



Drawing by
Guy Coheleach

THE WRENTIT

Founded 1904

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.

January-February 2008

January Program

A Century After the Vinegaroon

Recent Bird Studies at the Salton Sea
Wednesday, January 16, 2008

Kathy Molina

In 1908 California's premier ornithologist, Joseph Grinnell, embarked upon the maiden voyage on the present day Salton Sea aboard his leaky rowboat dubbed the Vinegaroon. In the following 100 years the Salton Sea's bird life has seen some remarkable changes. In her presentation, Kathy Molina will briefly trace these changes and discuss some of her studies of the birdlife of the Salton Sea since the early 1990's. These studies range from investigations of the breeding biology of gulls, terns and skimmers, to inventories of waterbirds and shorebirds using the Sea and the adjacent agricultural landscape.

Kathy C. Molina, a native Angelino, is a Research Associate at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and manages the UCLA-Dickey Bird and Mammal Collections. Kathy recently co-edited (with Dave Shuford) "Ecology and Conservation of Birds of the Salton Sink: An Endangered Ecosystem" in the Studies in Avian Biology Series Volume 27, a publication of the Cooper Ornithological Society.

General Meetings held at:

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

February Program

Least Tern and Snowy Plover Recovery Program

Wednesday, February 20, 2008

Tom Ryan

Tom has been monitoring the California Least Tern colony at Venice Beach since 2004. The colony failed in both 2004 and 2005 due mostly to egg predation. Working together with the California Department of Fish and Game, LA Audubon and community volunteers the colony rebounded in 2005 and produced record numbers of fledglings in 2007. Tom will discuss how they have been able to bring the colony back and what the future may hold for the site. He has also been working with LA and Santa Monica Bay Audubon on a project to protect Snowy Plovers on Los Angeles County beaches that involved countywide surveys in 2007 to determine where the plovers winter and where they are most likely to attempt to nest. They found a nest scrape in Hermosa Beach, which is the first sign of nesting since 1949. He will discuss the project and what is being done to protect this species within Los Angeles County.

Tom works as a Senior Biologist/Ornithologist for SWCA Environmental Consultants. His research interests include tropical ornithology and special status species recovery. He is currently involved in studies of the Burrowing Owl, California Least Tern, and Western Snowy Plover.

March Program

Kenya: Birds & Wildlife in the Gem of East Africa

Wednesday, March 19th, 2008

Roy Poucher and Linda Oberholtzer

Join Roy Poucher and Bird Odysseys on an intimate and inspired photographic safari of Kenya.

See the Masai Mara and other wild locations, with colorful and comical-looking birds and the big game of hippos, rhinos, zebra, elephant, giraffes and lions. Grasp the mind-boggling millions of Lesser Flamingos blanketing Lake Nakuru in pink. Enjoy the antics of the gangly Secretary Bird and of the largest flying bird in the world, the Kori Bustard, as it displays for females.

Visit beautiful and bird-rich Lakes Baringo and Naivasha in the Great Rift Valley, the verdant Kakamega Forest near Uganda, and famous Treetops Lodge, built above big game watering holes in Aberdares National Park. See Bee-eaters & Rollers, Hamerkop & Fish Eagles, Weavers & Sunbirds, Hoopoes & Hornbills, Bustards, Lapwings, Longclaws and White-Eyes. Experience why it's called "Magical Kenya."

Roy Poucher is a Sea and Sage Audubon trip leader and leads multi-day trips to the Eastern Sierra, Arizona and Texas. His bird tour company, Bird Odysseys, visits many domestic and international hot spots.

President's Perch

Pasadena Audubon ended the year on 2 high notes:

- The Christmas Bird Count & Dinner was very successful this year thanks to Jon Fisher's organization of the Count and the Excellent dinner provided by our Hospitality Committee (Judy Bass, Susan Gilliland & Pam Dong).
- And, we finally got the U.S. Forest Service to install our 6 interpretive signs (designed by Laura Garrett) on the Cobb Estate Nature Trail! We are

thinking of having a dedication ceremony in January.

February is coming up and it is time again to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count. Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, with National Audubon, is conducting the GBBC on February 15-18 this year. Last year they set a new record by receiving 81,203 checklists (613 species of birds). For more details on how to join the count, go to their website www.birdsource.org.

Good Birding in 2008.

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Conservation

Fish and Game Commission Improves Non-lead Ammunition Bill

The Fish and Game Commission voted 3-1 on December 7th to adopt new hunting regulations throughout condor country. The new regulations are nearly the same as the recently passed bill, AB 821, except for two significant differences which protect condors further.

First, the new regulations state that it is unlawful to possess lead ammunition in condor range while taking (shooting) or attempting to take game covered by the new regulations. This offers more protection than AB 821 gives because it only states that it is unlawful to use lead ammunition while taking game.

Second (and this one was truly unexpected), the Commission did not exempt .22 caliber, or smaller, projectiles from the new regulations. AB 821 exempts small caliber ammunition because non-lead varieties do not currently exist on the market. The Commission felt that by requiring non-lead ammunition for all ammunition, the market will adjust. We need non-lead ammunition in order to protect condors.

Lead poisoning poses the greatest threat to free-flying condors. Many condor experts testify that without these changes, there is no hope for condors to survive on their own. The new law and regulations together not only should protect condors but other species of scavenging birds as well. Thank you, California Fish and Game, for taking one more step to protect California Condors.

Ventana Wildlife Society is the only nonprofit releasing condors in California and has focused on recovering the species for 10 years in Big Sur and collaborates with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Pinnacles National Monument, San Diego Wild Animal Park, Los Angeles Zoo and many others.

From the Ventana Wildlife Society

Tejon Ranch Update

As many of you know, the owners of the 270,000 acre Tejon Ranch are planning to develop it by building 23,000 homes, plus another 3500 luxury vacation homes, right in the middle of Condor country. This is a crisis of monumental proportions for several reasons. First, this land contains critical bird habitat, including an IBA (Important Bird Area). Second, its location means that it provides connectivity between other important areas, like the Antelope Valley, the Sierras, the Kern River Valley and the San Joaquin Valley. If it is developed, this would damage, if not destroy, this connectivity. Third, from a human perspective, imagine the traffic caused by 26,000 new homes in the area. Where are they going to get the water, you ask? The answer is that the developers have the rights to the Aqueduct that

passes right through Tejon Ranch before it comes to Los Angeles.

Pasadena Audubon has been working with many other groups to try to stop this environmental disaster. On December 3, several Audubon Chapter representatives met with Graham Chisholm, the Conservation Chair from Audubon California, who informed us that this issue is extremely high on their priority list as well. We do not know what we can hope for at this point, whether it will be a conservation easement, a state park, or nothing at all. Right now, we are waiting for the EIR (Environmental Impact Report) which is due shortly.

So what can you do to help? Get the word out to everyone you know who cares about birds, other animals and crowding in LA that this crisis is real, and we need to be ready to act as necessary. You can also contact Laura Garrett at PURPLECOW@IPS.NET or (626) 564-1890 for more information.



photo by Donald G. Rogers

Norm Arnheim, Laura Garrett, and Will Fulmer admire the newly installed interpretive signs at the Cobb Estate. Watch for a full story in the March issue.

2007 CBC (continued)

and thus easily overlooked. The last record was during count week way back in 2001. Northern Cardinals are introduced residents in the Whittier Narrows area in small numbers. With rare exceptions they've been recorded every year, but have now been missed the past three years. They are still present in the area, but it's possible that the population is declining thus making them harder to find.

Well that is what it's all about; what was found and what was not found. Sometimes what we don't see tells us more about what's going on than what we do see. Each contribution, even the counts of Yellow-rumped Warblers and Western Scrub Jays, is important

Field Trips (continued)

Meet at 8am Saturday morning in Maricopa at the intersection of Highways 166 and 33. You may wish to spend Friday night in Taft or Maricopa, or leave early from Pasadena. Saturday night will be spent at California Valley Lodge, with dinner and breakfast at the Lodge. There are only 11 rooms available at the lodge. Information on how to register will be sent to you when you sign up.

There are no services on the Plain, so bring a full tank of gas, lunch, water, and snacks for two days. FRS radios will be helpful. Weather is unpredictable, so its best to be prepared for both heat or cold. Please carpool if possible.

To sign up, email Mark Scheel SCHEEL@TAPIR.CALTECH.EDU

in completing the overall picture and charting the changes in birdlife over time.

Birds are known to be a strong indicator of the health of the environment. The fact that they are generally some of the easiest animals to find and identify allows nearly anyone with an interest to provide useful information on populations and trends. The CBC is a great way to do this.

A big thank you to all the participants who make the count possible. I hope to see you all again next year.

Jon Fisher

2007 Pasadena - San Gabriel Valley Christmas Count

We had a great turnout of participants for 2007 and a very successful count. The weather was clear and beautiful and, although overcast skies generally produce more bird activity throughout the day, we did well. We found 164 species, which is a new count high and a very respectable total for an inland count.

Our count has a long history going back to 1946. Now, in an era when many CBCs are coordinated through e-mail and with phone calls, our pre-count meeting and count night dinner are traditions at Pasadena Audubon. These events bring everyone together first to organize, and then to socialize, have dinner and share the results of the day.

The Pasadena-San Gabriel Valley CBC encompasses over 175 square miles within its fifteen mile circle, which is quite a substantial area. Much of it is composed of urbanized areas or inaccessible chaparral covered slopes, but the portions that we are able to census provide a varied array of bird habitats.

Some wetland birds, such as Sora, Virginia Rail and American Bittern are now very rare on the count, an obvious result of the lack or (more precisely) loss of suitable habitat. Others, such as Spotted Dove and Loggerhead Shrike, have declined for other unknown reasons.

Of course some species – the Great-tailed Grackle is a prime example – are on the increase. Any species which can adapt to human development has a leg up. Eurasian Collared-Doves, though they have yet to really invade the count circle, also certainly fall into this category. It's the changes as well as the constants that keeps the count interesting.

Here's a review of the count highlights for 2007.

Cackling Goose (last recorded in 1985), Snow Goose and White-fronted Goose (rare, but now recorded for the third straight year) were found along the San Gabriel River in the Whittier Narrows area. A lone Ross's Goose was at Legg Lake where it has now apparently taken up permanent residence.

A great bird, and a first for the count, was a Common Teal (or Eurasian Teal) on the San Gabriel River. This bird spent most of last winter at the same spot, but was not detected until after the count. This Eurasian form of Green-winged Teal is quite rare anywhere in California.

Other waterfowl of interest included Canvasback (not always a slam-dunk on the count) and several Hooded Mergansers, marking the fourth straight year for this hit and miss species.

Mountain Quail can be difficult to find when not calling, thus the lack of

count records since 1999. That dry spell ended this year, though, with this species recorded by the Mt. Wilson team.

We struck out on Spotted Doves. This attractive Asian dove used to be a fixture in the San Gabriel Valley with counts of between 50 and 90 birds in the 1970s and early 1980s being typical. However, the decline of this species since that time has been spectacular. Cooper's Hawks, increasing in suburban areas recently, have been suggested as one of the main causes of the decline. Could this be a case of a native species displacing one that's been introduced? Now that's real justice!

On the other side of the coin, we had a Eurasian Collared-Dove for the second count record and the second year in a row. While Spotted Doves have declined rapidly, Eurasian Collared-Doves have been increasing in California and we should expect to see their numbers continue to climb locally. Just a few miles south of the count circle in Pico Rivera, I counted forty-five of them in November. It seems only a matter of time before they become common in the area and on the count.

A remarkable find was a Spotted Owl, the first since 1976, found on count week between Mt. Wilson and Henninger Flat. A half dozen Western Screech-Owls were found in the early morning hours of the count, along with the expected Great Horned.

Any Empidonax flycatchers are a nice find on the count. This year we had a Pacific-slope Flycatcher at the Arboretum and a more expected Gray Flycatcher at Hahamongna Watershed Park. Those were the only flycatchers of note, however.

We squeaked by with two Loggerhead Shrikes found at Santa Fe Dam this year. This is becoming the only reliable spot on the count for shrikes, as they are now absent from other areas where they were formerly easy to find. Reasons for this species' decline are not altogether clear, with populations in the interior of the state holding up fairly well but birds formerly breeding and wintering on the coastal plain nearly vanishing.

Swallows are scarce in winter, and any swallow is a good bird on the count. This year three species – Violet-green, Barn and N. Rough-winged Swallows – were a nice find at Legg Lake.

Another very good bird was a Townsend's Solitaire at Mt. Wilson, the first on the count since 1999. Last year, cold and foggy weather really hampered the birding effort at Wilson, but the results with clear weather this year were notably better.

The bird of the count had to be the

Blackburnian Warbler found on count day at Legg Lake. Legg Lake hosted a Bay-breasted Warbler at the end of November, apparently long gone now, but this Blackburnian was definitely an adequate consolation prize. According to Mickey Long, this is only the second record for the Whittier Narrows area and it's the first record for the count.

Also fairly rare on the count was a Hermit Warbler at Legg Lake. This area is a large one and obviously attractive to vagrants (I'm speaking of the feathered variety). It undoubtedly holds more as yet undiscovered birds and deserves more coverage throughout the year.

A Painted Redstart was back at the Monrovia Canyon Nature Center for its third winter. Though missed on last year's count, it was seen in 2005 and 2007. In fact, workers at the Nature Center have reported two Painted Redstarts there this year.

Multiple Western Tanagers were at both the Huntington Gardens and the Arboretum, but the hoped-for orioles at the Huntington Gardens were a no-show on the count.

Very unusual was a Green-tailed Towhee along the San Gabriel River. This species was last recorded in 1988, nearly twenty years ago. Obviously a rare find on the Pasadena count.

Finally, a White-throated Sparrow (one of two known to be present at Eaton Canyon) was also spotted on count day, with another at a feeder in Arcadia.

With 164 species recorded, there wasn't too much that we missed, but there are always a few. Here's an annotated list of some of them: American Bitterns are now very scarce because of habitat loss. The most recent sighting was in 2005, but the next most recent record was in 1994. Redheads are not all that rare, but easy to miss on count day with just a few individuals present. They also have the unfortunate habit of flying from place to place. Redheads was last found on the 2000 count.

Cattle Egrets are primarily seen along the San Gabriel River and in the Whittier Narrows area, but they are still quite uncommon there with 2004 being the last count record. White-tailed Kites are usually easy to spot when present, but with just a few pairs in the area they can be missed on a given day. They are recorded nearly every year, but were missed on the 2004 and 2005 counts, and of course in 2007.

Sora are sometimes found along the San Gabriel River, but they are secretive

(see 2007 CBC page 2)

Field Trips

Hahamongna Monthly Walk

Saturday, January 5, 2008

Saturday, March 1, 2008

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, January 13, 2008

Sunday, February 10, 2008

Sunday, March 9, 2008

8:00am - 10:00am

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, January 20, 2008

Sunday, February 17, 2008

Sunday, March 16, 2008

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, January 27, 2008

Sunday, February 24, 2008

Sunday, March 23, 2008

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) or phone, putting "Huntington" in the subject line to avoid inadvertent deletion.

Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

Salton Sea

Saturday/Sunday, January 26-27, 2008

All day Saturday and until afternoon on Sunday

The Salton Sea has been a traditional way for PAS members to begin their year list!

We usually find over 100 species for the weekend and over the years we have seen the following number of species: 27 geese & ducks, 13 hawks, 15 waders, 8 gulls, 6 terns, 11 flycatchers, 10 warblers and 16 sparrows. This is one of the premier birding spots on the continent.

We will bird all day Saturday and a half day on Sunday, heading home after lunch.

This trip is only for Pasadena Audubon members and is limited to 12.

(What!? Not a member yet? Download an application from our website and send it in today!)

To reserve a spot on the trip and get accommodation information and meeting location/times, please email (highly preferable) or call Ron.

Ron Cyger

Santa Fe Dam

Saturday, January 12, 2008

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. In winter, waterfowl, sparrows and a variety of raptors are the specialties here. Cactus and Rock Wrens are also present. In the past few winters there have been White-fronted, Ross's and 'Aleutian' Canada Geese here as well as a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.

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

Legg Lake & Peck Road Park

Saturday, February 2, 2008

7:30am -11:30am

This trip will cover several consistently good lake and park birding areas. Legg Lake

has lots of water and scattered trees and has produced good waterfowl numbers and varieties as well as an impressive list of migrants and wintering birds.

Peck Road Park contains a huge hour-glass shaped lake that often hosts a wide variety of water birds, including grebes, ducks, gulls, terns, egrets, and shorebirds. Time permitting; we'll include the Livingstone – Graham Reservoir, which usually contains hundreds of ducks and gulls. There are almost always one or two Ospreys present. Other raptors are often seen at all these locations.

Meet in the Santa Anita Ave. parking lot, closest to the 60 freeway. Take the Santa Anita exit and turn south from the off-ramp (going south). The lake and parking lot will be on your right.

Ed Stonick

Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge

Saturday, Feb 16, 2008

8:00 am – noon

This wildlife refuge contains one of the largest saltmarshes in Southern California as well as intact agricultural areas and grasslands. As such a unique chunk of open space surrounded by extensive urban sprawl, it is a vital piece of habitat for large numbers of wintering waterfowl and shorebirds. Such species as Pacific Golden-Plover and Short-eared and Burrowing Owls have regularly occurred in recent winters.

Seal Beach NWR is located on a US Naval Base with restricted entry. Attendance on this trip must be done by reservation, so please notify Jon via email if you would like to attend. The meeting place and time will be arranged.

Jon Feenstra and Tom Ryan

Carrizo Plain Weekend

Feb 23-24, 2008

8am Saturday – noon Sunday

Trip Leader: Roy Van de Hoek

Join us for a weekend trip to "California's Serengeti", the Carrizo Plain. We will look for Sandhill Cranes, Mountain Plover, Mountain Bluebird, and LeConte's Thrasher. Many raptors winter on the plain as well: on last year's trip we had Rough-legged and Ferruginous Hawks, Golden Eagle, and four species of Falcon. Five species of owl are also possible. We may also see Chumash Rock Art, Pronghorn, Tule Elk, Brine Shrimp, Kit Fox, and Giant Kangaroo Rat. We will also learn about the geology of the San Andreas Fault, and the unique ecology of Soda Lake, the largest alkali wetland west of the Sierras and deserts.

(see Field Trips, page 2)

Calendar

Submit material for the next Wrentit by December 1st

January 2008

Date	Day	Time	Event	Location	Leader*
2	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Will Fulmer
5	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Monthly Walk	Ron Cyger
12	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	Santa Fe Dam	Jon Fisher
13	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Mountain Birding Monthly Walk	Hill Penfold
15	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	San Dimas Canyon	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
16	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: A Century After the Vinegaroon
20	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
26-27	S-S	7:00 am	Field Trip	Salton Sea	Ron Cyger
27	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

February 2008

2	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Legg Lake	Ed Stonick
6	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Will Fulmer
10	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Mountain Birding Monthly Walk	Hill Penfold
16	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Seal Beach	Jon Feenstra
17	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
19	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Bonelli Park	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
20	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: Least Tern & Snowy Plover
23-24	S-S	7:00 am	Field Trip	Carrizo Plain	Roy Van de Hoek <i>(contact Mark Scheel)</i>
24	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

March 2008

1	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Monthly Walk	Ron Cyger
5	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Will Fulmer
9	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Mountain Birding Monthly Walk	Hill Penfold
15	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	Piute Ponds	Ron Cyger, Mark Scheel
16	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
18	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Peck Road Park	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
19	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: Kenya Photo Safari
22	Sat	6:00 am	Field Trip	Owling in the San Gabriels	Lance Benner
23	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

***Trip Leader Information**

Mark Scheel (Chair)	(818) 366-7343	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
Mickey Long	(626) 398-5420	mlongbird@charter.net
Elaine MacPherson	(626) 355-9412	birdergrrl@aol.com
Hill Penfold	(818) 352-4954	hpenfold@gmail.com
Mike San Miguel	(626) 355-5058	sanmigbird@aol.com
Ed Stonick	(626) 796-0595	edstonick@earthlink.net
Madeline West	(626) 574-0429	west226@adelphia.net

Trip Report

Birding South Africa

If you want the best kind of birdwatching experience I might be so bold as to recommend a trip to South Africa. Of the approximately 850 bird species recorded, about 725 are resident or annual visitors and around 50 can be seen nowhere else in the world.

South Africa is a wonderful place to see ecotourism in action. It is almost impossible to separate a tourism experience from a nature experience. There are many hundreds of nature reserves, bird sanctuaries and game reserves, with excellent facilities, information sheets, and checklists, providing opportunity for birdwatching. In many cases, trained guides are available.

The Kruger National Park is world-renowned and was established in 1898 to protect the wildlife of the South African Lowveld. The park has more than 500 species of birds and it is not uncommon to see in excess of 100 species in one day. If that isn't enough, the 150 mammal species (including the big five) should add to your overall enjoyment and alleviate any possibility of boredom. I would recommend travel to the park in September, October, March or April. Summer temperatures (mid December) reach in excess of 40C and the malaria risk is at its highest at that time.

Watch out for migratory birds like the African Hoopoe, minute nectar birds like the Collared Sunbird, colorful robins like the Green Twinspot, Lilac Breasted Rollers, innumerable birds of prey, my particular favorite being the majestic Martial Eagle, exotic birds like the Crowned Crane and ones that eke out a living taking parasites from the larger mammals, like the Red-Billed and Yellow-Billed Oxpeckers. There are numerous species of kingfishers from the Pygmy to the Giant and, if you keep your eyes peeled, daytime owl spotting is not unusual. Seeing an Ostrich in natural surroundings is somewhat surreal and maybe you will be lucky enough to come across a group of Ground Hornbills, unmistakable large black carnivorous birds with prominent red throat and face.

Although the whole country has many bird and game viewing opportunities, another favorite place for me is the Southern Cape and Garden Route region. The coastline is exceptionally beautiful and the bird life is prolific. Be sure to visit the Lake Pleasant Bird Sanctuary in Sedgefield for a chance to see the spectacular Knysna Lorie and perhaps even the elusive Narina Trogon.

This scenic coastal lake district

expanse has bird hides situated in reed beds overlooking the water and offers perfect photographic opportunities, highlighting: African Rail, Little Bittern, Malachite Kingfisher, African Fish Eagle, Little Rush Warbler and White Breasted Cormorant. Managed by the Wilderness National Parks Board, there are many delightful spots that will satisfy your yearning for adventure, nature and the best of environmental management.

The Cape Province is cooler than the North of the country so recommended travel time would be from October to March.

If you need some respite from carrying your binoculars and watching the birds there are many other great activities to keep you busy in the area. If a round of golf would pique your interest there are eight championship golf courses designed by such world-renowned professionals as Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player. Other activities include bowling and fishing, a ride on the Outeniqua Choo Tjoe (a local steam train), a visit to the Cango Caves or the nearby Ostrich farm, a look at George Crocodile Farm or, for the more adventurous, bungee jumping or shark diving.

In season, from June to November, the 65 km Whale Route along the greater Mossel Bay coastline is superbly suited to view whales. Four species are seen along this route, of which Southern Right Whales are the most commonly sighted when they come into the bay to calve. There are also Humpback, Bryde's and Killer Whales frequenting the route.

Sue Hellen

Septemberfest

Since we're retired, Will and I do a lot of traveling. This September, we took a trip to "romantic" Germany. Although this was not a birding trip, we did see some attractive birds along the way. Most were common European birds, but not common to us Californians.

Cruising the Rhine, we passed by numerous castles, plus Black-headed Gulls and Gray Herons.

Among the charms of Wiesbaden are the "largest cuckoo clock in the world" and a flock of Rose-ringed Parakeets. The Common Moorhens were definitely common there, as a dozen or so were swimming in the local park.

A family of Mute Swans entertained us near King Ludwig's "Sleeping Beauty" castle, Neuschwanstein (schwan means swan in German). Eurasian Jays frolicked in the chestnut trees nearby. We were especially happy to see the jays, as we'd only had glimpses of these beautiful birds with lazuli blue wings in the past.

Poking around in the beautiful fall foliage were Great Tits, Blue Tits, Wood

Pigeons, Mistle Thrushes, White Wag-tails, Chaffinches, a Eurasian Nuthatch, and a White-backed Woodpecker. Overhead we saw House Martins, Common Buzzards, Carrion Crows, and Hooded Crows.

A Black Redstart sang on the Heidelberg Castle wall.

Swimming in a Munich canal were Tufted Ducks and the one new bird for our life list, several Common Pochards.

All in all the sights and the bird life were very enjoyable, and the beer was pretty good, too.

Lois Fulmer

Staten Island Surprise

Refound Rarity in Childhood Haunt

Most birders vividly remember their first few field trips and the birds that most impressed them as they began this hobby. I grew up on Staten Island, which is part of New York City, but in my boyhood it still had lots of undeveloped land as well as parks, beaches, marshes and woodlots. Fortunately, much of it still remains today.

The area where I grew up has an accessible beach, which often attracted winter grebes, ducks, and cormorants, migrant shorebirds, and occasional alcs; it also has scattered groves of deciduous trees which would sometimes be filled with beautiful breeding-plumage warblers and other songbirds in May.

One nearby area, Great Kills Park, has beaches, a bay, mudflats and a few marshes. Unfortunately, it had been used as a landfill in the 1950s for the city's ever-burgeoning garbage supply and had lost its original splendor. Old time Staten Island birders told me it rivaled the well known Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge at one time.

In late August of this year, I visited my brother John, who still lives in the house we grew up in. He is also a birder and the one who first got me fascinated with birds. One great thing about birding is that the adventures are never over, and you never know what might show up next.

On the morning of the day I was to return to California, we decided to take one more short birding trip to Great Kills Park. We saw a Merlin perched in a large tree not far from the beach, picked up a pair of Black Scoters which had summered, and spotted a dozen or so herons and egrets perched on rocks near the shore. They included Great and Snowy Egrets and a few Little Blue Herons, including one messy one that was half blue and half white.

After scoping the group, we noticed that one of the adult "Little Blues" had a white throat. Perhaps it was a juvenile

(see Staten page 7)

Staten *(continued)*

that was almost in the adult stage. Shortly after, however, we noticed that it had bright yellow feet at the end of grayish-green legs. A bizarre Little Blue/Snowy hybrid!?

Our U. S. field guides showed nothing like this. Only when we returned home and checked the computer, on a long shot hope that this might be a recent reported rarity, did we realize we had seen a Western Reef-Heron! The bird had first been reported in July at Coney Island, and in mid-August a birder at Great Kills reported a small blue heron with yellow feet. Our sighting confirmed that the bird was still in the area.

The Western Reef-Heron's normal range is coasts in tropical west Africa, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and east to India. It was first reported in the U. S. in 1983, and there are a handful of recent records over the past couple of years. This was definitely the best bird either of us had seen on Staten Island over a span of almost fifty years!

Ed Stonick

Recent Local Sightings

Eaton Canyon hosts one, possibly two, continuing White-throated Sparrows near the Nature Center. Hill Penfold's walk there on November 18th found an Eastern Towhee in the same area. The following day Sue Horton found a White-faced Ibis at Hahamongna. Scattered reports of Pine Siskins came in November. A Bay-breasted Warbler was seen for several days in November at Legg Lake. On December 8th Jane Strong found a Bonaparte's Gull at Peck Road Park. Also

at the park, on December 2nd and subsequent days, were a Hammond's Flycatcher and a Gray Flycatcher, as well as a continuing Ferruginous Hawk. On December 2nd a Vesper Sparrow was sighted at Santa Fe Dam. Descanso Gardens had frequent sightings of a Costa's Hummingbird near the buildings in the rose garden.

The Other North Slope

December 8

For those that weren't able to attend the December 8th field trip to the lakes of the northwest San Gabriel Mountains, we were able to chip out a pretty decent day of birding. It all began with wind and sleet in the parking lot at Quail Lake. As the unpleasant weather relaxed we were rewarded with 4 White-winged Scoters, 13 Greater Scaup, 2 Horned Grebes, and 2 Golden Eagles. Flocks of the regular diving ducks were in attendance. Though Holiday Lake (a little east) was a bit slow, we got back into gear as we journeyed southeast into the foothills and checked out Lake Hughes and Lake Elizabeth. We found a Wood Duck, hundreds of Canvasback, and 18 Hooded Mergansers. Just in time, too, as the wind and clouds crept back in over us. Who says there's nothing but sunshine in L.A.?

Jon Feenstra



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, January 15, 2008
San Dimas Canyon

Meet at the Nature Center

Tuesday, February 19, 2008
Bonelli Park

Meet at the entrance

Tuesday, March 18, 2008
Peck Road Park

Meet in the parking lot

*Sid Heyman
Madeline West*

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Policy changes by the National Audubon Society have severely reduced the share of NAS membership dues returned to local chapters, funds which Pasadena Audubon has used to finance its programs and services. To make up for the loss of funds from National Audubon, Pasadena Audubon, like many other National Audubon chapters, now offers *Chapter only* memberships.

When it's time to renew your National Audubon membership, we invite you to instead become a *Chapter only* Member of the Pasadena Audubon Society, or make a donation to our Chapter to support our programs. Chapter-only dues are \$20 per year, or \$15 for seniors and students, all of which remains with our local chapter to fund our programs, including publication of *The Wren*.

We thank you all for your support!

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John's Corner

The Difficulty of Birding in High School

As many readers might already know, I was home-schooled from third grade to eighth grade. During those years, I lived a luxurious birder's life. We went on field trips that often involved birding. If there was a rare bird reported, we could pursue it almost immediately. Also, there was a plethora of fantastic birds just at my house, where I have recorded well over one-hundred species. This year, I'm going to a new charter school called Aveson. Little to my surprise, it's been very difficult trying to squeeze in any time for birding, and rarity-chasing has been limited to the weekends. The most distressing part though is how unsupportive some of the "teachers" are.

The birding at school however, hasn't been too dreary. I have seen a nice collection of sparrows: Chipping, White-crowned, Golden-crowned, Lincoln's, and

Dark-eyed Juncos and California and Spotted Towhees. I've also seen a few of the regular warblers, flycatchers, and woodpeckers. And one day during yoga class, soaring out from behind the San Gabriel Mountains was a spectacular Golden Eagle. In my enthusiasm, I pointed it out to a few other students, which unfortunately attracted the attention of the teacher. When she asked me what the problem was, I told her that there was a Golden Eagle directly behind her. Without looking up, she stated that it couldn't be more important than her yoga class and chastised me. Of course by then many of the other students were looking at the eagle instead of paying attention, which got me in trouble.

I always seem to find the best birds during PE or yoga. This is probably because it's the one time I'm outside for more than a few minutes. For example, on December 3rd, during PE, I found an amazing male American Redstart! I got many excellent views of him, but after that

sour experience with the eagle, I decided to keep my mouth shut. Since I couldn't get out my camera, I drew a few rough sketches when nobody was looking. The one person I can tell about bird sightings at school is, unsurprisingly, my Biology teacher. Even though he's not a birder, he certainly is interested in nature and knows what I'm talking about. Unfortunately, he's also a comic book-superhero nerd, so every time I bring up birds, he starts talking about 'The Penguin' from 'Batman'!

This dramatic switch from the freedom of home-schooling to the imprisonment of high school has been very difficult birding-wise. I came from a place where all of the "teachers" strongly supported my passion, and find myself now at a place where many of the teachers are indifferent to my interests, and some are very unsupportive. I figure that I only have to survive until June 2011!

John Garrett

New Members

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

ALHAMBRA: Gilbert Gallegos, Alex Linn; **ALTADENA:** Patty Klein, Catherine Ledner, Judith Oneill; **ARCADIA:** Sydney Naness; **AZUSA:** Ruth Mitchell, Jeanette Young; **DUARTE:** Willye Chavis; **LA CAÑADA**

FLINTRIDGE: Thema Davee, Lloyd Johnson; **MONROVIA:** Stephen Carrick, Vincent Cuatico, Sivy Farhi; **MONTEREY PARK:** Robert Elliott, Raymond Helland, Vernon Kahle, Walter Stover, Peter Tang; **PASADENA:** Phyllis Cozad, Sue Dewey, Allene Eubanks, Fred Gotha, Catherine Gunther, P. Knosig, Bill Koenig, Priscilla Moorman, Patricia Payloff, W.P. Stafford, Andy Stephens, Nancy Wilson, Rosemarie Zaiser; **SAN**

GABRIEL: Ted Contis, Liliana Tome; **SAN MARINO:** Emilie Ferry; **SIERRA MADRE:** Leopold Borodovsky, Edie Cox; **SOUTH PASADENA:** Walter Cervantes, Marshall Hyman, Stephen McDonald, Kathy Omura, Olga Palo; **TEMPLE CITY:** Grace Allen.

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