine Warbler** at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on October 11 (Jon Feenstra).

A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was on Santa Catalina Island on October 16 (Christopher Hinkle, Adrian Hinkle, Logan Kahle) and a **Prairie Warbler** was on San Clemente Island on October 10 (Justyn Stahl, Nicole Desnoyers). **Black-throated Green Warblers** were at Granada Park in Monterey Park from September 16-18 (Chris Dean) and at Lewis McAdams Riverfront Park from September 19-23 (Andy Birch).

Wrapping things up for the warblers was a **Canada Warbler** at Wardlow Park in Long Beach on September 13 (Kim Moore) and a **Painted Redstart** in Brentwood from October 12-16 (Mark Harris).

Thirteen **Summer Tanagers** were found and a much less expected **Scarlet Tanager** was on San Clemente Island on October 22 (Nicole Desnoyers, Susan Meiman). Nine **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were recorded and **Indigo Buntings** were at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena from September 11-October 2 (Darren Dowell) and on Santa Catalina Island on October 20 (Mitchell Bailey).

An above average five **Dickcissels** were found, with birds on Santa Catalina Island on September 25 (Naresh Satyan, Mark & Janet Scheel, Chris Dean), at Buena Vista Park in Burbank from October 2-3 (Rebecca Marschall), at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale from October 5-6 (Chris Dean), at White Point in San Pedro on October 5 (Russell Stone) and at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on October 11 (Jon Feenstra).

A collective “phew” is warranted following this exhaustive list of birds. The fall of 2021 was particularly good in its

own rite, but 2022 managed to surpass it. Despite the great haul of rarities, we can only imagine how many birds were missed. We know that we can only detect only a small percentage of the birds actually passing through.

The passing of fall migration is understandably a bit of a letdown. But though migration is largely over, it doesn't mean birding will become dull. As we head toward winter, birders can watch for irruptive species such as Lewis's Woodpecker (already noted in above average numbers), Red-breasted Nuthatches, Varied Thrush and Pine Siskin. Lingering and wintering neotropical migrants will continue to be found as we head into winter.

The county's ever-increasing army of birders seems to ensure that no month passes without a number of notable sightings. In addition, digital cameras continue to confirm sightings that would have been “might be” birds twenty years ago.

The county's inland lakes and reservoirs may harbor unusual waterfowl and the Antelope Valley hosts a number of wintering specialties that draw birders.

An interesting project for birders will be to find and document Sagebrush Sparrows in the county. The true status of this species is not well known and additional field work is needed.

Christmas Bird Counts aren't far away, slated to begin on December 14. Participating is always rewarding and enjoyable and most CBCs are happy to accept additional counters. As valuable as our individual eBird trip list data is, the saturation of a CBC circle on a single day in early winter creates a unique snapshot of local birdlife; and one that is repeated year after year.

Regardless of where birding takes you, it is certain that Los Angeles County is more than capable of rewarding your endeavors.



Monthly Program Presentations



Nocturnal Flight Call Recording in Los Angeles County - Andy Birch

Wednesday, November 9, 2022

7:30 PM –8:30 PM

Are your dreams sometimes filled with birds? Perhaps, it's because they are flying over you as you sleep! You may have heard that a vast multitude of birds migrate at night. While it is now fairly popular to watch birds migrating at daytime, you may have wondered, how on earth can we experience bird migration at night? Andy will try to help you unlock the secrets of how to witness and record this hidden bird migration happening across our skies at night.

Andy Birch has been birding LA County for over 25 years and lives with his young family in Los Feliz. He can usually be found birding Griffith Park and the LA River around Glendale and Los Feliz. Over the past 30 years, he has also illustrated identification plates for field guides and birding magazines in North America and Europe.

The program will be presented online at:
<https://bluejeans.com/874530161/2879>



Tree Care for Birds - Ryan Gilpin

Wednesday, December 14, 2022

7:30 PM–8:30 PM

Millions of birds briefly visit or live their whole life in Californian cities. Urban forests made up of street trees, backyards and parks are important habitats that these birds rely on. Tree Care for Birds has been helping arborists care for trees while protecting wildlife and managing wildlife habitat since 2015. Join Ryan Gilpin to learn more about urban forestry, how arborists are being trained to minimize impacts to nesting wildlife, and how arborists are working with property owners to create more wildlife habitat in urban areas. Ryan will also share ideas about how you can work with arborists to make our cities better places for people and birds to live and visit.

Tree Care for Birds is a group of arborists, wildlife biologists, wildlife advocates and others creating educational materials for the tree care industry. Ryan was a founding member of the group, co-author of the Best Management Practices (BMPs) and teaches full-day workshops in which arborists learn how to use the Wildlife BMPs. Ryan is a consulting arborist, master birder, and business owner (Nidus Consulting) based out of Portland, OR.

The program will be presented online at:
<https://bluejeans.com/447598930/8238>



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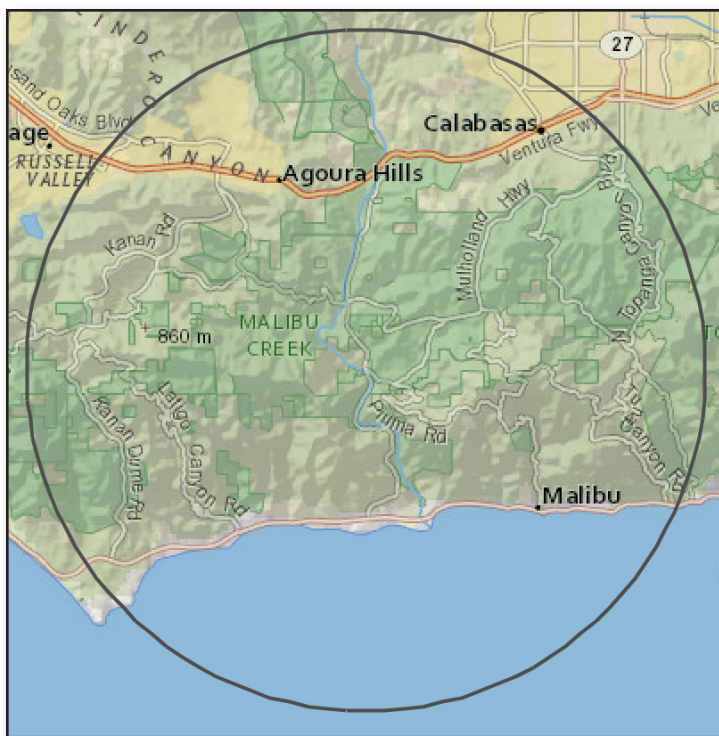
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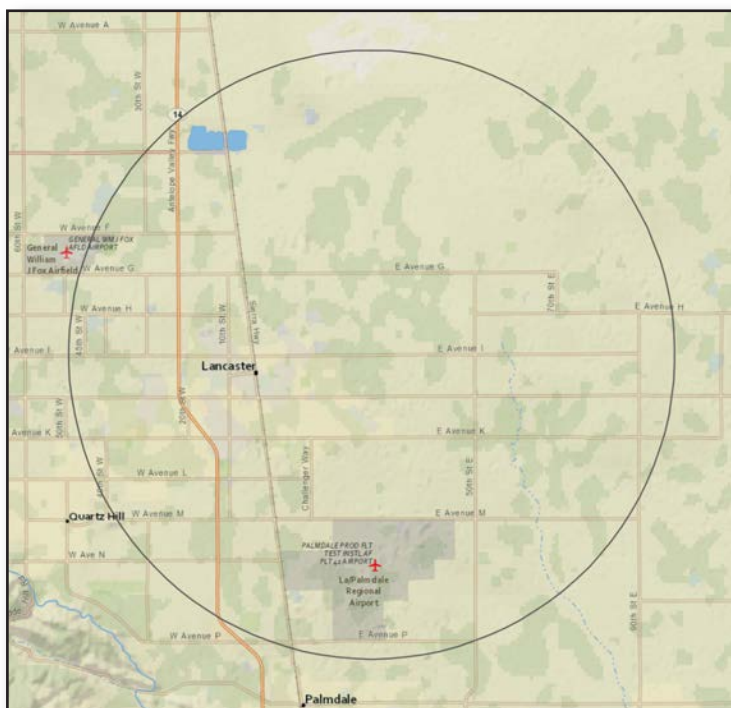
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Malibu CBC Circle (Story on page 6)
See online pages for larger images.



Lancaster CBC Circle 2022 (Story on Page 6)
See online pages for larger images.