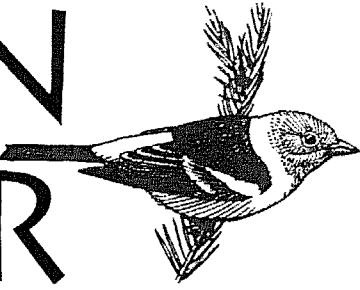


# WESTERN TANAGER



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Los Angeles Audubon Society

## *A Better Salton Sea for Our Birds*

Is this a good time to discuss the Salton Sea? You bet it is: there are some serious proposals in the pipeline that will affect migrating, wintering and breeding birds of the Salton Sink area for decades to come. So, get some info and evaluate my humble assessment of an unusually complex set of background documents, opinions, and hundreds of pages of agency materials. At first, I nurtured a deep suspicion that some powerful development interests were seeking a real estate and resort bonanza by transforming the Salton Sea into another leisure lake with all its trimmings (boating, jet skis, fishing, casinos?); it made me really uncomfortable that foremost among the Salton Sea development boosters was the argument that this was a first-class bird paradise with over 400 bird species. This hype was even echoed by the venerable and data-sensitive National Geographic magazine (February 2005). It states:

"Somehow this odd accidental lake, with its prolific fish and nearby fields, has become one of the most important migratory bird habitats in the U.S., if not in the world. Millions of birds representing more than 400 species can be spotted here, including endangered brown pelicans and Yuma clapper rails."

This sentence contains at least three inaccuracies and some exaggeration (most fish species have vanished from the lake, the

Brown Pelican is not really endangered anymore [although still on the list], the Yuma Clapper Rail prefers freshwater marshes rather than the open and highly saline lakeshore, and I can list a number of more spectacular migratory bird habitats around the world). More importantly, however, were birds really of interest to the proponents of Salton Sea change? And could there actually be 400 bird species using this often putrid, highly

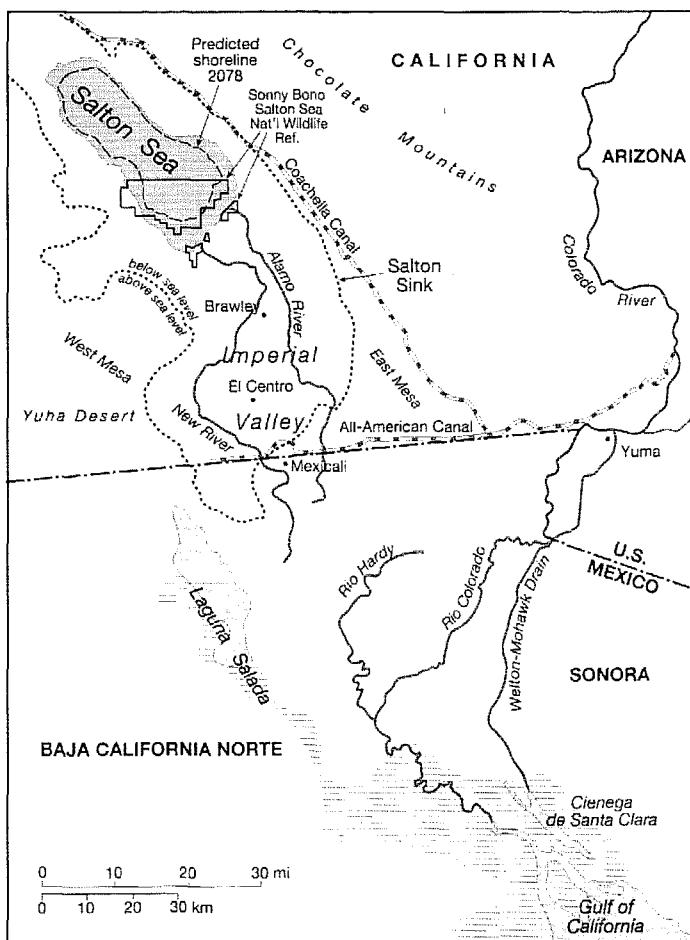
saline and polluted desert lake? I began to collect an atlas devoted to the Salton Sea (see reference [5]) a bird monograph [3], and every available science paper [6&7].

Then -- in October 2006 -- the Salton Sea Restoration Project of the Department of Water Resources in Sacramento released the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) on

the future of the Salton Sea [2]. Colorful maps and numerous charts and tables (all easily accessible online) accompany a total of eight so-called final alternatives for restoration. In addition, there are two possible scenarios of the future of this lake without any restoration. After absorbing this information I became very concerned about the price tag for the massive engineering and maintenance operations and looked longingly at the still undeveloped but water-starved wetlands at and near the delta of the Colorado River not far to the south across the border with Mexico. Maybe, the millions of birds using the Salton Sea and its adjacent wetland habitats would be better off in Mexico without the massive disturbance resulting from more than 20 years of earth- and water-moving manipulation of the Salton Sea ecosystem.

Upon further reflection I began to ponder the place of

Fig. 1 Map of the Salton Sink and Colorado River Delta Region.



the Salton Sea in the context of the historical transformation of the American West and particularly California. Have we not lost most of the natural wetlands that covered many areas of the State, among them San Francisco Bay, the huge Tulare Lake in the San Joaquin Valley, Owens Lake, and the coastal marshes and estuaries of Santa Monica Bay in the last century? Will the Salton Sea enter the history books as yet another degraded and ultimately destroyed wildlife resource? Enough is enough, I began to think, because even a minimum of environmental ethic should mandate that we rise to the challenge and not only save and clean up this enormous saltwater habitat but actually improve its usefulness for wildlife. So, energized by this quite rational conclusion, I will now lay out basic, relevant, as well as new information that should help you to participate in the public comment phase of the current decision-making process (deadline: mid January 2007).

The 1905 accidental gift of a breached Colorado River embankment to the parched desert lands of the Imperial Valley has become a sometimes deadly soup of toxic gases and high salinity coupled with poisonous concentrations of selenium in its sediments. Its putrid smell and somewhat unpredictable water level have been the cause of a frightful real estate bust along its shores, and its two largest natural inflows were regarded as the most polluted U.S. rivers in the 1970s. Officially sanctioned by Congress as an agricultural wastewater sump, this largest lake of California will begin to shrink (due to evaporation) after 2017 because of permanent contractual reductions in water inflows (the water will instead flow to San Diego!); eventually the Salton Sea may recede by 4-5 miles from its southern shoreline thereby exposing some 134 square miles of highly volatile lakebed dust (a more severe problem than presently experienced at Owens Lake). It will also become much saltier (unfit for any fish and fish-eating birds). If we want to avoid an American repeat of the infamous Aral Sea disaster in the former Soviet Union we have to intervene and change or "restore" the Salton Sea. Doing nothing has been termed "hazardous" [1].

My visiting student Christian Hof and I developed a database of all so-called 'waterbirds' of the Salton Sea incorporating relevant data from the recent Salton Sink avifauna monograph [2], the species summaries of the Birds of North America series [4], a large number of technical papers dealing with the interface between birds and the unique properties of the Salton Sea, discussion with some agency personnel, attendance of a birding festival in Imperial County, and personal observations of Salton Sea birds and their habitats (2003-2004). An excellent source for analysis and evaluation of Salton Sea bird life was found in the professional papers published in Studies in Avian Biology, No. 27 [6]. This database was queried about qualitative and quantitative characteristics of bird abundance, nesting, seasonal dynamics, productivity, mortality, and habitat preferences in the spatial context of local areas around the lake, regional locations in the Imperial Valley and in northern Mexico, the State of California, and all of North America. I have to thank K. C. Molina and K. L. Garrett for thoughtful comments on an earlier draft of this

### *Species Richness*

At least 415 bird species (including the recent sighting of a Ross's Gull) have been recorded for the Salton Sink region (comprising the mostly dry area of the prehistoric Lake Cahuilla, see map) which is a high but not exceptional diversity in North America (San Diego County has 492 species). It remains unclear how the 'Salton Sea bird paradise' slogan developed but the recent book *Birds of the Salton Sea* by Patten et al. [3] has done little to decrease its popular appeal. Except for its somewhat misleading title, this avifauna deserves much praise. It is a thorough and invaluable reference for all bird-related matters. The book is actually a regional avifauna of the extremely dry and hot desert surrounding and including the Salton Sea - the Salton Sink and the entire landmass filled by the prehistoric Lake Cahuilla. The birds covered by the authors include therefore hundreds of bird species that have nothing to do with the Salton Sea itself (species such as Brown Creeper, Cactus Wren, Burrowing Owl, and Lad-

der-backed Woodpecker) but are part of the multi-habitat Salton Sink ecosystem. The Mountain Plover, for instance, frequents the large expanses of irrigated agricultural fields of the Imperial Valley. The authoritative recent publications by Cohen and Hyun [1] and the PEIR [2] contain more or less the same information: the former states that "402 native and 5 non-native [bird] species have been recorded in and around the Salton Sea" (p. 20 and p. 27) while the latter asserts that "more than 400 resident, migratory, and special status bird species have been recorded in the Salton Sea area since its formation, with about 270 of those species using the Salton Sea on a fairly regular basis" (Executive Summary p. ES-6).

We were able to label a total of 159 species of the Salton Sink's avifauna as 'waterbirds' associated in some -often marginal ways-with the Salton Sea Sink. This includes the Yuma Clapper Rail which prefers to breed in the freshwater marshes on the south side of the Salton Sea (Wister, Unit 1, and marshes along the New River according to [3]) as well as many species that have been recorded once or a few times at most. A majority, namely 110 of these waterbird species actually use the open water and the muddy or rocky shores of this inland sea; included in this number are all species designated as common, fairly common, uncommon, or rare breeders or visitors by Patten et al. [3]. Accidental vagrant visitors such as the Blue-footed Booby were excluded, however, even though the Salton Sea appears to have acted as a magnet for sightings of accidental vagrants. When we add the fish-feeding Bald Eagle and Osprey to this list we arrive at a total of 112 bird species associated directly with the Salton Sea. Some 16 species are common to rare regular breeders found at the Salton Sea (Table 1, after [3]).

### *A Polluted and Perilous Bird Habitat*

It is widely known that the Salton Sea is highly contaminated with an assortment of unusually concentrated natural elements (selenium) and inorganic compounds (hydrogen sulfide and ammonia) that are considered harmful to birds as well as other vertebrates (including fish species). In its current state, the

Salton Sea can become a very perilous ecosystem for birds. California government agencies have been unable to clean up the Salton Sea and its highly polluted inflows from Mexican urban runoff and agricultural drains in the Imperial Valley. The Salton Sea should have been sealed off as a poisonous sump were it not such a huge lake. As a rather shallow body of water it has experienced occasional episodes of low oxygen following high turbidity and/or rich algal blooms. This results in large fish die-offs and bacterial contamination. The severity and frequency of bird die-offs at the Salton Sea "has increased since the 1970s" (Patten et al. 2003 [3]). My readings on the last major bird catastrophes in the 1990s filled me with sadness and the conviction that something has to be done because birds deserve a better Salton Sea than the presently existing desert sump.

#### *Importance of the Salton Sea for Bird Migration*

The Salton Sea and the surrounding fields and marshes can provide an extraordinary birding experience. The region is without doubt a hugely important stopover ecosystem for large numbers of shorebirds and waterfowl on the Pacific Flyway. It cannot function - and never has - as replacement for the many lost wetlands further north and west in California and elsewhere. Most of those freeze over in the winter and have therefore never been able to accommodate the 100,000s of migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. The southern latitude and hot climate of the Salton Sea have been a bonus for waterbirds since 1906; to a large extent, the Salton Sea region may have served as an alternate for those transient bird populations that lost their traditional Colorado River stopover and wintering habitats in the last century.

How significant are the numbers of migrating and wintering birds? The numbers are staggering, reaching tens of thousands, even millions of birds at peak migration. Some 14 species exceed 5% of their N. American population size in the Salton Sink area. Four species exceed more than 20%. The Eared Grebe is by far the most abundant non-breeding species of the Salton Sea, followed in its percentage rank by Gull-billed Tern, Ring-billed Gull and Black-necked Stilt.

**Table 1: Breeding Birds of the Salton Sea**

Species	Status and Seasonal Presence
Clark's Grebe	fR
Western Grebe	uS, fW
Brown Pelican	rS
Double-crested Cormorant	cP
Great Blue Heron	cP
Great Egret	cP
Snowy Egret	cP
Cattle Egret	cR
Snowy Plover	cS
Killdeer	cR
Black-necked Stilt	cR
Laughing Gull	rS, fT
California Gull	rS, cW
Gull-billed Tern	fs
Caspian Tern	fs, rW
Black Skimmer	fs

Data from Patten et al. (2003); abbreviations:  
 c = common, f = fairly common,  
 u = uncommon, r = rare;  
 S = summer visitor, T = transient,  
 W = winter visitor, R = resident,  
 P = perennial visitor.

See Table 2.

#### *Habitat Needs of Priority Bird Species*

Only four of the fourteen highly ranked species prefer saltwater habitats. They are Eared Grebe, Gull-billed Tern, Black-necked Stilt, and American Avocet. In addition, Snowy Plover, Caspian Tern and Black Skimmer have a preference for saline environments. Selected shore habitats and shallow saline habitats can serve all of these species except the Eared Grebe. The latter species is quite unique in its breeding and transient habitat-associated movements [7]. It is, however, the most abundant of all Podiceps species in the world. The American subspecies has a very large population and up to 85% of it may spend a few weeks at the Salton Sea going to and returning from the Gulf of California and Mono Lake. A hundred years ago, where did these birds fatten up before embarking on their long distance migration when there were no pile worms from the Salton Sea available to them? The lakes to the north are too cold (frozen) and

without food in late fall and winter. If they moved across SE California they must have continued on to the original Colorado wetlands and delta region. In our world today, the saline but sometimes perilous Salton Sea constitutes a crucial survival link between wintering and breeding areas. The other top-ranked species (Table 2) prefer open water and/or lagoons and marshes which will continue to be available during and after a Salton Sea restoration in the existing river deltas and wildlife refuges.

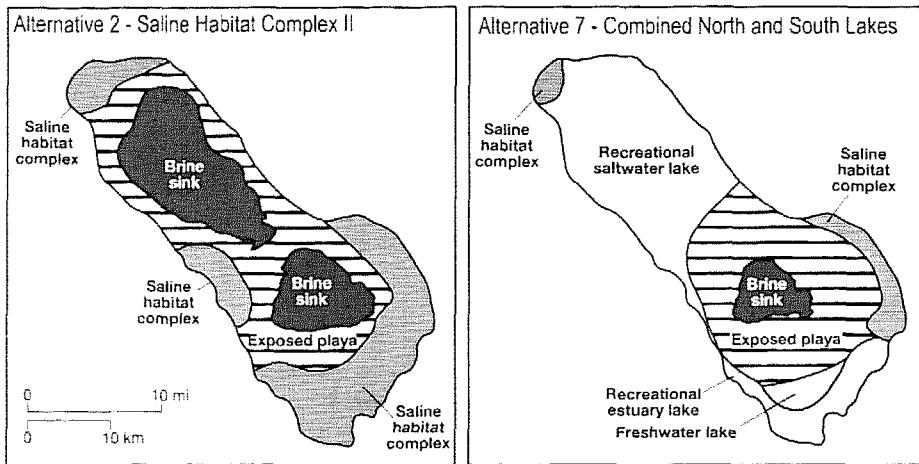
#### *The Restoration Alternatives*

The final eight Restoration Alternatives for the future of the Salton Sea (PEIR [2]) show a great promise for cleaning up the pollution of the entire region, for providing low and high salinity lakes and for creating thousand of acres of additional shallow saline habitats that are of the greatest utility for all saline water bird specialists including Snowy Plover, Caspian Tern, Gull-billed Tern and Black Skimmer. Some of the alternatives require massive engineering works, however, that may not be completed for 20 or 50 years. None provides an ideal solution of the Salton Sea emergency that can satisfy all stakeholders (farmers, motorized boating fans, public health departments, fishing enthusiasts, birders, etc). All of them have a price tag of \$2.3 to 5.9 billion most of which would be needed for construction phase 1 and phase 2 over the next 25 years or so. This appears to be expensive but pales when we compare it to the costs of freeway construction in urban areas. Some alternatives include the construction of a barrier berm or dam that would separate half or more of the lake surface as a deep and low salinity lake from a brine lake and other habitats. I will discuss two of the eight alternatives (see map) as they pertain to the diversity and welfare of birds.

#### *Alternative 2 (Saline Habitat Complex II)*

This Alternative would create two separate brine sink lakes (85,000 acres) and three so-called Saline Habitat Complex areas (75,000 acres); the latter resemble the shallow water salt evaporation ponds found in the French Camargue region and in Sardinia; I have stud-

Fig. 2 The proposed Salton Sea Restoration Alternatives 2 & 7.



ied these areas in the past and found them to be extremely attractive to the same set of shore and other waterbirds that frequent the Salton Sea today. If supplied with sufficient berms and islets above the water these 'salinas' would provide exceptional breeding and feeding opportunities for grebes, shorebirds, and literally hundreds if not thousands of pairs of Snowy Plover, Stilt, and other saltwater birds. This Alternative could easily accommodate a multiple number of today's breeding and migratory waterbirds. Efficient water pollution treatment facilities would also be in operation and provide for a much healthier water quality. Air quality management actions would include spraying of the exposed dry Playa areas (91,000 acres) with brine, and irrigation of salt-tolerant vegetation in areas prone to dust storms containing micro-particles. Construction cost: \$3.3 billion. Annual operations and maintenance cost: \$107 million in 2006 dollars. The Saline Habitat Complex would be constructed in five periods beginning around 2012 and ending in 2028.

#### *Alternative 7 (Combined North and South Lake)*

This ambitious Alternative would develop a Deep Marine Sea [recreational saltwater lake] in the north combined with a moderately deep Marine Sea in the south (104,000 - 115,000 acres depending on water inflows). There would be two smaller Saline Habitat Complex areas (12,000 acres), a small Brine Sink (15,000 acres), an exposed dry Playa (97,000 acres) as well as an 11,000 acre freshwater reservoir operated by the Imperial Irrigation District. Construction cost: \$5.2 billion. Annual operations and maintenance cost: \$82 million in 2006 dollars. The Saline Habitat Complex would be constructed in three periods between 2012 and 2022. The Marine Sea would achieve its salinity objectives by 2056 at the earliest. The dry Playa would be coated with a protective salt crust using salt crystallizer ponds. Birds would therefore have the choice of four different water bodies, an unusual diversity within a desert sea. This Alternative could easily provide excellent habitat for many fish species and could therefore serve as breeding and wintering habitat for large numbers of fish-eating birds such as pelicans as

well as for the millions of Eared Grebes passing through the Salton Sea ecosystem.

#### *Enhancing the Natural Capital*

At this stage in the debate I will not endorse any particular Alternative. Because so many factors need to be considered (general feasibility, fiscal constraints, public health advocacy, recreation, etc.) it is likely that some compromise using elements from more than one Alternative will be agreed upon in the end. Along with this 'restoration' effort (I always hesitate when using this term because strictly speaking we are talking here about creating something quite new in order to rehabilitate and enhance the so-called natural capital of the Salton Sink ecosystem) come extensive water conservation efforts, urban water treatment plants for the polluted river systems, etc. that will benefit the wildlife of the Salton Sink and the entire Imperial Valley. I wish, however, to endorse and press for a strong binational cooperative effort to return some Imperial Valley irrigation water to the Colorado River thereby increasing its flow near its delta. Such a strategy was proposed by Rodger Schlickeisen, President of Defenders of Wildlife, in the Foreword to an excellent book on the plight of the Colorado Delta (Bergman 2002 [8]). The potentially abundant wetlands, salt flats, and lagoons of the Colorado Delta complex would and should complement the Salton Sea ecosystem to form one of the finest and largest wetland habitat complexes in North America.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

Without restoration the Salton Sea will become even more hazardous for people and the surrounding landscapes than it is today; it will also become much smaller and less attractive as a wildlife habitat. Managing a shrinking Salton Sea and mitigating its adverse effects on human and natural systems would become more expensive as well (anticipated future operations and maintenance costs: \$48 million per year). Therefore California needs to address the Salton Sea restoration issue now. The carefully crafted eight Restoration Alternatives offer the potential for a much healthier Salton Sink ecosystem and for more accessible and better bird habitats than have existed for the last 50 years. We must support the restoration effort and let our decision-makers know of our resolve to fight for the revitalization of this unique ecosystem. California has lost too many wetland habitats already. This one must persist!

Against all odds, the Salton Sea has attracted an exceptional diversity of birds over its relatively short existence and has been a high priority visiting locale for multitudes of birdwatchers. So, if organizations and corporations not affiliated with Audubon tout the Salton Sea as a bird paradise, we should welcome it as long as their goals and actions favor the wildlife of the region. I have the hope that the restoration initiatives for the Salton Sea can greatly benefit the Salton Sink avifauna and create an ecosystem with great environmental health attributes that can truly become a bird paradise for California and the world. Let's have a better Salton Sea!

**Table 2: Rank of Bird Species Using Salton Sea Wetland/Lake/Shore Habitats**

Rank	Species	Salton Sea Abundance	N American Population	Salton Sea's %
<b>80-90%</b>				
1	Eared Grebe	3,500,000	4,100,000	85.37
<b>40-50%</b>				
2	Gull-billed Tern	340	780	43.59
<b>20-30%</b>				
3	Ring-billed Gull	500,000	1,700,000	29.41
4	Black-necked Stilt	35,000	150,000	23.33
<b>10-20%</b>				
5	Ruddy Duck	75,000	409,783	18.30
6	White-faced Ibis	15,000	100,000	15.00
7	California Gull	75,000	500,000	15.00
8	Whimbrel	7,500	57,000	13.16
9	Long-billed Dowitcher	60,000	500,000	12.00
10	American Avocet	50,000	450,000	11.11
11	American White Pelican	10,000	100,000	10.00
<b>5-10%</b>				
12	Western & Clark's Grebe	8,600	118,000	7.29
13	Marbled Godwit	10,000	169,500	5.90
14	Clapper Rail ssp. <i>yum.</i>	400	7,364	5.43

Note: Mountain Plover and Long-billed Curlew have been omitted since they frequent Imperial Valley field habitats.

## AUDUBON & THE SALTON SEA

There are more resources on the Salton Sea on the websites listed below. Audubon California and Salton Sea Coalition take the position that "none of the alternatives presented in the Draft PEIR satisfies the legal requirements to maximize wildlife habitat, air and water quality protection in a reasonable timeframe." Their "evolved" alternative distilled from parts of all of the alternatives and sample comment letters are included on their websites, along with their histories of involvement on the Salton Sea.

The deadline for comments on the draft PEIR from the public is January 16, 2007. A final EIR is expected in Spring, 2007 from the Salton Sea Authority.

For a history of Audubon California's involvement in the Salton Sea and a sample letter visit

[www.audubon-ca.org/salton\\_sea.html](http://www.audubon-ca.org/salton_sea.html)

For sample letters of comment on the Draft PEIR to send to your representative visit

[www.saltonseacoalition.org](http://www.saltonseacoalition.org)

For the Salton Sea Authority draft Programmatic EIR including the alternatives visit

[www.saltonsea.water.ca.gov/PEIR/](http://www.saltonsea.water.ca.gov/PEIR/)

Join Nick Freeman on the LA Audubon field trip to the Salton Sea on Saturday and Sunday, January 13 and 14th. See FIELD TRIPS in this issue for details!

*The Editor would especially like to thank Kimball Garrett, Kathy Molina, Kathie Satterfield and Julia Levin for their generous and considerable contributions to the editorial process of this article.*

*The author is a Professor at the University of California, Los Angeles.*

# **GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT**

## **FEBRUARY 16-19, 2007**

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**The City of Beverly Hills and Los Angeles Audubon Society  
join in the  
10th annual Great Backyard Bird Count  
Friday-Monday, February 16-19, 2007.**

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a national yearly four-day event that engages citizens of all levels of bird watching in counting birds for as little or as long as they wish in their backyards, parks, or other natural areas. The results are entered anytime into the Great Backyard Bird Count web site <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/> to give scientists at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology a mid-winter snapshot of the numbers, kinds, and distribution of birds across the continent. The program is hosted by Audubon and Cornell.

To receive a flyer with more details, to sign up for the class or to join the four day event call Beverly Hills Recs & Parks at 310-550-4761.

### **Introduction to Birdwatching**

Los Angeles Audubon presents the basics of bird watching in advance of the Great Backyard Bird Count. Topics including how to use the best optics and field guides, and how to observe and identify birds in your backyard, local parks, or nature areas around Los Angeles. *Instructors: Eleanor Osgood & Jenny Jones*

**Day: Saturday, February 10, 2007**

**Time: 10am-12pm** (including possible bird watch around Roxbury Park depending on weather).

**Site: Roxbury Park Community Center Auditorium**

To sign up call Beverly Hills Recs & Parks at 310-550-4761.

Bring your binoculars and field guide, or shop for them at  
Los Angeles Audubon Nature Store in West Hollywood  
323-876-0202  
[www.laadubon.org](http://www.laadubon.org).

# City of Beverly Hills

## COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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American Goldfinch

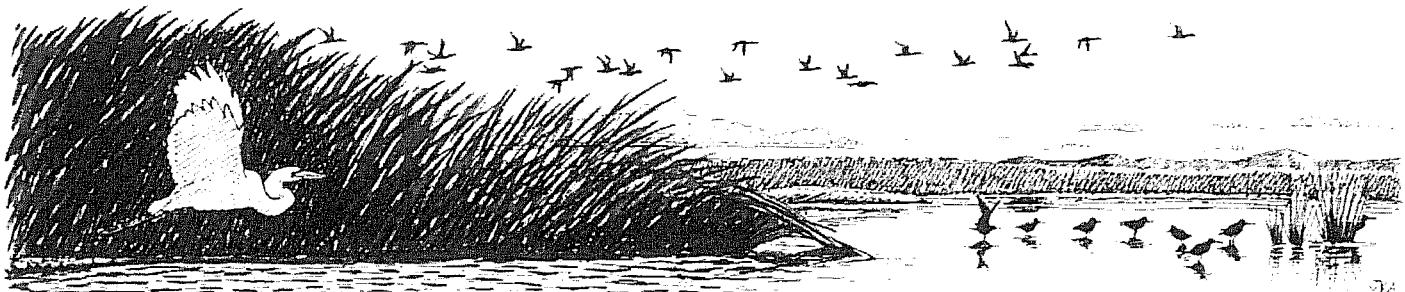
Northern Mockingbird

Western Scrub Jay

Townsend's Warbler

# Winter 2007

Classes and Activities



# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Garry George

## Why we care about Great Blue Herons in LA

Los Angeles Audubon Society is involved in the issue of heron and egret rookeries in densely populated coastal areas. The story has received worldwide press coverage through articles in the Associated Press, South Bay Daily Breeze, the Argonaut, on KCET "Life and Times" and in an upcoming story on NPR. The media interest is focused primarily on the conflicts between human use and roosting and nesting Great Blue Herons at a restaurant and marina in Long Beach, and at Villa Venicia and Marina Harbor apartment and condo complexes in Marina del Rey. Black-crowned Night-herons, Green Herons, Great Egrets and Snowy Egrets are also found in the colonies and recently a nesting White-tailed Kite was photographed at Villa Venicia but the media and biological consultants working for developers focus on Great Blue Heron as the species of greatest importance and nuisance, possibly due to its size and ease in photography, even though KCET got it wrong and filmed Double-crested Cormorants in their story. The emergence of the Great Blue Heron as a symbol of the paradigm of the struggles of nature versus the needs of man is interesting and could be productive for the (recently revised) mission of Los Angeles Audubon "to promote the enjoyment and protection of birds and other wildlife through recreation, education, conservation and restoration." That mission clearly puts us into the controversy on the side of the birds, but is there an opportunity presenting itself while ironically advocating for the conservation of non-native trees in urban environments? Could the Great

Blue Heron be a flagship species that could awaken Angelenos to the joys of birds and a cleaner, greener Los Angeles and be the symbol for a greater appreciation of all native birds in Los Angeles?

Populations of Great Blue Herons are also a topic of discussion in stakeholder committees on Master Plans for Los Angeles River and Silverlake Reservoir and in peripheral discussions on Channel Islands Harbor in Ventura, Los Alamitos Marina in Long Beach and in Long Beach Harbor.

In the Audubon tradition, our role is to advocate for the birds with good science. This alone is a tremendous step in the partisan process while advocates on both sides claim science that justifies their goal, and raw data is often interpreted to reach Alice in Wonderland conclusions that makes anyone taking the time to read the data feel like they've fallen down a hole. Public hearings are contentious and often bereft of fact.





Here's what we know about populations of Great Blue Herons in Los Angeles County:

1. Great Blue Herons are making a dramatic comeback.

Late in the 19th century, Grinnell (1898) wrote that Great Blue Heron "breeds sparingly in the county." According to the upcoming Los Angeles Audubon Breeding Bird Atlas (courtesy co-author Larry Allen) "No county [breeding] colonies could be cited in publications from 1933 or 1981 (Garrett and Dunn 1981, Willett 1933). In 2000, surveys recorded 300 breeding bird pairs.

2. Great Blue Herons have adapted to non-native vegetation.

Once a nester in forests near water, the lack of habitat has prompted the herons to adapt to non-native tall trees near their feeding grounds. In Marina del Rey they nest and roost in cypress, pine and fan palm and in Silverlake they nest in eucalyptus.

3. Great Blue Herons are extending their nesting periods.

The Breeding Bird Atlas found nesting periods from 26 February to 10 August and recent documentation by Urban Wildlife Task Force members Jason Stuck and Lisa Fimiani show fledglings in trees in October and member David DeLange has recorded courtship display as early as December in Marina del Rey.

4. Great Blue Herons are a symbol for and evidence of environmental recovery

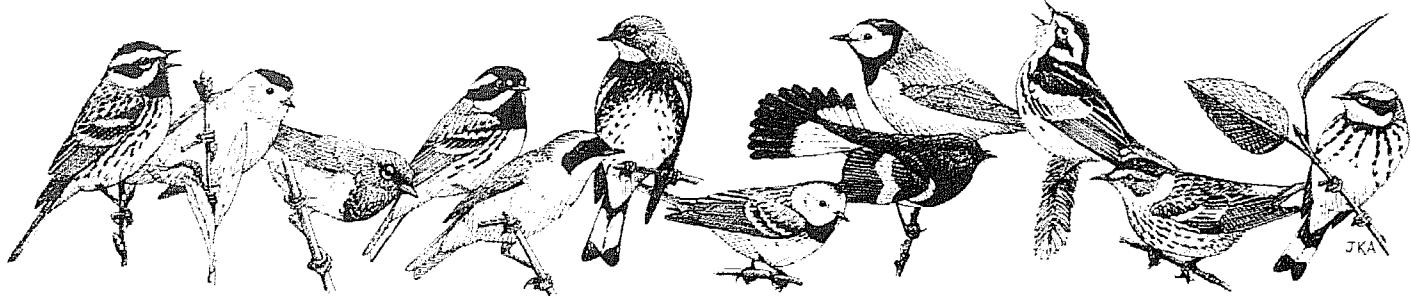
New signs on the Los Angeles River signs feature an illustration of a Great Blue Heron. The recent cover of LA WEEEEKLY on streams in Los Angeles featured an illustration of a Great Blue Heron. Both Larry Allen, co-author of LA Audubon Breeding Bird Atlas and Robert Butler, author of the recent book *The Great Blue Heron* attribute the comeback to increased environmental recovery through clean water programs and habitat restoration.

So, let's celebrate the Great Blue Heron's recovery in Los Angeles County and find common ground by

1) providing protected habitat. With all the great minds and financial resources of the greening of Los Angeles and passage of Proposition 84, there must be some out of the box re-vegetation that could provide sufficient habitat for these birds so that people can enjoy them without considering them a nuisance. Los Angeles City engineers recently created floating habitat in Echo Park Lake that cleans the water and provides food and shelter for wildlife. Why not let ecology experts build islands in the Marina del Rey channel, Silverlake Reservoir and LA River where the birds could be protected from predators and people could watch them from afar? If enough new habitat were built and became functional, i.e. the birds began using it successfully, then there could be less heated discussions about removing current habitat.

2) making the Great Blue Heron a symbol of the city and the County. Portland, the greenest city in the U.S., prides itself on the protected island habitat it provides for Great Blue Herons and that bird has become a symbol of the city's environment. Portland even celebrates the heron with a brewery of Great Blue Heron pale ale! We could do the same with a public campaign that generates interest in birds and nature and clean water.

3) protecting "filopatric" species nests year round. Current federal, state, city and county laws protect native birds during nesting season but the habitat is fair game during the rest of time unless protected by the Coastal Commission or some other state or federal agency. This year, an attempt was made in the Parks, Wildlife and Water Committee of the California Assembly by our own Assembly-member Paul Koretz (D-West Los Angeles) to amend the Fish & Game code to protect nests of "filopatric" birds (birds that are faithful to their nests by returning to them) year round rather than just during the nesting season. Filopatric birds include herons and egrets as well as eagle, osprey, some owls and other raptors. That attempt failed in Committee by one vote, but the effort could be restarted in the Assembly and in the Senate.



## BIRDS OF THE SEASON

August through October are months in the birding year that most of us anticipate more than any others. The variety of birds, of both the rare and regular variety, is what makes the fall migration period so intriguing. It's also a time of year that has the potential for producing real rarities. This fall did not disappoint in that regard in that it produced two new birds for the county. The only problem is there never seems to be enough time to get to all the places you want to bird. Fortunately there are a lot of dedicated observers out there and if I can't see all the good birds myself, I'll settle for living vicariously through them.

Interesting this fall was the fact that no real high-end eastern warblers or vireos were reported from the county this season. The best birds this fall were all non-passerines. In early October, reports from a number of observers indicated an above average movement of **Mountain Chickadees**, **White-breasted Nuthatches** and even a handful of **Brown Creepers** into the lowlands. This trend continued through the period with reports of chickadees being widespread and a White-breasted Nuthatch even making it to Malibu Lagoon.

September and October are still early for many waterfowl, but not too early for a **Cackling Goose** on the lake at Hansen Dam on October 23 (Kimball Garrett). Almost a week later a possible "Aleutian" **Cackling Goose** was at Ballona Freshwater Marsh on October 28 (Kevin Larson, Richard Barth, Carol Selvey). Six **Greater White-fronted Geese**, regular but rare, were at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on October 28 (Ted Kopf), and a sizeable flock of thirty-six was at

Piute Ponds on October 8 (Mike San Miguel). An immature **Snow Goose** was at Malibu Lagoon on November 5 (Jon Fisher) where several spent last winter. Also of interest well away from the coast was a **Surf Scoter** at Piute Ponds on October 15 (Russ & Dorothy Stone).

An October 14 boat trip out of San Pedro turned up two excellent finds. First, a **Masked Booby** was spotted on the breakwater near Cabrillo Beach. Only two other coastal records exist for this species in L.A. County (including one identified as either a Nazca or Masked Booby), with several other reports from San Clemente Island. Later in the morning, and several miles northwest of Palos Verdes point, a **Red-footed Booby** was seen over Redondo Canyon (both Kimball Garrett). This ends a long absence for this species in the county with the last record being one brought into rehab in August 1991. Also of note was an errant **Brown Pelican** along the San Gabriel River at Wilderness Park in Downey on October 7 (Larry Schmahl).

**Swainson's Hawks** are scarce west of the deserts, but a few flocks are reported passing through the area each spring and fall. A dozen birds were observed over Pasadena on October 10 (John DeModena) and smaller groups were seen over Claremont on October 23 and 26 (Tom Miko).

Very unusual was a **Sandhill Crane** seen briefly at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on October 7 (Andrew Lee). An additional sighting for the period was a group of four immature Sandhill Cranes in the Antelope Valley on October 21 (Mike San Miguel).

by Jon Fisher

The lower Los Angeles River was excellent for shorebirds for most of the season, with good numbers of birds as well as rarities being the rule rather than the exception. An adult **Pacific Golden-Plover** with an injured leg that was first found on August 31 continued through September 10 (Richard Barth). A superb and surprising find was L.A. County's first **Upland Sandpiper** seen just above Willow Street on September 23 (Larry Schmahl, Mickey Long). After it was identified, the bird flew to the top of the west bank where it was in easy view of participants from two Audubon field trips. The bird was reported again on September 24, but apparently continued south after that. Uplands are typically associated with grassland habitats, so the apparent preference for concrete is puzzling. One has to assume that given the location there wasn't much good habitat to choose from. Outside the county, another Upland Sandpiper was found on an LAAS trip to the Oxnard Plain on October 28 (Nick & Mary Freeman).

A few Baird's, Solitary and Pectoral Sandpipers were present through much of the period on the river, with a high count of nine **Baird's Sandpipers** made on September 9 (Kevin Larson). Away from the river, single Baird's were found on September 8 along Ballona Creek at Inglewood Blvd. (Don Sterba) and at Malibu Lagoon on September 11 (Irwin Woldman). At the Piute Ponds two Baird's Sandpipers and two **Pectoral Sandpipers** were present on September 8 (Mike San Miguel) and another was there on October 8 (Irwin Woldman). Another Pectoral offered extremely close views at Malibu Lagoon from October 20-22 (Muriel Kotin).

It was a good year for Ruffs. One found on the LA River on September 2 continued through September 10. Another individual, its noticeably larger size indicating a male, was on the river from September 25 through October 22 (both Richard Barth). Still another Ruff, either the third or fourth on the river this fall, was discovered just above Willow Street during a shorebird survey on November 5 (Kevin Larson).

Two **Parasitic Jaegers** were at Cabrillo Beach in San Pedro on September 30 (Bernardo Alps). One lingered on the beach there through October 4. Another Parasitic was found at the Piute Ponds on Edwards Air Force Base on September 8 (Mike San Miguel). Rare for the San Gabriel Valley was a **Common Tern** at Peck Pit in Arcadia from September 16-24 (Andrew Lee). Another inland tern worthy of note was an **Arctic Tern** at Piute Ponds on October 8 (Mike San Miguel).

Columbiformes of interest included two **Eurasian Collared-Doves** at Wilderness Park in Downey on October 7 and a **Common Ground-Dove** nearby on the same day (both Larry Schmahl). The big surprise though, and a first record for the county, was an adult male **Ruddy Ground-Dove** found at a private residence in La Canada October 10 (Mark Hunter).

Very rare coastally was a **Short-eared Owl** that showed up at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh from October 28-29 (Richard Barth, Don Sterba). **Burrowing Owls** are scarce migrants anywhere in the L.A. Basin, but one that spent the day perched in a tree on Spring Street in downtown L.A. on October 20 (Sue Horton) was even more noteworthy because of the odd location.

Few flycatchers of note were found this fall. A **Tropical Kingbird** at Holy Cross Cemetery in Culver City on October 14 (Tom Miko) was the only one reported. As might have been predicted, the **Thick-billed Kingbird** that spent last winter at Banning Park in Wilmington returned. It was first seen on November 4 (Kevin Larson). The **Vermilion Flycatcher** that wintered last year at a soccer field in South El Monte returned as of

October 22 (Jeff Webster). Another repeat Vermilion was back in Willowbrook as of October 25 (Richard Barth). A **Gray Flycatcher** at Hahamonga Watershed Park in Pasadena on November 4 (Ron Cyger) was the only one reported.

Reports of **Plumbeous Vireos** included birds at Peck Pit in Arcadia on September 16 (Andrew Lee), at DeForest Park in Long Beach on September 23 (Richard Barth), in Claremont on October 25 (Mike San Miguel) and in Hahamonga Park Pasadena on November 4 (Ron Cyger). Also of note was a **Bell's Vireo** at DeForest Park in Long Beach on September 24 (Richard Barth).

**Horned Larks** are now quite rare west of the deserts and interior valleys, thus one at Hansen Dam on October 14(?)23 (Kimball Garrett) and another flying over Sepulveda Basin on November 4 (Jon Fisher) were noteworthy. Another sparse migrant was a **Purple Martin** was at DeForest Park on September 16 (Kevin Larson) for only the second coastal report this fall.

As expected, a variety of 'eastern' warblers passed through during the period. Four reports of **Tennessee Warblers** came in during October with the first being one at the Village Green Condos in Los Angeles on October 7 (Andy Birch). Another (?) was there on October 23-November 1 (Don Sterba). Other Tennessee Warblers were at Wilderness Park in Redondo Beach on October 14 (Kevin Larson) and Legg Lake in South El Monte on October 15 (Larry Schmahl). A **Virginia's Warbler** at Piute Ponds on September 10 (Mark & Janet Scheel) was the first one reported this fall. Other Virginia's were at DeForest Park in Long Beach on September 14 (Karen Gilbert) at Peck Pit in Arcadia on September 17 (Andrew Lee) and in Los Angeles at the Kenneth Hahn Recreation Area on October 3 (Pete & Mary Shen). The only **Northern Parula** was in La Crescenta On September 25 (John Kelly).

A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** at Oak Park Cemetery in Claremont September 26 (Michael San Miguel Jr.) was the only one found. Four **Blackpoll Warblers** were recorded, with one at Oak Park

Cemetery on September 26 (Michael San Miguel Jr.), another at the Village Green Condos in Los Angeles from October 3-6 (Don Sterba), one in El Segundo Library Park on September 21 (Richard Barth) and the last at Ballona Freshwater Marsh October 20 (Don Sterba). **Palm Warblers** were represented by just three individuals. One was at Balboa Lake in Encino on September 24 (Andy Birch), another was at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on October 14 (Dave Moody) and a third was at Hansen Dam in Sylmar on October 23 (Kimball Garrett). A nice find was an adult male **Black-throated Green Warbler** at Peck Pit in Arcadia on September 17 (Andrew Lee).

A handful of **Black-and-White Warblers** were found with birds seen at Sand Dune Park on September 17 (Kevin Larson) and October 10 (Lori Conrad). Reports also came from Oak Park Cemetery in Claremont on September 23 (Rick Clements), Ladera Heights on October 4-6 (Richard Barth), Ed Vincent Park in Inglewood on October 10 and Atwater Village on October 16 and (both Richard Barth). The latest report was of one at Legg Lake in South El Monte on October 15 (Larry Schmahl). The only **Northern Waterthrush** reported was at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on September 17 (Kevin Larson).

Several **American Redstarts** turned up, with one at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on September 15 (Kevin Larson), another at Sepulveda Basin in Van Nuys September 29-30 (Bob Pann, Alan Dunn) and one at El Segundo Library Park on September 21 (Richard Barth).

In the last issue I wrote that one thing we know for sure is that "this year will not be a carbon copy of the last one". In one respect though, it very nearly is. Four of last year's six **Painted Redstarts** returned to the same locations where they spent the winter of 2005-06. The redstart at Bonelli Park in San Dimas was first noted on October 8 (Andrew Lee). One of two birds that spent last winter at Elysian Park was found again on October 23 (Sue Horton), and single birds were rediscovered at Big Dalton Canyon near Glendora and at Monrovia Canyon on November 1 and 2 respectively (both Mike San Miguel).

**Summer Tanagers** were in Clare-

# BIRDS OF THE SEASON

mont on September 12 (Tom Miko) and at Sepulveda Basin on October 12 (Alan Dunn). Four more appeared within days of each other in early November. These birds were at Exposition Park on November 1 (Kimball Garrett), in Ladera Heights and Inglewood on November 2 (Richard Barth, Don Sterba) and in Bailey Canyon in Sierra Madre on November 5 (Elaine MacPherson).

Though a fairly common breeder in our higher mountains and regular as a migrant on the deserts, **Green-tailed Towhees** are quite scarce in the L.A. basin. The only report was from Loyola Marymount University in Westchester on September 30 (Russell Stone). A "Large-billed" **Savannah Sparrow** was at Cabrillo Beach San Pedro on September 8 (Bernardo Alps). Though they breed locally, **Grasshopper Sparrows** are extraordinarily scarce as migrants. Thus single birds along the L.A. River in Van Nuys on September 9 and another at Peck Pit in Arcadia on September 24 (both Jon Fisher) were of interest.

It was a good fall for **Clay-colored Sparrows** with single birds found at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on October 5 (Richard Barth) along the San Gabriel River below Slauson on October 7 (Larry Schmahl), at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on October 14 (Dave Moody), Bonelli Park San Dimas on October 20 (Rod Higbie), Hansen Dam October 23 (Kimball Garrett) and at Oak Park Cemetery in Claremont on October 25 (Mike San Miguel).

The only coastal report of a **Vesper Sparrow** was one at Hansen Dam on October 23 (Kimball Garrett). A returning **Swamp Sparrow** was back at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on October 16 (Rod Higbie) and another was near the Piute Ponds in the Antelope Valley on October 27 (Mike San Miguel). Other sparrows included the only reported **White-throated Sparrow** at Descanso Gardens November 1 (Will & Lois Fulmer) and a "Pink-sided" **Junco**, very rare in the county, seen in Westchester on November 1 (Richard Barth).

Two **Lapland Longspurs**, rare anywhere on the coastal plain, flew over Harbor Park in Wilmington on October 21 (Kevin Larson). A **McCown's Longspur** was at a ranch in the Antelope Valley on October 27 (Mike San Miguel).

**Baltimore Orioles** were at Oak Park Cemetery in Claremont on October 1 (Mike San Miguel) and at West L.A. College October 23 (Don Sterba). Reports of **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** came from the San Gabriel River near Whittier on October 7 (Larry Schmahl) and at Sepulveda Basin on October 21 (Jon Fisher). **Bobolinks** were few in number with one at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on September 15 (Robb Hamilton) and another along the L.A. River in Van Nuys on September 9 (Jon Fisher). Well to the northeast of us in San Bernardino County, but well worth mentioning, was a **Streak-backed Oriole** found at Zzyzx on October 9 (Michael San Miguel Jr.). The bird lingered there for a week and accommodated many L.A. area birders.

It was certainly a respectable fall, but it always seems to go by in a flash. The lower L.A. River, wonderfully productive over the last few months, has already seen a significant decrease in the number and diversity of shorebirds. The first substantial rains will dramatically accelerate that trend. And now as I'm finishing this column, the first Christmas Bird Counts will be taking place in five short weeks.

As we head into late fall and winter, things will settle down and our birding habits will inevitably change accordingly. Working our local parks and other little green patches along the coast and in the valleys will offer rewards as lingering, wintering and returning vagrants will continue to be found. The Antelope Valley, though likely windy and cold, can be explored through the winter for longspurs, sparrows and raptors. The San Gabriels still hold woodpeckers and owls and perhaps a flock of Evening Grosbeaks. Or try birding somewhere you've never been before, or a spot that receives little or no coverage. Don't forget to check your backyard... you just might find a Ruddy Ground-Dove.

**R**ecords of rare and unusual birds reported in this column should be considered tentative pending review by the regional editors of *North American Birds* or, if appropriate, by the California Birds Records Committee.

To report birds, send observations with as many details as possible to:

*Birds of the Season,*

*North American Birds, L.A. County*  
Kimball L. Garrett  
Ornithology Collections Manager  
Natural History Museum of L.A. County  
900 Exposition Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90007  
e-mail: kgarrett@nhm.org

*California Bird Records Committee*  
Guy McCaskie  
P.O. Box 275  
Imperial Beach, CA 91933-0275  
e-mail: guymcc@pacbell.net

To report birds for the tape, call:

Jon Fisher: (818) 544-5009 (work)  
e-mail: JonF60@hotmail.com

# NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

## TERNS & PLOVERS

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON and SANTA MONICA BAY AUDUBON have jointly received a grant of \$2,500 from Chapter Funding of Audubon California to survey and monitor Western Snowy Plovers and Least Terns on Los Angeles County beaches. No breeding pairs of Western Snowy Plovers have been found in the last few years in LA County, and one of the goals will be to survey historic nesting sites to look for breeding birds. LAAS and SMBAY have applied for another grant for the project to Audubon for funds provided by a grant from the Packard Foundation. A Volunteer program will begin in January. Check [www.laadubon.org](http://www.laadubon.org) for details.

## SHRIKE ENDANGERED?

On October 12, 2006 Hartmut Walter, author of the cover article on the Salton Sea petitioned the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to list the *Lanius ludovicianus anthonyi* subspecies of loggerhead shrike as "endangered" throughout its range and requested that critical habitat be designated concurrently with the final listing rule. Dr. Walter's research on the Loggerhead Shrike of Santa Cruz Island was funded in part by LA Audubon grants, and was the subject of a cover article in the *TANAGER* in 2005.

## THE PEOPLE SPEAK

Thanks to the support of voters in California and the efforts of Audubon Prop 84 passed by a slim margin and will provide 5.2 billion dollars in funding for clean water and conservation projects. At the same time Prop 90 projected to have a negative impact on conservation efforts was defeated. Thank you!

*Los Angeles Audubon Society  
expresses our heartfelt thanks to all of  
the members and donors who are  
supporting our endeavors!*

## ROBIN FLIES

Executive Secretary Robin Gose has resigned from the Board due to increased pressures from her work at Culver City High School. Robin served two years on the Board as 2nd VP and Executive Secretary, and as Education Chair. Robin wrote the current naturalist curriculum for LA Audubon.

## EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

LA AUDUBON received a grant from Metropolitan Water District of Southern California in the amount of \$ 3,000 for printing and publication of a booklet to accompany the Baldwin Hills Native Plant & Wildlife Garden Education Program. The booklet will be based on the template of the booklets created years ago for Ballona and Sepulveda. Those had illustrations by Jonathan Aldefer but he is no longer available. The Baldwin Hills booklet will include illustrations and text of some native plants and butterflies as well as birds. Barbara Courtois and Cindy Harding, who manage the Ballona education program, are creating the program at Baldwin Hills which is funded by a contribution from an Anonymous Donor.

## THANK YOU!

Roy & Patricia Disney  
Jeri Hughes  
Marjorie Kim  
Phoebe S Liebig  
Pamela Plotkin  
Daniel Shulman  
Catherine Waters

## WELCOME! NEW & RENEWED MEMBERS

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*Sandy Wohlgemuth Conservation Fund*

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Edith & Tom Van Huss  
Robert Witzeman  
Robert Wohlgemuth & Cynthia Jean Lee  
Board of Directors, Los Angeles  
Audubon Society

# FIELD TRIPS & BIRD WALKS

Before setting out on any field trip, please, call the LAAS bird tape at (323) 874-1318 for special instructions or possible cancellations that may have occurred by the Thursday before the trip

## Monday, January 1 (note change of date!)

### Los Angeles

#### Christmas Bird Count.

Compiler: Raymond Schep. It's not too late to do a CBC! To participate, contact Ray at: rayoohoo@yahoo.com.

## Saturday, January 6

### Debs Park Audubon Center

Join Jenny Jones for a leisurely morning walk through the diverse natural areas that surround the Audubon Center at Debs Park. A wide variety of birds from riparian, chaparral, and walnut woodland habitats can be found, including raptors.

Debs Park Audubon Center is located at 4700 N Griffin Ave., Los Angeles CA 90031, on the west side of the park. From the south: take the Pasadena Freeway (110) north to the Avenue 43 exit. Bear left on Avenue 43rd, up the hill to Griffin Ave. Turn left on Griffin Ave. and go about a quarter mile to the Center's driveway, which goes steeply uphill on the right. From the north: exit the Pasadena Freeway (110) south at Avenue 52. Turn left on Avenue 52, and follow it across the freeway to where it becomes Griffin Ave. The driveway is a quarter mile on the left. Meet at 9:00 AM.

## Sunday, January 7

### Topanga State Park.

Ken Wheeland & Chris Tosdevin will lead participants through this beautiful and diverse coastal mountain area. An ideal trip for a beginning birder or someone new in the area. 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 PCH, take Topanga Cyn. Blvd. 5 miles to Entrada Rd. Parking \$5. Meet at 8:00 AM.

## Sat. & Sun., January 13 & 14

### Salton Sea.

Leader: Nick Freeman. Yellow-footed Gull, Ruddy Ground-Dove, Snow & Ross' geese, Sandhill Cranes, Stilt Sandpiper, and Gila Woodpecker all hopeful to certain. Fee: \$10. No Limit, but sign up with phone, e-mail, and SASE for more details. Meet at 7:00 AM Saturday. Calipatria Inn (800) 830-1113 (leader's preference) and Brawley Inn (760) 344-1199 are recommended. FRS radios & 'scopes helpful. Arrive fed, bring lunches, dinner together.

## Saturday, January 20

### East Antelope Valley.

Leaders: Scott Harris and Stan Gray. Beyond 50th Street East is uncharted territory for many birders. However, Scott has DFG oversight of the area, and Stan birds the area extensively; so they know that Mountain Plover, raptors, LeConte's Thrasher and other AV specialties are sometimes easiest to find in the far eastern reaches of the Valley. Take Hwy 14 N to Avenue S (next to Lake Palmdale). Drive into the Park-and-Ride just to the east of the offramp. Meet at 8:00 AM at the W end of the main lot. Bring lunch and a full tank of gas for a full day of fun in the field. No fee, no reservation. 'Scopes and FRS radios helpful.

## Saturday, January 20

### Kenneth Hahn

### State Recreation Area.

Leader: Ann & Eric Brooks. This trip covers landscaped parkland and natural coastal scrub habitats, and is paced for beginning birders and members of the Baldwin Hills community. The park entrance is off of La Cienega Blvd. Between Rodeo Rd. and Stocker St. After passing the entrance kiosk (\$4 parking fee), turn left (leading to the "Olympic Forest") and park in the first available spaces. Meet at 8:00 AM.

## Sunday, January 21

### Ballona Wetlands.

Bob Shanman leads this trip to our nearest wetland and adjacent rocky jetty. Shorebirds and gulls should be well-entrenched for the Winter. Meet at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot. Take the Marina Fwy (90 W) 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. Meet at 8:00 AM.

## Saturday, January 27

### Parrot Patrol.

Parrots have become a common sight in much of the LA basin, with many species well established. Larry Allen will take us to staging areas and roosting spots for up to eight species of parrots and parakeets now found in the San Gabriel Valley. Meet at 3:00 PM in South Pasadena, and pick out parrots until about 5:00 PM. Take the Pasadena Fwy (110) to Orange Grove Ave, turn S, and meet on the W side of this small street just beyond the offramp.

## Saturday, January 27

### Whittier Narrows.

Leader: Ray Jillson. View colorful resident and migrating birds, possibly including the introduced Northern Cardinal. Take Peck Dr. off the 60 Fwy in South El Monte (just west of the 605 Fwy). Take the off ramp onto Durfee Ave. heading W (right) and turn left into the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave. Meet at 8:15 AM.

## Sunday, January 28

### Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area.

Leader: Kris Ohlenkamp. "Freeway close" morning of birding. Kris has led this walk on-and-off for 20 years, noting 200 species, and averaging 60-65 per walk. Take the 405 fwy N into the San Fernando Valley, turn W on Burbank Blvd. and N (Rt.) on Woodley Ave. to the second Rt., which is marked "Wildlife Area". Turn here and park in the lot at the end. Meet at 8:00 AM, and bird until about 11:30 AM.

# FIELD TRIPS & BIRD WALKS

## Saturday, February 3

### Debs Park Audubon Center

Leader: Dexter Kelly

See January 6 for details

## Saturday, February 3

### Seal Beach Naval Weapons Station Wetlands.

Martin Byhower and a base biologist will drive 12 lucky LAAS participants around this prime wetlands site where Pacific Golden-Plover, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Sage Thrasher and numerous raptors have been known to winter. Decent high tide expected in AM. Base will confirm with us around January 10. Send SASE to Audubon House with e-mail and phone number (phone # required) by January 24. Only SASE-confirmed U.S. citizens with photo ID allowed on base. No cameras or weapons. Meet at the main public lot at 800 Seal Beach Blvd. at 7:30 AM, and bird until noon. Take Seal Beach Blvd. S from the 405 FWY, pass Westminster Blvd., turn left onto the base at the Forrestal Lane light, and left again into the lot.

## Sunday, February 4

### Topanga State Park.

Leaders: Ken Wheeland & Chris Tostevin. Meet at 8:00 AM. \$5 parking fee. See January 7 listing for details.

## Friday, February 9

### Gull Study Workshop Lecture.

Speaker Larry Allen will discuss most gulls that have appeared in North America – most of which have made it to California. Larry will specifically address general aspects of gull topography, the confusing logic of molt sequences, and the finer aspects of identification to age and species. Slides, study skins and handouts will be used. Meet at Audubon House, 7-10 PM, with one break. 20 maximum. \$15 fee, SASE, phone and e-mail numbers mailed to LAAS gets you the lecture & field trip, and flyer with directions. Not offered separately. Park in the south lot, so you don't get locked in.

## Sunday, February 11

### Gull Study Workshop Field Trip.

Leader: Larry Allen. Put your new knowledge to use in the field, perhaps even identifying California & Ring-billed gulls as they fly overhead! Meet at 7:45 AM at Doheny State Beach in Orange County, and ogle the gulls until we're all gull identification experts! 20 maximum. See above to reserve lecture & field trip. Parking fee usually starts at 8:00 AM. Bring a lunch.

## Sat. thru Tues., February 17 thru 20

### Winter SE AZ.

Meet 9AM at Wilcox Playa. Our travels should center around Sulphur Springs Valley and San Rafael Grasslands. \$50 entitles you to follow Nick & Mary Freeman around, as they ogle and pish their way through the sparrows, hawks, thrashers, cranes, plovers and others of this scenic corner of the southwest. Bird until perhaps 3PM on Tuesday. Send check, e-mail, phone number and SASE to LAAS. Maximum 10, minimum 6 participants. You need to reserve & pay for your own car, food, rooms, etc. Hotel names provided. We will try to arrange carpooling. Anticipate breakfast and dinner restaurant options, and lunches on the road.

## Saturday, February 17

### Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area.

Leader: Karen Johnson. Meet at 8:00 AM. \$4 entry fee. See January 20 listing for details.

## Sunday, February 18

### Ballona Wetlands.

Leader Bob Shanman. Meet at 8:00 AM. See January 21 listing for details.

## WESTERN TANAGER

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# FIELD TRIPS & BIRD WALKS

## Saturday and Sunday,

February 24 and 25

### Carrizo Plain.

Leaders: Larry Allen & Mary Freeman. Meet at 8AM in Maricopa. Spectacular scenery. We will see Ferruginous Hawks, Prairie Falcons, Golden Eagles, LeConte's Thrasher, Merlin and pronghorn; with likely Rough-legged Hawk, Mountain Plover and Sandhill Crane. To spice up the trip, we will meet in Maricopa, access the Plain via Crocker Springs Road (as conditions allow), and stay in Buttonwillow Saturday night; then Sunday leave the Plain north via Bitterwater Road before we away to LA. If possible, please carpool or avail your vehicle to others when you reserve. Your phone number will be released for carpooling unless you request otherwise. Send name, phone number, \$5 per person, and SASE to sign-up with Audubon House for exact directions and information. Reserve your own room in Buttonwillow for Saturday night (Motel 6 is here). FRS radios & 'scopes helpful. Limit: 14.

## Saturday, February 24

### Whittier Narrows.

Leader: Ray Jillson. Meet at 8:15 AM. See January 27 listing for details.

## Saturday, March 3

### Bonelli Regional Park.

Leader Rod Higbie. Bonelli Regional Park is a remarkable island of habitat. It has lake, coastal sage, mixed woodland, park and riparian habitats. Birds regularly seen in the past include California Gnatcatcher, Cactus Wren, dancing grebes, and occasionally Golden Eagle. 200 other species throughout the year. From LA, take the 10 or 210 Fwy east towards San Dimas to the top stretch of the 57 Fwy. Proceed N from the 10, or S from the 210 on the 57 Fwy to the Via Verde exit just N of the 10/57 interchange (at the bottom of Kellogg Hill). If coming from the N, turn left onto Via Verde, and left into the "Park and Ride" lot. If coming from the S, be alert that the offramp comes up fast. Proceed Rt. off the ramp onto Via Verde to the "Park and Ride" lot. We will meet here at 7:30 AM to carpool

since there is a \$7.00/car park entrance fee. Rod will continue after lunch, if there is interest. There are picnic tables and facilities. Bring lunch, if you plan to bird past noon. No limit or reservation.

## Sunday, March 4

### Topanga State Park.

Leaders: Ken Wheeland & Chris Tostevin. Meet at 8:00 AM. See January 7 listing for details.

## Saturday, March 10

### Upper Franklin Canyon

#### Birdwalk.

Docent Steve Botts will be escorting us around this local bird haven, with stunning Wood Ducks, resident chaparral species, and a few migrating songbirds expected. Franklin Canyon is located between Sherman Oaks and Beverly Hills. Meet in the parking lot at 8:00 AM, and bird for a few hours. From the 101 Fwy, take Coldwater Cyn. Ave. S into the hills. Immediately after Mulholland Dr. merges from the W with Coldwater Cyn. Ave., make a 90-degree right turn onto Franklin Cyn. Dr. and continue west to the Sooky Goldberg Nature Center. The lot is through a gated drive on the left.

## Saturday and Sunday,

### March 17 and 18

### Anza Borrego

#### Birds, Butterflies and Beyond.

Leader: Fred Heath. High points over the years: Swainson's Hawks, blooming desert evening-primrose and indigo bush, chuckwalla, desert bighorn (annual), LeConte's Thrasher, Long-eared Owl (hopeful). Suggested accommodations: Tamarisk Grove Campground (reserve through [www.reserveamerica.com](http://www.reserveamerica.com)), or Stanlund Motel in Borrego Springs (760) 767-5501. Anticipate a busy weekend, and reserve camping and motels very early. Limit 20 people. Send SASE with phone number, e-mail and \$5 fee to LAAS to learn 7:00 AM meeting place and more details. Pleasant to warm days, cool to cold nights.

## Saturday and Sunday,

April 14 and 15

### Owens Valley Grouse Trip.

Mary Freeman leads. Sage Grouse on the lek, breathtaking scenery, raptor-rich valleys, shorebirds heading north. Meet early Saturday morning in Bishop. Limited to 20. To sign up, send \$20 and a SASE to LAAS. More details in mailer. Reserve rooms and trip early, for this immensely popular trip. Motel 6, Mountain View Inn, Bishop Elms are some of many hotels in Bishop.

## Friday through Monday,

April 27-30

### Kern River Valley Spring Nature Fest.

200+ spp./festival. Trips to Butterbredt Spring, Kern NWR, Kern R. Preserve, Mojave Desert, Sequoia NF. Contact bird trips organizer Bob Barnes at [bbarnes@lightspeed.net](mailto:bbarnes@lightspeed.net), or check <http://kern.audubon.org/bioregion.htm>.

#### RESERVATION AND FEE EVENTS (Limited Participation) Policy and Procedure

Reservations will be accepted ONLY if ALL the following information is supplied:

- 1) Trip desired
- 2) Names of people in your party
- 3) Phone numbers:
  - (a) usual and
  - (b) evening before event, in case of cancellation
- 4) Separate check (no cash please) to LAAS for exact amount for each trip
- 5) Self-addressed stamped envelope for confirmation and associated trip information

Send to:

LAAS Reservations  
P.O. Box 931057  
Los Angeles, CA 90093-1057

If there is insufficient response, the trip will be cancelled two Wednesdays prior to the scheduled date (four weeks for pelagics). You will be so notified and your fee returned. Your cancellation after that time will bring a refund only if there is a paid replacement. Millie Newton is available at Audubon House on Wednesdays from noon to 4:00 PM to answer questions about field trips. Our office staff is also available Monday through Thursday for most reservation services.

# INTERNATIONAL BIRDING TOURS

## THE BEST OF COSTA RICA

February 5-17, 2008

Costa Rica, with its well deserved reputation as a country sincerely interested in conserving its natural resources, is one that is invariably on all birder's lists to visit. Its tropical forests harbor howler monkeys, Resplendent Quetzals, poison-dart frogs, giant morpho butterflies, over 830 species of birds, and the beauty of thousands of plant species. We will visit six of the major locations that are distinctive, each offering a marvelous profusion of tropical birds.

Habitats encountered will range from semiarid ranch land, to misty cloud forest, the transition zone between the dry and moist forests of the Pacific lowlands, the treeless paramo, and what may well be the highlight of our trip, a visit to La Selva, a lowland rainforest where nearly 400 birds have been recorded. As part of a small group, enjoy some of the best tropical birding in Costa Rica., where you will be accompanied by outstanding leaders throughout.

Space is limited.

## KENYA BIRDING & WILDLIFE SAFARI

November 2-14, 2007

*Post-Extension Eastern Kenya:*

November 13-21, 2007

Kenya, one of the great birding and wildlife destinations in the world, offers an opportunity for you to experience much of East Africa within a short period of time. Over 1100 bird species have been recorded in Kenya, and many are easily seen. Besides its incredible birdlife, Kenya has become synonymous with the historic great wildlife of Africa, and Kenya may be the very best place to see large numbers of wildlife, namely the "Big Five", elephant, rhinoceros, leopard, lion and buffalo. In addition, the variety of wildlife, often at the same time you are viewing fascinating birds, is difficult to believe. From Nairobi to Samburu, the slopes of Mt. Kenya, Lake Nakuru, and the great plains of the Masai Mara, this is sure to be your African trip of a lifetime.

On the extension, we plan to travel from Nairobi to the Tsavo West National Park and Mzima Springs, with views of Mount Kilimanjaro. Then we are on to Shimba Hills National Reserve, just a short distance from the Indian Ocean, and the last remaining breeding population in Kenya of the indigenous Sable Antelope. Birding stops will be made along the way. Experience for yourself the wonders of East Africa on this Los Angeles Audubon Safari. Space is limited.

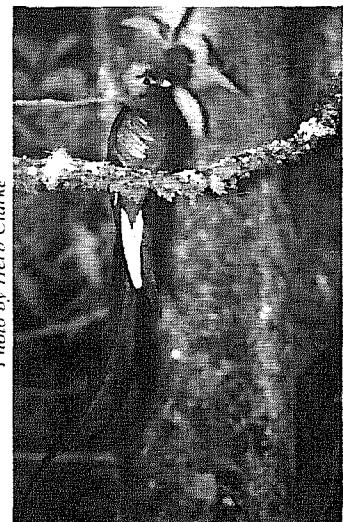


Photo by Herb Clarke

Resplendent Quetzal

For information and itinerary, contact:  
Olga Clarke - Travel Director  
Los Angeles Audubon Society  
2027 El Arbolita Dr.  
Glendale, CA 91208  
Ph/Fax: 818-249-9511  
e-mail: oclarketravel@earthlink.net



Photo by Herb Clarke

Hippo

# NATURE SHOP & BOOKSTORE

## REGULAR SCHEDULE

Open: Monday through Thursday  
9:30 AM to 4:00 PM

Normally closed: Friday, Saturday and Sunday

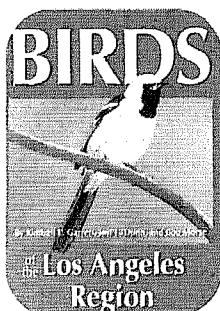
N12287



N12196



N12285



N12154



## SPECIAL

### SATURDAY SCHEDULE

Saturday, January 6, 2007  
Saturday, February 3, 2007  
Open from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

## NEW TITLES

### *Plastic Book Covers*

The Bookstore now stocks Plastic Book Covers in a variety of sizes for all your soft bound books.

With a book purchase	\$0.79
Without a book purchase	\$1.99

### *Bird Voices of Alta Floresta and Southeastern Amazonian Brazil*

Six CD set has vocalizations of 446 birds and 10 mammal species occurring in the lowland forests of Amazonian Brazil south of the Amazon River from the Rio Madeira east to the southeastern edge of the Amazon basin in Maranhao.

*Curtis A. Marantz & Kevin J Zimmer, 2006* \$48.95

### *Bird Songs in Cuba*

Re-release of the 1988 record album onto a 2 CD set, covers 130 species, the booklet and voice announcements are in both Spanish and English. *George B. Reynard & Orlando H. Garrido, 1988* \$29.95

### *Princeton Field Guides: Birds of the Dominican Republic and Haiti*

Covers 300 species, 57 color plates, range maps, listing of local bird names, text on ecology, behavior and status.

*Steven Latta, Christopher Rimmer et al., 2006* \$35.00

### *Birdsongs of the Pacific Northwest*

CD and book, songs and calls of 165 species, color illustrations of each species. *Martyn Stewart, Stephen R. Whitney, and Elizabeth Brairs Hart, 2006* \$21.95

### *Birds of the Los Angeles Region*

Photo guide to the common birds of LA, color coding by species, easy-to-carry size, each species has a Did you Know? feature, that provides the reader unique facts on that species.

*Kimball Garrett, Jon Dunn, and Bob Morse, 2006* \$15.95

### *Traveller's Wildlife Guides: Southern Africa*

Identification and location information on the most frequently seen amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Color illustrations of over 500 species, information on ecology, behavior and conservation.

*B Branch, C. Stuart, T. Stuart, and W. Tarboton, 2006* \$27.95

*With spring just around the corner, check with the bookstore for your flower identification books and butterfly books.*



## PELAGIC TRIPS 2007

Save \$5.00 with an early sign-up  
60 days prior to the trip departure.

### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24

**Palos Verdes Escarpment and Redondo Canyon.** This 8 hour trip departs from Marina del Rey Dock at 7:30 a.m. on the r/v UCLA Seaworld. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Short-tailed, Black-vented, Sooty and possibly Pink-footed shearwaters; Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Xantus Murrelet; Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. Occasionally: Ancient Murrelet. Rarity: Manx Shearwater. Gray Whales and several species of dolphins are often seen.

**Leaders: Jon Feenstra, Kimball Garrett and Todd McGrath.** \$79 There is no galley on board, but coffee and hot water are available.

### SATURDAY, APRIL 21

**A deep water trip toward the San Juan Seamount.** This trip departs from the Santa Barbara Harbor on the fast catamaran Condor Express at 7:00 a.m. and will return approximately by 8:00 p.m. This is a One Day Murphy Petrel Search! We will cruise along the deep water shelf by the San Juan Seamount. Birds previously seen: Laysan and Black-footed albatross; Northern Fulmar; Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters; Parasitic, Pomarine and Long-tailed jaegers; Leach's and Fork-tailed storm-petrels; Cassin's Auklet, Xantus Murrelet and Tufted Puffin. Rare possibilities are Cook's Petrel and Red-billed Tropicbird.

**Leaders: Dave Compton, Jon Feenstra, Todd McGrath, David Pereksta and Wes Fritz.** \$198 There is a complete galley that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

### SATURDAY, JUNE 9

**Land on Santa Cruz Island for the Island Scrub Jay, and then out to sea.** This 8 hour trip departs from the Island Packer dock in the Oxnard Harbor at 8:00 a.m. on the m/v Van-

guard. We will land at Prisoner's Cove where the endemic Island Scrub-Jay is easily seen. Then we will cruise out to sea for pelagic birding, returning by Anacapa Island. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters; South Polar Skua; Parasitic and Pomarine jaegers; Sabine's Gull; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Pigeon Guillemot; Xantus Murrelet. Rarities: Flesh-footed Shearwater. A Tufted Puffin was seen in 2002.

**Leaders: Jon Feenstra, Todd McGrath and David Pereksta.** \$96 A box lunch and breakfast can be ordered from the adjoining dock-side deli, or bring a picnic lunch and drinks.

### SATURDAY, JULY 21

**A deep water trip towards the San Juan Seamount.** This trip departs from the Santa Barbara Harbor on the fast catamaran Condor Express at 7:00 a.m. and will return approximately by 8:00 p.m. We will cruise along the deep water shelf by the San Juan Seamount. This time of year Cook's Petrels and Red-billed Tropicbirds are seen in this area, and this is an ideal time to look for mega-rarities such as Dark-rumped and Stejneger's petrels; as well as Wedge-rumped Storm-petrel. Birds expected: Pink-footed and Sooty shearwaters; Leach's, Ashy and Black storm-petrels; Cormorants(3); Red-necked and Red phalaropes; South Polar Skua; Pomarine Jaeger; Pigeon Guillemot; Common Murre; Xantus and Craveri's murrelets; Cassin's Auklet.

**Leaders: Dave Compton, Jon Feenstra, Kimball Garrett, Todd McGrath, David Pereksta and Wes Fritz.** \$198 If there is insufficient response 35 days prior to the departure, the trip will be cancelled. There is a complete galley that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

**A deep water trip to Cherry, Tanner and Cortez Banks.** This trip departs from the Santa Barbara Harbor at 7:00 a.m. on the fast catamaran Condor Express, and returns

### REFUND POLICY FOR PELAGIC TRIPS

If a participant cancels 31 days or more prior to departure, a \$4 service charge will be deducted from the refund. There is no participant refund if requested fewer than 30 days before departure, unless there is a paid replacement available. Call LAAS for a possible replacement. Please do not offer the trip to a friend as it would be unfair to those on the waiting list.

*All pelagic trips  
must be filled 35 days prior to sailing.  
Please reserve early.*

**NOTE: Destinations may be changed in order to maximize bird sightings, or minimize rough seas. In order to meet unexpected increases in fuel costs, there can be a \$5 to \$10 energy surcharge per person.**

approximately at 8:00 p.m.

This is our **Red-billed Tropicbird trip.** We are far offshore in 3 counties Santa Barbara, Ventura and Los Angeles. Birds expected: Black, Least, Ashy and Leach's storm-petrels; South Polar Skua; Parasitic, Pomarine and Long-tailed jaegers; Sabine's Gull; Arctic Tern. Rarities: Black-footed Albatross; Buller's Shearwater; Craveri's Murrelet. Blue, Fin and Minke whales as well as several species of dolphins are usually seen.

**Leaders: Jon Feenstra, Kimball Garrett, Todd McGrath, David Pereksta and Wes Fritz.** \$198 The trip will be cancelled if there is insufficient response 35 days prior to departure. There is a complete galley that serves breakfast lunch and dinner.

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20

**A trip around the Northern Channel Islands Monument.** This 8 hour trip departs from the Island Packer's dock in the Ventura Harbor at 8:00 a.m. on the fast catamaran Islander. After dropping off campers on Santa Cruz Island, we will have the boat to ourselves and cruise around Santa Cruz Island to the Santa Cruz passage by Santa Rosa Island and along the Santa Rosa Flats to the deeper water near San Nicolas Island. We will return by Arch Rock at Anacapa Island. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Sooty, Pink-footed and Black-vented shearwaters; Leach's, Least and Ashy storm-petrels; cormorants (3); Parasitic and Pomarine jaegers; Sabine's Gull; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Common Murre, Xantus Murrelet; Cassin's Auklet. Rarities: Buller's and Flesh-footed shearwaters; South Polar Skua; Long-tailed Jaeger. In 2002 a Streaked Shearwater, and in 2003 a Brown Booby and 2 Manx Shearwaters were seen. Blue, Fin and Humpback whales have been seen on this trip.

**Leaders: Jon Feenstra, Todd McGrath and David Pereksta.** \$120 There is a snack galley with beverages, bring your own lunch.

# PROGRAMS & EVENING MEETINGS

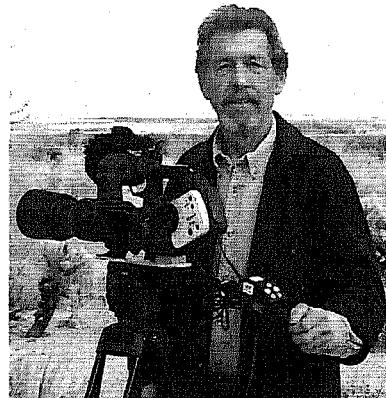
Meet at 7:30 at Audubon House in Plummer Park  
7377 Santa Monica Blvd (at Martel between La Brea and Fairfax)  
323-876-0202

**Wednesday, January 10, 2007**

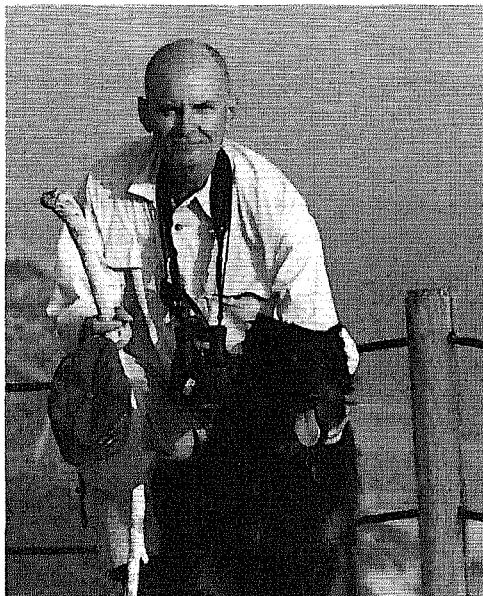
Don DesJardin presents:  
**Birds of Ventura County**

Please note change in  
meeting nights from  
**Tuesdays to Wednesdays.**

Don DesJardin has been birding and photographing birds for the last 16 years in what he calls his "local patch", Ventura County. Even though Don's primary passion was the 35mm camera, he had always wanted to explore the world of capturing birds on video. After much research, he decided to take the plunge into the video world by purchasing a Canon XL1 Mini DV video camera in April of 2000. This is an awesome camera, and with a 3CCD chip, and being a digital format, it approaches near broadcast video quality. Since then he has acquired an extensive collection of local and migratory Ventura County birds, shorebirds being one of his most favorite groups. Don's program is a 60-minute video that he has produced called "Birds of Ventura County". This is not a bird identification video, but what he calls "bird eye candy", that will show over 285 separate video clips covering over 130 species and shows just how diverse the bird life is for Ventura County, even though it represents only a small portion of the total bird species ever recorded for the county.



*Don DesJardin*



*Phil Barnes*

**Wednesday, February 14, 2007**

Phil Barnes presents:  
**How Flies the Albatross - Understanding Dynamic Soaring**

Learn from aerospace engineer Phil Barnes, how the Wandering Albatross remains aloft, without flapping its wings as it travels several times per year around the globe. This multi-disciplinary presentation, with something for everyone, applies math and science to understand the phenomenon of dynamic soaring.

Phil has a master's degree in aeronautical engineering, and has been with Northrop-Grumman Corporation for over 25 years. He hopes that the presentation, which closes with computer simulations of the albatross in flight, will stir greater interest in halting the slide to extinction of this wonderful bird.

Please note change in  
meeting nights from  
**Tuesdays to Wednesdays.**

Los Angeles Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 931057  
Los Angeles, CA 90093-1057

DATED MATERIAL  
Please Expedite

**Great Backyard**

***Bird Count***

***Feb., 16-19, 2007***

***See page 6***