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Guy Coheleach

THE WRENTIT

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Pasadena Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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*To bring the excitement of birds to our community through birding, education
and the conservation of bird habitats.*

November-December 2008

November Program



Tejon Ranch Agreement Wednesday, November 19, 2008 Graham Chisholm

The Tejon Ranch Conservation Agreement announced in May 2008 secures 375 square miles of California's largest contiguous land holding. The ranch is at the crossroads of four distinct ecological regions, and home to innumerable rare species including California Condor, San Joaquin Kit Fox, Spotted Owl, and many more.

Audubon California's Graham Chisholm will discuss the details of the agreement, as well as the many issues at play during negotiations with the Tejon Ranch Company. (See page 2.)

December Program

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Pre-count Meeting

7:00 pm

Wednesday, December 17, 2008
Eaton Canyon Nature Center

Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 20, 2008

Count Dinner

6:00 pm

Saturday, December 20, 2008
Eaton Canyon Nature Center

*Details and Reservations
See Page 7*

General Meetings held at:
Eaton Canyon Nature Center
1750 N. Altadena Drive, Pasadena
7:00 pm Social
7:30 pm Program

January Program

From Rain Forests to Polar Bears

Wednesday, January 21, 2009

Lauren Hierl

National Audubon Society

Alaska contains our largest and most spectacular National Parks, National Forests, and National Wildlife Refuges. Alaska is also home to incredibly diverse wildlife, from bald eagles, brown bears, and salmon in the south to polar bears, musk oxen, and snowy owls in the north. These public lands are facing critical conservation threats ranging from oil drilling on the North Slope to logging old-growth temperate rain forest in the Southeast. Audubon is scientifically identifying and prioritizing the most important wildlife habitats in these threatened regions, and is working hard to protect these critical areas from development.

Lauren Hierl has worked on conservation issues across the nation from Maine to Southern California, and has published several scientific journal articles on her work. Recently she worked on a climate change research project in Kruger National Park, South Africa, but is now excited to be working for the National Audubon Society on the vital conservation issues we are facing on our incomparable public lands in Alaska.

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President's Perch

On September 20, ten of us (led by Jon Feenstra) went birding for seven days at Cape May, NJ. We were up at dawn and birded for 12 hours the first day because we kept seeing birds the whole time. Cape May was kind of an experiment for PAS to see if we should expand the length of some of our field trips. We all agreed that this was a successful trip! I can see us offering similar trips to great birding spots in the future.

The Christmas Bird Count is coming up, on December 20. The CBC is one of the best known annual inventories of birds in North America. When I tell people that I

am a birder they often say "do you participate in that annual count-all-the-birds thing?" Yes, even non-birders know about the CBC. PAS did a good job last year and reported 164 species. We had a good turn-out of members for the count and all enjoyed the dinner together that night. This year we hope to beat the 164 species count and our Hospitality Committee is planning a "delicious" dinner for us to celebrate – see the details in *The Wrentit*.

Will

Conservation

Annandale Canyon Update

On September 8, 2008, the City of Pasadena took a huge first step toward preserving over 20 acres of open space in Annandale Canyon. The City Council approved a vote by area residents regarding the creation of a Benefit Assessment District. This means that if the area residents approve, they will be assessed extra money in their property taxes for a few years, and that money will be used to purchase the land in Annandale Canyon.

The land costs about seven million dollars, and the Benefit Assessment would raise about \$1.4 million. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy has pledged another \$2.5 million, and the City expects another \$1.7 in various state and county grants. That still leaves another \$1.5 million, and the City has pledged its support. The Assessment already has the support of many of the local residents, and it also has the support of the Linda Vista Annandale Association.

This 20 acre parcel is located in the hills above Annandale Golf Course, next to Glendale and Eagle Rock. It is next to another property that was going to be developed with ten homes, but now the developer is only going to put two houses on the lot, and will keep a substantial portion as open space, and make it available for parking and a picnic area.

The 20 acre parcel is also near another 4.5 acre parcel in Pasadena that was recently bought by a group called Collaborative Eagle Rock Beautiful. This parcel is between the Eagle Rock and the Annandale parcel, with only one parcel separating the two. It now has a 1.5 mile trail, which they hope to connect to future trails on the Annandale parcel.

Maybe this is the beginning of a new open space preserve in Pasadena! Thank you, City Council, for taking the first step!

Laura Garrett
PURPLECOW@JPS.NET

Tejon Ranch Update – Opinion

By now you probably know that up to 240,000 contiguous acres of the 270,000 acre Tejon Ranch will be protected under a precedent-setting agreement brokered by Audubon California and five other environmental groups with the Tejon Ranch Company. You probably also know that in exchange, these environmental groups, including Audubon California and the Sierra Club, will not oppose Tejon's plans to build a city of 23,000 homes, a resort community of 3400 homes or the new industrial park. If you go to Audubon California's website:

[HTTP://CA.AUDUBON.ORG/TEJON.PHP](http://CA.AUDUBON.ORG/TEJON.PHP), you can read a comprehensive explanation of this agreement, and you can learn of its many benefits, including a conservancy to manage the land and public access to land that most of us have never seen. Think of the birding!

In the opinion of your Conservation Chair, the people that brokered this deal deserve our gratitude because if they had not spent 20 months struggling with this process, we would be in trouble. The Tejon Ranch Company would be able to sell off the land piece by piece, and each time they did that, we would have a battle on our hands. As it is, we are guaranteed that most of this truly amazing land will be preserved forever. Before any of the public process has even begun, most of the land is safe from development. These developments will still be subject to public review and applicable federal and state environmental protection laws.

We also need to remember that the Pasadena Audubon Society is NOT held to this agreement. We are separate from Audubon California, so we are free to fight what remains of this development. If we choose to do so, we will not be alone. Other groups will also be doing what they can to prevent these developments. In fact, the Center for Biological Diversity, one of the original groups that were negotiating with Tejon, backed out of the negotiations after ten months and now is actively fighting the remaining three developments. If you are interested in joining me to stop a new city from being built right at Quail Lake or to stop multi-million dollar houses from being built in the middle of Condor habitat, please contact me. Together, we can do it!

Laura Garrett
Conservation Chair
PURPLECOW@JPS.NET

“If you look at a map of California, you can see just how big a victory this is for Californians,” said Graham Chisholm, conservation director for Audubon California. “The protected area is immense – 375 square miles – and the only place in North America where four distinct ecoregions meet on one property.”

Tejon Ranch encompasses more of California's natural beauty and diversity than any undeveloped area of the state. Located at the junction of the Mojave Desert and the Sierra Nevada, central and coastal mountains, the enormous parcel is home to precious native grasslands, oak woodlands, Joshua tree woodlands and conifer forests. It is home to the endangered California Condor and more than two dozen state and federally listed plant and animal species.

In negotiations conducted over the

past 20 months, Audubon California, the Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Endangered Habitats League, the Planning and Conservation League and Resource Opportunities, LLC worked with the Tejon Ranch Company to hammer out an agreement establishing lasting protections for the property, while at the same time preserve economic value for the publicly held company.

The agreement puts in place:

Permanent Conservation – Safeguards 240,000 acres, including 178,000 acres through an enforceable conservation easement and dedicated open space, as well as the option to purchase an additional 62,000 acres.

Governance and Funding – Establishes an independent Tejon Ranch Conservancy to manage and restore landscape, monitor the conservation easements, and provide for public access. The agreement also provides it with a permanent funding source through a transfer tax on lots and homes sold and resold on the ranch.

Public Access – Thirty-seven miles of the Pacific Crest Trail will be realigned in order to allow hikers to cross the Tejon Ranch. The agreement also commits all parties to work together to establish a state park on a portion of the ranch, and the Tejon Ranch Conservancy will manage a public access program.

Agreement – Audubon California and its partners agree not to oppose three development projects on 10 percent of the Tejon Ranch. These developments will still be subject to public review and applicable federal and state environmental protection laws.

Audubon California and its partners in the environmental community have secured a hard-fought victory for California's environment through intense negotiations. Ultimately, these negotiations presented a unique opportunity to settle the ranch's future and avoid decades of piecemeal legal wrangling with little likelihood of gaining the extensive habitat protection and funding for long-term restoration and management that this represents.

“This comprehensive negotiated solution is a window of opportunity to preserve the ecological integrity of the Tejon Ranch,” said Dan Silver, chief executive officer of the Endangered Habitats League.

In addition to the Condor, the Tejon Ranch is home to up to 17 bird species on the Audubon Watchlist, including Golden Eagle, Spotted Owl, Purple Martin, Willow Flycatcher, and Tricolored Blackbird. The scale of this agreement is likely to attract a great deal of attention beyond California's borders.

Pasadena/San Gabriel Valley Christmas Bird Count 2008

Fall is nearly over and “winter” – such as it is in Southern California – is coming on fast. Be sure to make time in your busy holiday schedule for the 2008 Christmas Bird Count on December 20. This annual count has been running for sixty years and is a major event for Pasadena Audubon. Each year the count creates a snapshot of the winter bird life of the San Gabriel Valley area.

The first-ever bird Christmas Bird Count took place in 1900. At that time, a total of twenty-seven participants counted ninety species. Over one hundred years later, nearly 2,000 counts involve over 50,000 participants. The growing interest in these bird counts has been impressive, to say the least.

Our own Pasadena/San Gabriel Valley count traces its origins to the mid 1940's. It's obvious that tremendous changes have taken place since then, but we still manage to find about 150 species each year. In fact, that's more than were found on earlier counts when a lot more natural habitat existed. We've been able to do this largely because our ability to find and identify birds has grown dramatically. This has made the count both more accurate and more productive. Then too,

some of the changes have benefited recent colonizers (such as Great-tailed Grackles) while other birds have been introduced (Eurasian Collared-doves and all of our parrots and parakeets).

In spite of extensive urbanization, we're fortunate to have a wide variety of habitats in the count circle. Lakes, streams, marshes, montane woodland, oak woodland, chaparral, riparian, coastal sage and exotic plantings can all be found. In combination with Southern California's mild climate, these habitats create a great diversity of winter birdlife.

As with all CBC count circles, ours is fifteen miles in diameter. The center is at the intersection of San Gabriel Boulevard and Duarte Road. The area it encompasses includes a number of good birding spots such as Santa Fe Dam, Big Santa Anita Canyon, Whittier Narrows, Peck Pit, Eaton Canyon, the Huntington Gardens and the L.A. County Arboretum. The circle also reaches Mount Wilson, offering the possibility of high mountain birds such as Clark's Nutcracker, Williamson's Sapsucker and Cassin's Finch.

New birds are still added to the count list on a regular basis and we've found a number of great birds over the last decade—Painted Redstart, Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler and Bell's

Vireo being some of the more recent ones. What unexpected birds will be found this year? Not knowing what will turn up is half the fun.

It doesn't matter what your birding abilities are, because anyone can take part in this process of learning and discovery. It's a great chance to learn about local birds and it also contributes to our knowledge of bird distribution and population trends.

This year's Pasadena/San Gabriel Valley Christmas Count will take place on Saturday, December 20. A pre-count meeting will be held at the Eaton Canyon Nature Center on Wednesday, December 17 at 7:00 pm. At the pre-count meeting we will hand out count materials and checklists, review procedures and assign count areas to participants. If you can't be at the pre-count meeting, don't worry – it's easy to sign up for an area to count via e-mail or phone.

As usual, we will hold a post-count dinner and wrap-up on count night. It's always fun to see who saw what, what was missed, and what surprises turned up. See the announcement in this issue of *The Wrentit* for details. (See page 7)

For additional information, please contact count coordinator Jon Fisher at (818) 800-2776 or at JONF60@HOTMAIL.COM. See you on the count!

Jon Fisher

Trip Reports

Cape May, NJ

Known among birders around the world, Cape May, New Jersey is one of North America's premier locations to observe the migration of birds. Bound on the east and west by the Atlantic Ocean and the Delaware River, respectively, southern New Jersey acts as a funnel, forcing large concentrations of southward migrating birds to its end at Cape May.

The southern tip of this peninsula, although a popular beach destination and inhabited by many people, is also a checkerboard of parks and preserves where these often exhausted and stressed migrants find a place to stop on their way south.

Cape May is also relatively close to where I grew up and is where I spent a great many weekends from the time when I became a “serious” birder (at about John Garrett's current age) until I moved to California. It's a place to which I've been drawn back almost every fall since I moved here. This fall was the right time to bring some people back with me. To lead a field trip is to share with others the passion of observing birds and experienc-

ing nature on a wavelength not detected by the vast majority of humans. And a good day in Cape May can steal one's breath. The trip was advertised first to the



With the help of Mark Scheel's computer, the group debates: Nelson's or Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow? Verdict: Saltmarsh!

Board of Directors and then to the general membership at the annual dinner last June. We were ten people strong and ready to go. It felt longer than it actually took, but September 20 finally came around.

We arrived at night in preparation for six dawn to dusk days of non-stop birding. Cape May is a small place. There is Cape

May County, and there is the Island. Cape Island, or “The Island” as it is referred to by the locals, is simply the tip of Cape May County that is separated from the mainland by the Intracoastal Waterway. It's about two miles wide and one mile deep. We drove a couple of mini-vans around, but it wouldn't be unthinkable (or even unprecedented) for a birding trip to be conducted on foot or on bicycles, because the birds, they're all on The Island. A passerine migrant heading south following the Atlantic Flyway and funneled onto the Atlantic Coast flies over The Island and encounters the Delaware Bay, an eight mile stretch of open gull-infested water between Cape May, New Jersey and Cape Henlopen in Delaware. Unprepared for a long flight over water, birds will circle around Cape May Point and drop into the dense vegetation to rest for their next hop across the bay. The spot to view those birds circling around is Higbees Beach on the west shore of the Island.

The first morning we shook off our jetlag, grabbed some food and caffeine at Wawa, and were standing in the field at Higbees before dawn on Sunday. It was a

(see *Cape May* page 6)

Field Trips

Hahamongna Monthly Walk

Saturday, November 1, 2008

Saturday, January 3, 2009

8:00 am – noon

This monthly bird walk is for birders of all ages and experience. A good variety of birds should be in residence. Bring binoculars, birding guide, water and wear walking shoes. No dogs.

Exit the north 210 at Berkshire and make a right, then a left at Oak Grove. The Hahamongna Watershed Park entrance is on the right at the next stop light. Take the first left after entering Hahamongna, and park by the ballfield

Ron Cyger

Mountain Birding Monthly Walk

Sunday, November 9, 2008

Sunday, December 14, 2008

Sunday, January 11, 2009

8:00 am – 10:00 am

This monthly walk ordinarily begins in the parking lot of Chilao Visitor Center, but occasionally the group will carpool to other nearby areas. Smell the pines and see higher-altitude species not common in Pasadena.

Dangerous driving conditions (chains required, storms, etc.) will cancel the outing. Chilao Visitor Center is located on State Highway 2 (Angeles Crest Highway), 27 miles north of La Cañada. For local conditions and information, call the Center at (626) 796-5541.

Hill Penfold

Eaton Canyon Monthly Walk

Sunday, November 16, 2008

Sunday, December 21, 2008

Sunday, January 18, 2009

8:00 am – 11:00 am

Pasadena Audubon and Eaton Canyon Nature Center are cosponsoring monthly walks at Eaton Canyon. The walks are led by Hill Penfold, who has been leading them at ECNC for many years. Hill is wonderful with birders of all levels and Eaton Canyon is one of the best locations to learn the birds of the Pasadena area.

The walks are held on the third Sunday of each month. Meet at the flagpole: bring water, binoculars, hats, *but no dogs*.

Hill Penfold

Huntington Library

Birdwalks (*PAS Members only*)

Sunday, November 23, 2008

Sunday, December 28, 2008

Sunday, January 25, 2009

8:00 am – 11:00 am

A special benefit for Pasadena Audubon Society members is the chance to bird the Huntington Library grounds. Attendance is by

reservation only and limited to 15 participants. We thank our member and Huntington curator, Dan Lewis, for making these trips possible.

Contact Elaine by email (preferred), putting "Huntington" in the subject line to avoid inadvertent deletion or by phone.

Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

North Slope of the San Gabriels

Saturday, November 8, 2008

7:30 am – 2:00 pm

We will explore areas on the northern slope of the San Gabriel Mountains, such as Grassy Hollow Visitors Center, Jackson Lake, and locations in Valyermo. We will search for high-altitude species as well as wintering raptors. Unusual species (e.g. Lewis's Woodpecker, Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker, Swamp Sparrow) have been found in some years.

Time permitting; we may look for longspurs in the Antelope Valley. It may be cold, especially at higher elevations, so bring warm clothes.

We will meet at the Park & Ride on Ave. S in Palmdale, just off the 14 freeway.

Mark and Janet Scheel

Newport Back Bay by Kayak

Sunday, November 9, 2008

Noon – 3:00 pm

Last year's kayak adventure was a success – no one fell out, and we got close looks at shorebirds and waterfowl and even some passerines like Marsh Wren. It was scheduled around an unusually high tide. This year's trip, in contrast, is scheduled around a moderate low tide, so we'll see vast exposed mud flats and lots of feeding shorebirds, as well as winter-resident waterfowl. It's a blissful and interesting outing. We have a few kayaks available to borrow, and you can also rent kayaks right there at our launch point: Newport Aquatic Center, WWW.NEWPORTAQUATICCENTER.COM or (949) 646-7725. RSVP to the trip leader (818) 957-5044 for more details and helpful advice.

Mark Hunter

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival

January 16-19, 2009

This popular event is hosted by the Morro Coast chapter of the Audubon Society, plus a large number of other conservation-minded groups.

All day and half-day tours will take participants to a wide variety of habitats, including deep water pelagic, oak woodland and riparian, wetland and estuary, and the unique grassland habitat of the

Carrizo Plain. Workshops will cover a vast array of topics ranging from beginner birding classes to gull identification. Outstanding Evening Speakers will make presentations on Saturday and Sunday. A variety of vendors will be present with nature related artwork, books, field equipment and attire, and local merchant wares.

Morro Bay California is one of the few remaining estuaries on the Pacific flyway. Christmas Bird Counts on the bay have numbered above the 200 species mark, and the festival bird lists have totaled over 220 species for the weekend, making this area on the central California coast a prime birding destination.

To register, call (866) 464-5105 toll free or go to [HTTP://MORROBAYBIRDFESTIVAL.ORG](http://MORROBAYBIRDFESTIVAL.ORG).

Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve

Saturday, January 17, 2009

8:00am-noon

Welcome to the new, improved Bolsa Chica! Since the new channel was cut from the south end of the wetlands to the open sea, the resulting tidal flows have caused an explosion of life that exceeded even the expectations of the conservationists who planned the new environment. We will see a full assortment of wintering waterfowl, shorebirds and much more.

The reserve parking lot can be accessed only from northbound Pacific Coast Highway. Take the 405 freeway south to Goldenwest Ave., then Goldenwest south to Pacific Coast Highway then right (north) a little over two miles to the reserve parking lot on the right. Spotting scopes are helpful. Cameras will be well-employed for surprisingly close shots.

Mark & Janet Scheel

Santa Fe Dam

Saturday, January 24, 2009

7:30 am – noon

Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale is an interesting area containing multiple habitats. We'll bird coastal sage scrub, a man-made lake, riparian and grassy park areas planted with many non-native trees. This variety of habitats attracts many birds.

Take Irwindale Ave. south 1.5 miles from the 210 Freeway and turn right on Arrow Highway and watch for the park sign and entrance on your right in half a mile. After paying the entry fee at the kiosk, continue straight through the intersection at the bottom of the hill. We'll meet at 7:30 am in the parking lot closest to the northeast corner of the lake.

Jon Fisher

Calendar

Submit material for the next Wrentit by December 1st

November 2008

Date	Day	Time	Event	Location	Leader *
1	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Watershed Park	Ron Cyger
5	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Will Fulmer
8	Sat	9:00? am	CaCCof Audubon	Debs Park	PAS hosts Council
8	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	North Slope of San Gabriels	Mark & Janet Scheel
9	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Mountain Birding Monthly Walk (Chilao)	Hill Penfold
9	Sun	Noon	Field Trip	Kayak on Newport Back Bay	Mark Hunter
15	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	North Slope of San Gabriels	Mark & Janet Scheel
16	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
18	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Whittier Narrows Nature Center	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
19	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: Fort Tejon Agreement
23	Sun	7:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

(PAS Members Only)

December 2008

3	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Will Fulmer
6	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Legg Lake/Peck Pit	Ed Stonick
9	Tues	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	LA County Arboretum-Potluck	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
13	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	Point Vicente Sea Watch	Mike San Miguel
14	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Mountain Birding Monthly Walk (Chilao)	Hill Penfold
17	Wed	7:00 pm	Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Pre-Christmas Bird Count
20	Sat	7:00 pm	Event	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Christmas Bird Count & Dinner
21	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
28	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

(PAS Members Only)

January 2009

3	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Watershed Park	Ron Cyger
7	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Will Fulmer
11	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Mountain Birding Monthly Walk	Hill Penfold
17	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Bolsa Chick Ecological Reserve	Mark & Janet Scheel
18	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
20	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
21	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: Venezuela
24	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	Santa Fe Dam	Jon Fisher
25	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

(PAS Members Only)

*Trip Leader Information

Mark Scheel (Chair)	(626) 355-8707	SCHEEL@TAPIR.CALTECH.EDU
Larry Allen	(626) 288-2701	LARRYALLEN@EARLYMUSICLA.ORG
Lance Benner	(626) 791-1187	LBENNER@CHARTER.NET
Ron Cyger	(626) 449-3625 (before 9 pm)	RON@CYGER.ORG (preferred)
Kathi Ellsworth	(626) 564-0652	PANDIONSKY@YAHOO.COM
Jon Feenstra		FEENSTRA@ALUMNI.CALTECH.EDU
Jon Fisher	(818) 800-2776	JONF60@HOTMAIL.COM
Nick & Mary Freeman	(818) 247-6172	MNFREEMAN@EARTHLINK.NET
Sid Heyman	(626) 571-5991	
Dan Lewis	(626) 398-4805	DANOLEWIS@EARTHLINK.NET
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Tom Ryan		TRYAN@SWCA.COM
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Ed Stonick	(626) 796-0595	EDSTONICK@EARTHLINK.NET
Madeline West	(626) 574-0429	WEST226@ADELPHIA.NET

Cape May (continued)

relatively slow flight with only a few each of the common warblers zooming by – Northern Parulas, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Blackpoll, Black-and-white Warblers, American Redstart, Northern Waterthrush, and Common Yellowthroats. White-eyed Vireos and Red-eyed Vireos were a little more numerous. Little birds aren't traveling alone, though, and this flight day wasn't slow for everything. A trip down the street to the Beanery with its open fields showed us the other migrants – hawks, eagles, and vultures, dozens of them patrolling the skies.

Then we got to the beach and saw It. The Great Black-backed Gull. For those of us who have spent a lot of time on the East Coast it is a bird with which we are accustomed, as we see them frequently and often have to search through flocks of them for something unusual. But to the uninitiated, and Susan in particular, the Great Black-backed Gull is a monster, a great emperor of birds who bellows cruel decrees to his quivering subjects while perched impressively on a forbidding throne made of the bones of lesser birds. In coastal Southern California, the large gull in the flock is often a Herring Gull. In coastal New Jersey, a Herring Gull keeps one eye open or it's going to be dinner. Great Black-backed Gulls and their menacing antics were enjoyed by us all whenever we were near the water.

That first evening we visited the Nature Conservancy's South Cape May Meadows preserve ("The Meadows"). We each bought weekly passes to The Meadows, which made it frustrating that the next day the preserve was closed for the remainder of the week while they did some maintenance. We did get that one evening in, though, and our only Common Nighthawks of the trip.

On Monday, after watching the dawn flight at Higbees and enjoying a few more warblers, a Great-crested Flycatcher and a few Scarlet Tanagers, we left the Island and drove up the Atlantic Coast for an hour to Forsyth National Wildlife Refuge Brigantine Unit – known to birders as "Brig." Here we squinted at thousands of distant peeps, got some good close looks at a few White-rumped Sandpipers and wrapped up the coastal "salt sparrows": Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sharp-tailed and Seaside Sparrows.

Tuesday was our best songbird flight day with 16 warbler species in the first hour and a Mourning Warbler pushed up out of the brush during our walk around the Higbees Beach fields. Philadelphia and Yellow-throated Vireos were nice surprises in the parking lot. Great birds in the parking lot? Just another one of those

Cape May moments.

Migration all depends on the weather. It is an enormous energy drain for a bird and, to survive the thousands of miles between the breeding grounds and the wintering grounds, optimum conditions are required. Winds from the north provide birds with a tail wind that helps them along. In contrast, during south



Susan Gilliland by i-Phone
Trip leader Jon Feenstra attempts to become one with the warblers.

winds birds won't fly but instead rest until the weather changes. Though it may not be the best conditions for the birds, in Cape May winds from the northwest are what birders want. Northwest winds push birds to the coast, meaning more are funneled into the point, more will zoom by Higbees Beach, and more will be hopping around in the bushes all day looking for something to eat.

Unfortunately, we never had the perfect birding conditions, and as the week progressed, the winds became less favorable for birds and birdwatchers alike with a shift from the north to the northeast. An Atlantic storm called a Nor'easter rolled in and finding songbirds was work. We did what we could to focus on the resident species and to spend more time looking at the ocean for the migrating seabirds that get closer to land during such storms. We took some shelter under a pavilion or two with scopes trained on the Concrete Ship – a ship made of concrete that somehow sank a short distance off the beach. Not a prime example of humanity's brilliance, but a good spot for watching seabirds. The Great Black-backed Gulls, a Lesser Black-backed Gull, and a few Parasitic Jaegers kept us busy.

On Wednesday we visited the Atlantic coast and saw some Piping

Plovers while getting battered by flying sand. The nearby salt marshes harbored a few Tricolored Herons and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons. And later that day we saw our only individual of the namesake bird – the Cape May Warbler. For a complete lack of irony, it was in the town of Cape May in the trees over the entrance of the Cape May Bird Observatory. We couldn't find the CMBO staffer pulling the strings, so decided it was probably a real bird. Thursday morning we got great looks at a Hudsonian Godwit while continuing to hear praise from Ron Cyger regarding the absence of his least favorite bird – the Black-necked Stilt. The neighborhoods of Cape May Point offered a little cover from the winds and held a Magnolia Warbler and a few Black-throated Blue Warblers.

On Friday we worked up along the Delaware Bay shore birding the edges of saltmarshes. We scraped up Nelson's and Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows, Seaside Sparrow, Clapper Rail, American Bittern, and a huge flock of Semipalmated Sandpipers resting on the Reed's Beach jetty. Hopefully everyone appreciated how nice it was to be at these locations without biting insects. The wind was really good for that.

And so we wrapped up our trip with one last stop at Higbees before heading to the airport on Saturday morning. We recorded 153 species by my count, a very respectable total, and despite a little weather, there was hardly a dull moment. As to the best bird, we all had our opinions. For me, it was either the Mourning Warbler or the Hudsonian Godwit since neither makes it to California very often and it had been years since I had seen either. Other votes were for the Great Black-backed Gull (see above) and Philadelphia Vireo. Cape May can be about a bird, but really it's about birds, many birds, and a great group of birders.

Thanks to all who came and made this a fun and hilarious trip.

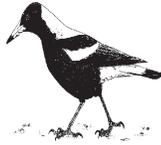
Jon Feenstra

What is this Bird?



See Answer on Page 8

**Magpie
Bird Study
Group**



The group meets the third Tuesday of each month. We bird 9:00 am to about 11:30 am, eat sack lunches and have a short business meeting. *All PAS members welcome.*

Tuesday, November 18, 2008
Nature Center of Whittier Narrows
 Meet in front of the nature center.

Tuesday, December 2, 2008
LA County Arboretum
 Meet at the entrance. Around 11 am we'll go to Bill and Madeline's home (848 W. Huntington Dr. #32, Arcadia) for a holiday potluck. She will make chili. Call her (626 574-0429 to tell her what you will bring

Tuesday, January 20, 2009
San Dimas County Park
 Meet at in the lower parking lot.

Tuesday, February 17, 2009
Bonelli Park
 Meet in the parking lot to the right before you enter the park..

*Sid Heyman
 Madeline West*

**Annual PAS
 Christmas Bird Count Dinner**

**A delicious dinner will be catered AND
 Beverages Are On Us!!**

Saturday, December 20, 2008

6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Eaton Canyon Nature Center

\$10.00 per person

Mail checks to:

Pasadena Audubon Society at ECNC
 Payable to Pasadena Audubon Society;
 add CBC Dinner to memo line

RSVP By December 7, 2008

- **Susan Gilliland** (626) 441-8487 (before 9:00 pm) or
- **Judy Bass** JUDYBASS@EARTHLINK.NET or
- **Pam Dong** (626) 799-2232

See you there!



Golden Eagle

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
 DONATIONS TO PAS**

These PAS members have made donations to our chapter since September, 2008: Yolanda Adra and Elena Seto. Thank you!

Membership Application

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Donor's address for gift membership:

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Yearly Membership for Individual or Family

PAS Chapter Only \$20 \$35* Other _____

** Plus Chapter Pin and Tee Shirt or PAS Birding Guide*

\$15 Senior/Full-time Student

Donation _____

Make checks payable and mail to:

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John's Corner

Patch Birding

Recently, I've been biking to several local birding 'patches,' locations that I take notes on and visit regularly. Since I'm too young to drive (legally anyway), all of my patches are within biking distance of my house. That's just as well – it also cuts down on carbon emissions. One of my favorite things about patch birding is how ridiculously easy it is to be happy and excited – a California Thrasher singing in a bush I'd never seen one in before or my First of Fall White-crowned Sparrows can really make my day.

My original two patches were Arlington Garden and the Lower Arroyo Seco. Both of these places need more data of their avifauna, and I needed some local places to bird, so it was a perfect fit. Arlington Garden was created three years ago when native vegetation was restored there. However, being originally purchased by the state for freeway construction, its future is currently uncertain. Hopefully, by collecting data on the birds

and other animals that live there, I can ultimately help protect it.

I'm also hoping to add several other places to my list of "patches," such as the Huntington Library and perhaps Lacy Park, both within biking distance. Years ago, Dan Cooper created a bird checklist for the Huntington Gardens, back when he was about my age; I'm interested in finding out what's changed and what hasn't. Lacy Park has good potential habitat for vagrant fall warblers, and although I'm uncertain whether anything "rare" has ever been found there, I'm also uncertain how much coverage it gets by birders.

So what could your patch be? It could be your backyard, or someplace you could bike or walk to. If you don't have much of a backyard, and you don't know of any places to bike or walk to that might have decent birding, try looking at satellite images on the internet to see if any green spots or bodies of water pop up. If nothing does, or you're not interested in biking or walking, then you could find someplace to

drive to – maybe on your way to work instead of someplace out-of-the-way to cut down on carbon emissions (assuming that is you enjoy better air quality and polar bears). Find someplace you can go to everyday. I guarantee you won't regret it.

What is this Bird?



Answer: Immature Ring-billed Gull
Ring-billed Gull is a common sight in Southern California, but they are almost always adults. Kathi Ellsworth took this photo at Cape May, NJ, in September 2008

New Members

PAS is pleased to welcome the following new members. We hope you will get involved in our many activities.

ALTADENA: Annabelle Aylmer; Grace Wong; **BIG BEAR LAKE:** Patricia

Rowe; **LOS ANGELES:** Harriet Diamond; **MONROVIA:** Paul Stein; **PASADENA:** Jeb Bowdoin; Thomas & Cheryl Palfrey; Matt Randolph; **SIERRA MADRE:** Diane Leiker.

PAS on the WEB

Website

[HTTP://WWW.PASADENAUDUBON.ORG](http://www.pasadenaudubon.org)

ListServe

[HTTP://GROUPS.YAHOO.COM/GROUP/PASADENAUDUBON/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pasadenaudubon/)

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Publicity	(open)	
Website	Janet Scheel	(626) 355-8707
Education	Peggy Ogata	(626) 398-3184

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