



Drawing by
Guy Coheleach

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

February 2021 - March 2021

74th PAS Christmas Bird Count a Huge Success Despite Pandemic

For a number of reasons, 2020 was a year to remember. Massive wildfires locally and throughout California and a global pandemic made for a most unpleasant and stressful time. Though a few Christmas Bird Counts decided to cancel, we stuck to plan and continued the tradition of the Pasadena-San Gabriel Valley CBC, which was held on December 19, 2020. We had great weather- clear, calm and cool- and a fairly high level of participation.

Given Covid-19 safety precautions, things were different for this count. Most people counted alone, unless they were with other household members. Of the other counters who would normally have gone with a group, many elected to do backyard or feeder counts. Despite my very cautious optimism about the count results, I needn't have worried at all. The CBC was a success by any measure.

We had couple of really great rarities, along with a number of lower-end vagrants. This was in striking contrast to the anomalous (at least in that respect) 2019 count, which produced virtually no unusual species.

The San Gabriel River and its tributaries, San Jose Creek and Walnut Creek, proved again that they offer the greatest diversity of birds within the count circle. Over ninety species were recorded there alone. We were also fortunate to be able to get access to Mt. *continued on page 3*

President's Perch

My goodness, what a year we've had. How very different this January feels from last January! It's been completely challenging, and yet, as I write this, I am filled with hope and gratitude. I am hopeful that we can now restore the protections of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and work to protect clean air and water and bird habitat. And I'm grateful that our Audubon chapter has been able to thrive during such a demanding year. We're not out of the woods yet, but I can see daylight!

But mostly I'm grateful to you, our members. I'm deeply grateful to our Program Director, Lois Brunet, for working like the dickens to convert our in-class Bird Science Program to a virtual one, for managing our garden at Washington School, and for doing more to help our chapter in a day than I can imagine doing in a month. I'm extremely thankful that I get to work with truly dedicated, talented, hard-working, open-minded, and forward-thinking Pasadena Audubon board members. I also deeply appreciate our volunteers, especially our teen volunteers, who are helping with the relaunched Young Birders Club and our other activities. Mostly, I'm grateful to you, our members. You've been showing up and staying connected in some pretty amazing ways. We hold programs, and you join us. We ask for volunteers, and you respond. We ask for donations, and you give more than ever

before. Thank you, thank you, thank you for demonstrating that the best way to get through difficult times is to work together for the greater good, especially for kids and birds. Thank you for giving me so much reason to feel hope and gratitude.

Perhaps that's why these words from poet Mary Oliver have been filling my brain for the last few days:

Wild sings the bird in the forests of our lives

As we enter a new year, let's hear the wild hope in every birdsong, let's keep working together to help children and birds, and let's be grateful for all that we've achieved and all that we can accomplish together.

We are Pasadena Audubon, and we are grateful for birds and hopeful for their future! And I am grateful for you.

Laura Solomon



MONTHLY CHAPTER MEETINGS: UPCOMING PROGRAMS

How Cities Affect Evolution and Behavior in the Dark-eyed Junco and the House Sparrow

February 17, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Dr. Pamela Yeh

One recent phenomenon PAS members have seen firsthand is the rapid change in status of Dark-eyed Juncos from winter visitors to year-round residents. This recent adaptation to city life makes them fascinating birds to study for local ornithologists. February's meeting will focus on if and how Dark-eyed Juncos and humble House Sparrows change their behaviors in urban environments, and how that might ultimately affect their ability to survive and thrive in these human-modified spaces.

Dr. Yeh is an evolutionary biologist and studies how human activities affect the evolution of species, focusing on the evolution of birds in urban environments and the evolution of drug-resistant bacteria in urban and agricultural areas. She received her PhD in Evolutionary Biology from UC San Diego and conducted post-doctoral work in the Center for Genomics Research and the Systems Biology Department both at Harvard University. She is currently an Associate Professor at UCLA and External Faculty at Santa Fe Institute.

Listen to Her Sing

March 17, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Nathan Pieplow

Only male birds sing, right? Wrong! In fact, this widespread notion has a lot more to do with human cultural and geographic biases than it has to do with nature. In this talk, Nathan Pieplow explores the often-overlooked songs of female birds. You will hear the pair duets of meadowlarks and blackbirds, the musical songs of female cardinals and orioles, and the distinctive song of the female Canyon Wren, among others. In which species do females actually sing more often than males? How do you know when you're listening to a female Blue Jay? And where did we even get this crazy idea that only male birds sing? Answers to these questions and more in this presentation.

Nathan Pieplow has been fascinated by

birds since his childhood in South Dakota and has intensively studied bird sounds since 2003. He is the former editor of the journal *Colorado Birds* and an author of the *Colorado Birding Trail*. He lives in Boulder, Colorado, where he teaches writing and rhetoric at the University of Colorado. He is the co-creator of the seminal Earbirding Website and author of the *Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds of Eastern North America* and the *Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds of Western North America*.

Hummingbirds: Small Wonders

April 21, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Sheri L. Williamson

They may be tiny, but hummingbirds know how to live large. Dazzling colors, fearless personalities, voracious appetites, continent-spanning migrations, "singing" feathers, and sometimes scandalous personal lives are just a few of the qualities that have earned these miniature marvels a devoted following far beyond the birding community. Join internationally known hummingbird researcher Sheri Williamson for an evening with these small wonders. As adaptable as they are, hummingbirds are vulnerable to many of the same environmental crises as other migratory birds — loss of habitat and food resources, pollution, and the effects of climate change. Good news: Almost anyone in N. America can help build a brighter future for hummingbirds with a few simple actions.

Williamson, a lifelong naturalist, birder and conservationist, is co-founder and director/naturalist of the Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory. She recently completed a major revision of *A Field Guide to Hummingbirds of North America* in the Peterson Field Guide Series, first published in 2002, and she will provide a sneak peek at this revised edition.

Monthly chapter meetings are held the third Wednesday of the month. Until further notice, the meetings will be held remotely via the Zoom platform for video conferencing. The application can be downloaded free of charge to computer or smartphone at <https://zoom.us/download>. Chapter members will receive an email from PAS with a link on the day of the meeting.

Upcoming PAS Board Meetings

The PAS Board meets from 7:00 pm-8:30 pm on the first Wednesday of the month between September and June. Contact Lois Brunet at loisb.pas@gmail.com if you would like the Zoom link to attend.

February 3rd, 2021

March 3rd, 2021

April 7th, 2021

May 5th, 2021

Save the Dates! GBBC is Feb. 12-15!

With health officials still urging folks to stay at home and avoid gatherings, 2021 has the potential to be one of the best ever for the Great Backyard Bird Count. Mark your calendars and, if you don't already know, find out how you can participate at <https://www.birdcount.org/>



Ask a Birder!

Remember when we could go out for a beer together and talk about all things avian? Yeah, we can't either. Well, maybe we remember a little.

We really miss getting together with you for casual chats about birds and birding, so we've decided to host a new program called "Ask a Birder." Each month, we'll gather with two or three birders on Zoom and you can ask them anything you want!

We'll meet the 4th Wednesday of the month from 7-8 pm. You bring the questions, and we'll do our best to provide some answers, with some of our expert birders moderating. Check the website for the zoom link.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, CONTINUED

Wilson (currently closed to the public following the Bobcat Fire).

Legg Lake, the Huntington Gardens, Hahamongna Watershed Park, Mt. Wilson and the Arboretum also made significant contributions to the count. But this doesn't diminish the number of smaller parks, feeder watchers and other lesser known areas where counters added species and numbers to our CBC database. It all helps to paint a picture of winter birdlife in the area as well as charting and tracking the changes over time.

Here's a look at the highlights and other interesting aspects of the 2019 count.

In the waterfowl department, a Greater White-fronted Goose was at Legg Lake (Mickey & Jan Long) and a Snow Goose was spotted along the San Gabriel River (Jon Feenstra). Fourteen of the introduced and increasing Egyptian Geese were also recorded on the count. Waterfowl such as Cinnamon Teal and Lesser Scaup, while common in the region, were represented on the CBC by just three and one, respectively. Redhead, a species often missed on the count, was represented by a rather remarkable seventeen birds at Legg Lake. Three Canvasback, another regularly missed species, were also at Legg (both Mickey & Jan Long).

An excellent bird and a first for the count was a Lesser Black-backed Gull at the Livingston-Graham gravel pits (Ed Stonick). What was presumably the same bird had been seen several times previously at Peck Road Park, but had been reported sporadically. Thankfully the bird was in the right place at the right time on count day.

Another very good bird was a Neotropical Cormorant that had been reported previously at Peck Road Park in Arcadia. Though it was missed on count day, it was spotted during count week. This species is increasing in the area but is still quite scarce.



PAS webmaster Chris Spurgeon captured a quizzical gaze from the reluctant star of this year's CBC, a Greater Peewee at Lacy Park in San Marino © Chris Spurgeon

I've often heard that Sharp-shinned Hawks outnumber Cooper's Hawks by about a two to one margin. That may be true nationwide, but not for our CBC. Flipping the numbers, Cooper's Hawks outnumbered Sharp-shinned by a nearly three to one margin on the 2020 count, with twenty-four and nine

recorded respectively. These two species can be a challenge to identify in the field- and a few are undoubtedly miscalled- but I suspect overall the ratios are correct.

A Barn Owl and five Western Screech-Owls were recorded along with a number of Great Horned Owls, but the highlight was a Northern Pygmy-Owl in Little Santa Anita Canyon (Lance Benner).

Two Red-naped Sapsuckers were found, with one at the Arboretum (Katy Mann, Ira Blitz) and one at the Huntington (Sarah Ngo).

Often missed on the count, a Sora was spotted along the San Gabriel River (Jon Feenstra).



Count data indicate a Pine Siskin irruption. They were twice as abundant this year as compared to last © Javier Vazquez

The most remarkable bird of the count wasn't identified or confirmed until weeks later. A Greater Pewee at Lacy Park was briefly spotted on count day (John DeModena). However the bird didn't offer enough views or clues to its identity at the time. It was refound and photographed in January, confirming this excellent winter rarity (Jack Wickel).

Empidonax flycatchers included two species that are rare in winter and one that is expected. A Pacific-slope Flycatcher continued at Hahamongna Watershed Park (Darren Dowell) and a Hammond's Flycatcher was found at the Huntington Gardens (Jon Fisher). Gray Flycatchers are the expected winter empid, though they are still scarce at that time. Two continuing Grays were at Peck Road Park on count day (Darren Dowell).

Eleven Vermilion Flycatchers on the count illustrate how rapidly this species is colonizing the San Gabriel Valley and the coastal slope in general. This species, in a few short years, has gone from a rarity to an expected bird. An increase in the number of birders explains some, but far from all of the growing number of sightings.

Thirty-seven White-breasted Nuthatches was a good count, indicating better than average coverage of the foothills and the front range. Four Red-breasted Nuthatches were also tallied on the count. A single and often tough to find Brown Creeper was another welcome addition (Lance Benner).

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PROFILES IN BIRDING

The World at Her Doorstep: PAS' Marsha Fowler Submitted an ebird Checklist for Her Yard Every Day in 2020

It's a fact that PAS members are among the most active birders in the LA area, accounting for an impressive share of the county's ebird checklists and avidly participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count and Feeder Watch events. But how many of us can say we've tracked the bird activity on our own property *every single day for an entire year*?! Marsha Fowler can. On a recent Saturday, Wrentit had a Facetime chat with Marsha to discuss her remarkable feat.

Wrentit: Was 2020 the first year you've done a daily count of your yard?

Fowler: Yes, but I hope not the last. On a whim, I decided I wanted to do a full year of birding. I am still a fledgling birder and wanted to improve my skills, but more specifically I wanted to have a sense of what a full year in my yard looks like. Then the pandemic hit and I was sooooo very glad that I had made this commitment. I have to admit, those last few days I got superstitious, kept thinking I was going to injure myself and be unable to reach my goal.

W: How would you describe your property, in terms of features that are attractive to birds?

F: My property is 50'x150', in Janes Village in Altadena. It's at an altitude of 1480', close to the Angeles National Forest. My front yard is planted with a mix of native and non-native shrubs and uncommon fruit trees (jujubes, pitanga, feijoa, calamondin...). I am trying to convert all shrubbery to natives...my back yard has approximately 54 different fruit varieties, mainly as trees, and vines. I prefer a crowded "secret garden" that others have called a jungle. I've hung 15 feeders (mixed seed, black oil sunflower, peanut, mealworm, nyjer) plus five hummingbird feeders total. The %&@#\$ Red-crowned Parrots ravage my yard for jujubes and persimmons and figs and the English varieties of apples and more, stripping the trees, breaking branches, wrecking my yard, and causing the songbirds to scatter. A number of the song birds love the fermenting apples that hang on the trees past season's end, and the persimmons and figs. I try to cut some of the citrus fruit open and leave it hanging on the tree for the birds that like citrus, same with the pomegranates. Unlike the ravening hordes of parrots, the song birds are delicate eaters and willing to share the fruit with me.



An impressive assortment of feeders and fruit trees draws multitudes of birds to Marsha's yard. All are welcome, except for the Red-crowned Parrots © Marsha Fowler

W: Did you tend to make your observations at a particular time of day, or did it vary with your schedule or inclination?

F: Some mornings I have to go out at 6:30 to chase the @!\$*! parrots off the fruit—the din is unbearable. However, I am not an early riser, so I normally awaken and lie in bed and listen to the dawn chorus every morning, then get up. The birds seem to have a "clock" and congregate in my yard at 9:30 and again at 10:30 then at 11:30 – what's with the half-hours? I go out each morning, at 9:00 or so, with my latte, bins, camera, and e-bird app, and watch for at least 30--60 minutes. I do my watching at the same time each day, from the same spot. I thought that consistency might give me a better sense of who is there, and when, but that may not be true. I also casually bird about 90 minutes before sundown when the birds arrive for a before-bedtime snack.

W: What was your most special sighting? Your most routine sighting? Did you reach a point where you were recognizing individual birds, through some combination of appearance and behavior?

F: My most common sightings are the House Finches and Lesser Goldfinches. But I have some regular individuals—an old and rickety Mountain Chickadee in particular, a young Allen's Hummingbird, and a mottled yellow/red House Finch, and a White-breasted Nuthatch. I differentiate them as individuals by behaviour and plumage. My special sightings have been birds new to my yard, and some new life-listers. This year it has been the Pine Siskin, the Dark-eyed Junco (Cismontanus), the Green-tailed Towhee, and the Black-headed Grosbeak. I also had Black Phoebes, Brown-headed Cowbirds, and a fledgling Nuttall's Woodpecker in my

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PROFILES IN BIRDING, CONTINUED

yard. I wonder if some of the birds are coming up from the nearby ongoing desecration of the Devil's Gate/ Hahamongna watershed.

W: What did you learn from paying such close attention to the bird activity in your yard?

F: I learned a lot about the resident and local bird population but I more specifically learned about the development of the process of bird identification. I have been doing research on the “Dreyfus Model of Human Intelligence / Skill Acquisition” specifically as it applied to the development of “clinical reasoning” of health professionals... When Alvaro Jaramillo presented at our meeting last October and talked about the shift in the birder's brain from a novice's non-contextual list of attributes, to an expert's intuitive grasp of bird identity that relies on the “face recognition” portion of the brain, it was clear to me that the journey from novice-to-expert was the same process of skill acquisition in clinical reasoning. Alvaro noted that that shift took 10,000 hours while Dreyfus' research showed a 2-3 year trajectory – or essentially the same amount of time. I wanted to spend the year watching how my ability to recognize birds might shift from a list of attributes to “face recognition.” It did change. I can now identify that flash of feather out of the corner of my eye instead of plodding through attribute comparison.

But I am guessing that this is not what you were asking. This year, Darren has been very graciously helpful in bird ID. Some juveniles stump me as does variant plumage, and occasionally a new face in the yard does as well. The completely gray House Finch with grey herringbone pattern on the back threw

me, as did the Green-tailed Towhee. I learned that there are different birds in the front versus the back yards, and more birds where there is more fruit, that the birds love the native plants, and that I can see a seasonal pattern of birds in my yard. I am now up to 44 species seen in, above, or from my yard, and hope to add more to that list this coming year.

W: So are you doing a daily bird survey of your yard again this year?

F: Yup. Gonna try. I would like to compare who showed up last year, and when, with this new year's visitors.



Before year's end, Fowler could instantly recognize this Mountain Chickadee in her Jujube tree by its villainous countenance © Marsha Fowler

BIRD SCIENCE PROGRAM AND SCHOOLYARD GARDEN UPDATES

Weeds and Wildflowers

Our Schoolyard native plant and pollinator garden continues to delight the handful of volunteers who have been lovingly caring for it, through the year of the pandemic. Shout out to Darren Dowell for his weekly visits and careful attention. The skeleton staff at the school stops by regularly to say how much joy they find there, between the fragrance of the sages, the sound of trickling water in the solar fountains and yes, the



Western Bluebirds utilizing one of River Muench's fountains © Lois Brunet

chirping of the birds who've discovered the oasis. Soon the children will be back and there will be even more joyful sounds to be heard!

The bit of winter rain we've had has encouraged both wildflowers and weeds. Our choice to not use any chemical products

to suppress the seed bank that pre-existed our planting was a healthy one, but the weeds are plentiful and must be dealt with. We'd like to remove as many as we can before they go to seed. As the native plants grow, and take up more space, we expect them to crowd out the weeds and it'll be easier and easier in future years.

If you'd like to come for a quiet morning or afternoon alone or in a very small group of 2 or 3, we'd welcome your help. Please email Lois at loisb.pas@gmail.com.

Finally, a word about the solar fountains. These were designed and built by a young Pasadena Audubon member, River Muench, for his Eagle Scout project. The pottery was donated and has the sheen of well loved second hand pieces. The terra cotta which matches the roof tiles of the surrounding buildings, is perfect for the spot. If you want to learn more about this great DIY solar fountain, River has made a how-to video which you can find on our website: pasadenaaudubon.org/Washington_garden.

Lois Brunet

CHAPTER ANNOUNCEMENTS AND OTHER NEWS

New PAS Birding Guide In the Works

The PAS Board decided it was time to revise and publish a new version of the Birding Guide to the Greater Pasadena Area, created in 2005 and now out-of-print.

A lot has changed since the first publication, both with good birding locations and the birds! So in early December, a committee of five [Darren Dowell, Graham Hamby, Mickey Long (chair), Laura Solomon & Patrick Walling] began planning a new list of birding sites to be included and potential authors for each site. We contacted authors totalling 19 (including several committee members) and have already gotten replies and even a couple of draft writeups submitted.

The Guide will have new content, introduction, photos, maps, and other features. We are targeting 2021 to have it out and available for sale. Stay tuned!

Mickey Long

Christmas Bird Count, Continued

A nice find was a Pacific Wren in Little Santa Anita Canyon (Lance Benner). Nearby Big Santa Anita Canyon normally offers the best chance for this species on the count, but following the Bobcat Fire, the area has been closed. Also, we can only guess at the condition of the habitat there post fire. Coverage of Mt. Wilson paid off with a variety of birds including a Cassin's Finch (Corey Husic). This is about the only spot in the count circle that offers the possibility of birds of the higher mountains such as this one.

There has been little evidence of irruptive species this winter, with the exception of Pine Siskins, which have been present in above average numbers. Fifty-three were found on count day; about double the number recorded on the 2019 count.

Another introduced species was a European Goldfinch found along the Rio Hondo (Naresh Satyan). Two Vesper Sparrows were at Santa Fe Dam were good to get for the count (Dessi Sieburth).

Two continuing Dark-eyed "Gray-headed" Juncos were found on count day, one at Mt. Wilson (Corey Husic) and the other at Hahamongna Watershed Park (Darren Dowell). Though just a subspecies, they are relatively rare, despite the fact that this winter has seen above average numbers in the area. Even rarer in winter was a Green-tailed Towhee at Bosque del Rio Hondo (Naresh Satyan).

A Bullock's Oriole was seen at Little Santa Anita Canyon, coincidentally by a birder not officially participating in the count (Steven Kurniawidjaja). But yes, we will gladly accept that sighting. A continuing Hooded Oriole was also refound at the Huntington Gardens on count day (Sarah Ngo). This species is common in spring and summer, but quite rare in December.

Just two Tricolored Blackbirds, a below average number, were

seen at Legg Lake (Mickey & Jan Long). This remains the only spot in the circle with a good chance for finding this declining species on the CBC.

Missed on count day but spotted during count week was a Black-and-white Warbler at Lacy Park (Darren Dowell). This bird doesn't add to our species count, but does get recorded as a species seen within the three days before and after the actual count. A continuing Nashville Warbler, rare in winter, was at Peck Park (Darren Dowell) and five Yellow Warblers were noted. Along Walnut Creek, an also rare Palm Warbler drew attention to itself by vocalizing (Jon Feenstra).

Aside from all of these notable birds, we managed to locate practically every expected species. That, along with the rare finds, definitely helped punch up the total number.

So how many did we get? An impressive 172 species were found on count day. This is our second highest total ever, missing that high mark of 2018 by a mere two species. In both

species count and rarities, the count exceeded expectations. How many individual birds were seen on the count? 16,003 to be precise; obviously a tiny fraction of what is actually present in the 15 mile diameter circle. But by counting the same areas each year we are still able to make this data accurate, reliable and useful.



This Lesser Black-backed Gull was kind enough to stick around and become the first of its kind recorded in our CBC. Shown here at Peck Road Park in November © Darren Dowell

As long-time readers will know, one of my favorite statistics are bird species that were represented by a single individual on the count. This year there were twenty-two of these. Obviously these single birds pad the species count significantly. On the

flip side of that number, how many other "ones" did we just miss seeing? It's anyone's guess.

Finally, a huge thank you to all who participated, from yard watchers to the trekkers who biked, hiked, walked in darkness, birded all day and went the extra mile to make the count happen and end up being so productive as well. I've enjoyed coordinating and compiling this event for nearly thirty years and it's something I look forward to all year.

By next December I hope and expect things will feel pretty close to normal and we will be able to conduct the count in more typical fashion. And we'll have the always enjoyable count night dinner and wrap up. I hope to see everyone then.

Jon Fisher

SELF-GUIDED FIELD TRIPS

Given that the current COVID situation in Los Angeles precludes us running group trips, PAS Field Trip Chair Luke Tiller thought it might be worth giving members some local seasonal birding tips and suggestions until our next newsletter in April.

February

The San Gabriel Spreading Grounds is well worth a visit in winter and has already come through this year with Grasshopper and Clay-colored Sparrows, Palm Warbler, and Eurasian Wigeon among the recent finds. Over the last few years, the area has become rare-gull-finding central. Almost everything larid one might expect here has shown up: Kelp, Yellow-footed, Lesser Black-backed, Slaty-backed and Glaucous Gull. More importantly some might argue it is a great place to bring your field guide and just slowly work through the pitfalls of identifying common gull species. I typically park at the end of Mines Road to access the site. 9721 Mines Ave, Pico Rivera, CA works as an address for the GPS.

Frank G. Bonelli Regional Park is always a favorite and worth a visit in winter. There are entrance fees on weekends of \$10/car, but the variety of species makes it worth it. The site often has a nice selection of wintering passerines and the lake can be filled with an impressive mix of waterfowl. Specialties you might hope to find here include Bald Eagle, California Gnatcatcher, Cactus Wren and Greater Roadrunner. The last three birds are found on the cactus covered slopes of the park's east side. 120 E Via Verde Dr, San Dimas, CA 91773 works as a GPS address.

Hummingbird Feeders: Rufous Hummingbirds are one of our earliest arriving spring migrants. If the lack of rain continues in LA they may be more reliant on irrigated areas and feeders this spring. Look for males to arrive in the second week of February. Black-chinned Hummingbirds should join them during the last week of March and if you get lucky Calliope from the first week of April. Anna's, Allen's and Costa's should be possible at any time of year. I have some articles on my

blog about my favorite hummingbird feeders and looking for green-backed Rufous Hummingbirds: <https://underclearskies.com/2020/07/25/green-backed-rufous-hummingbirds/>

March

Much of March can be quite slow for birding, with only the earlier spring migrants on the move until the end of the month. If you are looking for somewhere to explore that's further afield, but still manageable in a day's drive, how about Borrego Springs and Anza Borrego Hawkwatch? Mid to late March sees the peak of Swainson's Hawk migration through this oasis town and on good wildflower years the Swainson's Hawks often stick around for a while to fatten up on White-lined Sphinx caterpillars. Spots worth exploring include the Water Treatment Plant Settling Ponds, Yaqui Wells, Tamarisk Grove Campground, Old Springs Road and the Roadrunner Club. Blog Post from PAS's inaugural tour: <https://underclearskies.com/2016/03/20/anza-borrego-circle-of-life/> Herps, wildflowers and succulents are part of the attraction here too.

At the same time, keep your eyes to the skies in search of migrant raptors in the foothills of the San Gabriel's too. Groups of Swainson's Hawks, sometimes as large as 100+, can be seen at this time of year. It's easiest to spot these migrants on days with some cloud cover. Turkey Vultures are another common migrant, and you may find something else interesting mixed into the kettles. For me though just seeing these familiar raptors in migration is thrill enough in itself.

A local spot I like to explore in early spring is Upper Big Tujunga Canyon Road. Heading south from Angeles Forest Highway towards the Forest Highway, where the road parallels Mill Creek can be good for migrant birds. The draw for me however is the chance to hear, and with luck see, one of our most secretive resident birds: Mountain Quail. By March males should be starting to call which makes them infinitely easier to find than when they aren't. I like the first three or so miles south from the Crest Highway for them

because the less dense cover here means the birds sometimes run between bushes briefly giving you a chance to spot them. Be aware that California Quail occur here too so be ready to identify them given potentially brief views. The area also promises interesting sparrows with resident *Belli* subspecies of Bell's Sparrow and Rufous-crowned Sparrow. Early in March you might find a mix of Fox Sparrows here and by April returning Black-chinned Sparrow. I've also found Blaineville's Horned Lizard in the area.

April

Birding is simple in April. To paraphrase Alec Baldwin in *Glengarry Glen Ross*, "ABB: Always Be Birding." Unlike the east coast, where the movement of northbound fronts presaged the arrival of migrants in spring, here in LA things appear much more complicated. The only thing that seems somewhat constant to me here in Pasadena is that low clouds and fog over the mountains and basin seems to equal more migrants in foothill neighborhoods and local parks.

In April, PAS usually hosts field trips to places like Bob's Gap Road, which runs north of Big Pines Highway towards the CA138. Here desert specialties like Scott's Oriole, Black-throated Sparrow, Greater Roadrunner, Cactus Wren, Ladder-backed Woodpecker and— if you hit the lottery— Gray Vireo might be found. By the end of April late migrants start to appear in the mountains and so higher elevations like Buckhorn Campground in the Angeles National Forest are worth visiting for Dusky Flycatcher, Green-tailed Towhee, Thick-billed Fox Sparrow and McGillivray's Warbler as well as the interesting resident species. Given the closures after the Bobcat Fire, East Blue Ridge Road above Wrightwood might be a better bet for higher elevation explorations. The road is best explored with a high clearance vehicle. The nearby Grassy Hollow visitors center is always worth a stop too.

I hope these ideas help you plan some places to visit and species to keep your eyes peeled for during these times without guided field trips.

NEW OUTREACH PROGRAM

Sending Bins and Books to Peru

As birders, many of us eventually find ourselves with an extra set of binoculars. Maybe it was your starter pair, and then you received new binoculars as a gift or couldn't resist upgrading to a better brand or magnification.

That starter pair might have been the ones that allowed you to see a flock of Cedar Waxwings for the first time, with their lemon yellow tail tips and batman masks. Wonderful memories of discovery are associated with them, but now they're in the back of the closet, gathering dust. Why not consider donating them to a great cause?

Pasadena Audubon is partnering with a birding group in Cusco, Peru – *Club de Observadores de Aves de Perú* (COAP) – to provide binoculars and other optics to Peruvians who are interested in birds and conservation but cannot afford the equipment.

COAP was started by professional guides, one of whom, Saturnino Lactahuaman, led Program Director Lois Brunet (along with her sister, and their husbands) on a birding tour in southeastern Peru last March, days before the pandemic put an end to such travel. During the trip, Saturnino explained that while guiding allows him to make a good living, his real passion is to introduce Peruvians to birds and conservation. Peru is number two in the world for avian diversity, with close to 2000 species, yet according to Saturnino, many Peruvians don't know much about their birds. COAP offers field trips and classes to the locals and they're very popular. Field trips fill up within hours, but many of the attendees cannot afford binoculars so people share 3 or 4 to a pair. All of us who bird know from experience that having a set of binoculars handy is frequently the difference between seeing a bird in all its glory and missing it entirely.

"I was struck by the fact that COAP and Pasadena Audubon's missions are fundamentally the same. We're both focused on bringing the magic of birds to our communities and confident that a commitment to conservation will follow," says Lois. "With this partnership, I see an opportunity for us to make a real difference for a like-minded group in a different part of the world, while helping our members dispose of their unneeded optics and books in a meaningful way. It's a win win!"

She added that the program not only holds the potential to bolster conservation of Peru's endemic avifauna, but also of North American species that overwinter there, such as Swainson's Thrush and Scarlet Tanager.

Donations

For binoculars, we'd prefer to send the roof prism type because they tend to be more waterproof, an important consideration in a tropical climate. However, Saturnino stressed that any serviceable bins and scopes would be greatly appreciated. Books on neo-tropical birds are also welcome.

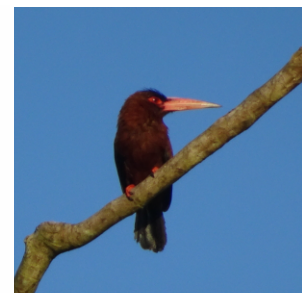
Contact Lois Brunet (loisb.pas@gmail.com) to make

donations. We encourage a \$20 donation to cover shipping costs for optics. If you wish to make a cash donation to the Bins to Peru fund, you may do so online or by sending a check to our address: 1750 N. Altadena Drive Pasadena, CA 91107.

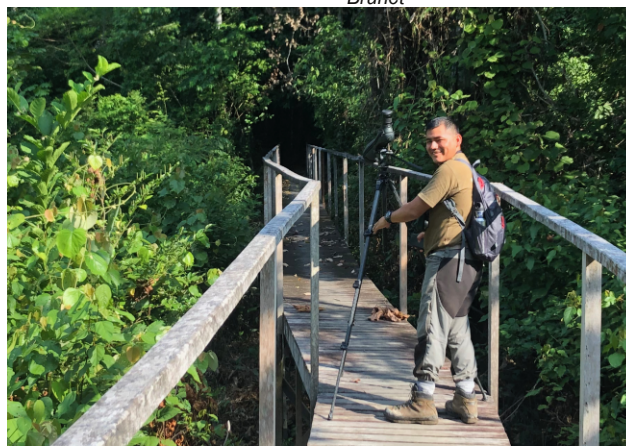
If you have excellent optics that you wish to sell, we can help with that too.



The COAP logo, featuring a trio of Peru's awe-inspiring birds: The Inca Tern, the Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, and the Harpy Eagle



A Purus Jacamar, one of the many remarkable birds Lois and her family saw on their tour of southeastern Peru © Lois Brunet



Saturnino Lactahuaman sets up his spotting scope to get a close-up view of a canopy dweller © Lois Brunet



COAP volunteer Flor Maria Quispe Mamani poses with her copy of "Birds of Peru", donated by Lois Brunet, which she is using to identify birds at a local wetland

Thank you to our Wonderful Donors!

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Alan Lamson gave a gift in honor of Laura Solomon.

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Lance Benner	Member at Large	lbenner@charter.net
Mickey Long	Member at Large	mlongbird@gmail.com
Lois Brunet	Program Director	loisb.pas@gmail.com

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