



Drawing by
Guy Coheleach

THE WRENTIT

Founded 1904

Pasadena Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

Volume 56 – No. 2

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

March-April 2008

March Program

Kenya: Birds & Wildlife in the Gem of East Africa

Wednesday, March 19, 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

Field trips! The backbone of Pasadena Audubon is our birding field trips. As our mission statement says: our focus is on "birding, education, and conservation" (birding is listed first because bird-watching is our most common denominator). PAS is very fortunate in having 17 experienced birders (their names are listed in the Wrentit) to lead us on weekend trips to nearby birding areas.

Our Field Trip Chair, Mark Scheel, meets with his trip leaders at the beginning of the year and birding locations are listed

Owens Lake: Risks and Opportunity

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Michael Prather

Owens Lake is one of California Audubon's Important Bird Areas. In recent years there have been many rehabilitation measures at the lake, and in the nearby Lower Owens River. These habitat improvements have already attracted large numbers of shorebirds and waterfowl. Soon the final phase of the Los Angeles Owens Lake Dust Control Project will add even more habitat. But what happens after that? Is the new habitat permanently protected, or is it threatened by Los Angeles' ongoing thirst?

Mike Prather is a retired public school teacher with the Death Valley and Lone Pine school districts. He is a past president of the Owens Valley Committee, Eastern Sierra Audubon Society and past chair of the Sierra Club Toiyabe chapter. He presently is actively working on land and water issues in the Owens Valley.

[See "Owens Lake Abides" on page 2 for more information.]

General Meetings held at:

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

and individuals are assigned to lead the trips. We get the benefit of an experienced birder to lead and teach us how to identify bird species and it is all free. It's free because our field trip leaders volunteer their services – they do a great job, so remember to thank your leader at the end of the trip!
Good birding,

Will

May Program

We've Got a Winner!

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

John Garrett

John has been participating since the age of 10 in the American Birding Association's competition for Young Birder of the Year. In 2007, in his final year of eligibility for the 10-13 age group, John took the Grand Prize. In addition to the congratulations and respect of his fellow birders, John gets a \$1000 scholarship toward a field ornithology camp and a pair of Leica Ultravid HD binoculars.

Come congratulate PAS's newest star and hear him relate his experiences in this competition. He will be showing photos, notebooks, illustrations, and essays that were used by the judges. There will be anecdotes, plans for the future (there's a 14-18 age group, too!), and time for question-and-answer.

For more details about the Young Birder of the Year competition, go to web site ABA.ORG/YB/YBY/INDEX.HTML

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Conservation

Owens Lake Abides

September 1917: "Great numbers of water birds are in sight along the shore – Avocets, Phalaropes and Ducks. Large flocks of shorebirds in flight over the water in the distance, wheeling about show en masse, now silvery now dark, against the gray-blue of the water. There must literally be thousands of birds within sight of this spot. En route around the south end of Owens Lake to Olancho saw water birds almost continuously."

– Joseph Grinnell, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California

The final build-out of the Los Angeles Owens Lake Dust Control Project will begin sometime in late summer of 2008. More than 9 additional square miles of dust control ponds and sheet flooding will bring the total of habitat-creating control methods to nearly 35 square miles by April of 2010. Attracted to this rich new habitat created by the water-based dust control methods, tens of thousand of shorebirds and waterfowl are once again using Owens Lake for food, rest and nesting. Spring and fall migration numbers as well as wintering and nesting populations (the lake is the largest snowy plover nesting site in California) have exploded dramatically. Coupled with the 900 acre Lower Owens River Delta Waterfowl Area (a component of the Lower Owens River Project), the flooded dust control areas on the lake have restored much of the habitat that once existed at Owens Lake when it was one of the West's most important wildlife locations.

The subsequent reappearance of Owens Lake's lost wildlife heritage has been noticed throughout California. Audubon California has listed Owens Lake as one of its priority Important Bird Areas. Highlights include 36 species of shorebirds, 27 species of waterfowl, 16 species of raptors and 15 Bird Species of Special Concern. Planning is underway for public access to the lake for wildlife viewing once the dust control construction is completed in 2010. This will hopefully include interpretation sites that will share the rich wildlife and geologic heritage of Owens Lake. Both the California Department of Fish and Game and the California State Lands Commission are being educated as to the need for protection and enhancement of this important public trust wildlife resource.

An opportunity to protect this enormous wildlife return for all time has presented itself, but is in no way assured. Current threats to the lake's bird populations include a reduction or elimination of water use for dust control resulting in

habitat loss, and the pumping of local groundwater threatens the springs, seeps and wetlands around the lake. A larger voice must be heard for the birds at Owens Lake in order for them to receive the recognition and protection that they deserve. A balance must be achieved between the water needs of Los Angeles and the public trust wildlife populations that belong to all Californians.

Michael Prather

How to Install Signs at the Cobb Estate

(in 35 simple steps)

Last December, Pasadena Audubon finished a project that it started almost five years ago. We finally installed six interpretive signs at the Cobb Estate, the open land at the top of Lake Avenue in Altadena. Some of you might be wondering how such a feat came to be accomplished, or you may be asking yourself, "How does one install six interpretive signs at the Cobb Estate?" You may be wondering why it took so long. To that end, I have written a "How To" Guide, just in case you would like to install more signs at the Cobb Estate, or any other location on government land. Good luck.

Step One: By accident, come into the possession of the eye-witness account, told by former PAS president Arden Brame, of how PAS helped the citizens of Pasadena and Altadena save the Cobb Estate from development back in 1971. Get inspired.

Step Two: Visit the Cobb Estate, a place you've sped through many times, and notice it for the first time. Notice the crummy old worn out posts that used to correspond with a nature trail and get more inspired. Notice the dedication sign that makes no mention of PAS and get a little miffed.

Step Three: Foolishly mention this to the PAS Board, of which you are a brand new member. Rashly suggest that PAS ought to replace these old posts with new ones and fix up the Cobb Estate. Be put in charge of project by an enthusiastic Board.

Step Four: Visit site with Ron Cyger. Realize that replacing old posts is a lame idea and start thinking about new interpretive signs, especially because the one informational sign at the Cobb Estate says nothing about the role PAS played in preserving this land.

Step Five: At the suggestion of Don Rogers, contact Forest Service person in charge of the Cobb Estate. Listen to the crickets chirping. Twiddle thumbs.

Step Six: Eventually get a response from the Forest Service. Contact New Person. Arrange to tour Cobb Estate.

Step Seven: Tour Cobb Estate with Forest Service person. Get preliminary approval for installing six interpretive signs. Decide on preliminary theme for signs. Foolishly get hopes up that we could install signs for PAS's 100th anniversary.

Step Eight: Contact a professional interpretive sign company to get a quote. Get quoted a price of \$6,000.00. Per sign. Total: \$30,000.00. After coming to and getting up off of floor, mop brow and decide we need to create the signs ourselves.

Step Nine: Contact Eric Wilhelm at Pasadena Sign Studios. Meet with him and get preliminary plans for signs. Figure out signs will cost at least \$900.00 each. Not free, but better than \$30,000.00!

Step Ten: Ask PAS Board for a lot of money when we have almost none. Norm Arnheim offers to seek grants for funding. Our hero!

Step Eleven: Start visiting the Cobb Estate frequently to research the flora and fauna and how they change with the seasons. Read and research a lot. Visit the Cobb Estate again. And again. And again.

Step Twelve: At the party to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Pasadena Audubon Society, mourn the fact that we are not even close to getting our signs installed. We have no money and no signs. Celebrate anyway.

Step Thirteen: Track down ethnobotanist to help with researching the Tongvan uses of plants. Discover that this is not as easy as it sounds. Visit Cobb Estate with Cynthia Guthrie to determine which plants there would have been used by the Tongva. She sends you beautiful descriptions with valuable information.

Step Fourteen: Start soliciting photographs and drawings from anyone who will respond to your emails and calls in the *Wrentit*. Jean O'Hagan shows you a few exquisite flora drawings, so ask her to do all the plant drawings. She graciously agrees. Be humbled by her lovely elegant drawings.

Step Fifteen: Start sorting through the many photos of fauna sent to you by Will Fulmer, John Garrett, Jeff Chapman and Ron Cyger. Marvel at how good they are! Begin the difficult process of selecting which ones to use.

Step Sixteen: Celebrate with the Board as Norm's Herculean attempts to get us funding start to pay off.

Step Seventeen: Beg husband, who is a very nice guy, to help with designing the signs. Nod head with sympathy when he begs off because he has little design experience, and then ask him anyway because he's talented.

(see Cobb page 3)

Cobb (continued)

Step Eighteen: Begin writing text for six signs. Write and rewrite and rewrite again. Figure out which drawings, photos and text go together and on which sign. Redo this several times, much to the delight of your long-suffering designer.

Step Nineteen: Bring draft of signs to Board meeting. Board approves heartily.

Step Twenty: Send drafts of signs to Forest Service contact person. Wait anxiously for “final” approval.

Step Twenty-one: Be horrified when signs are returned by a new contact person at the Forest Service. Be even more horrified after looking at the drafts and seeing that they are covered in red ink. Giant slashes of red obscure your hours of hard work. Try not to cry. Fail.

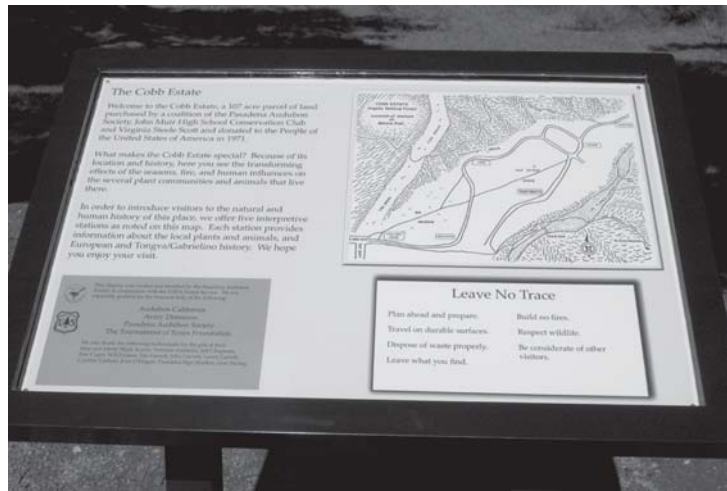
Step Twenty-two: Contact new Forest Service person to set up meeting. Be grateful when Will Fulmer offers to go with you.

Step Twenty-three: At meeting, make sure Will is always sitting between you and Forest Service person so that FS person doesn't get injured by the steam blasting from your eyeballs. Be told that your signs do not conform to Forest Service Guidelines. Ask for a copy of said guidelines. Be told that they do not exist in writing, and they are the whim? desire? preference? of the person sitting at the table with you. Be confused and try to keep head from popping off the top of your head. Be told that you need to **HEAVILY** revise the text. Agree to do so, only to get them done. Worry that you will never get feeling back in your tongue because you've been biting it so hard.

Step Twenty-four: **HEAVILY** revise text for signs. Send off new copies to FS person. Listen to crickets chirp. Twiddle thumbs. Take up knitting. Memorize the kings and queens of Britain from William the Conqueror to Queen Elizabeth II. Watch species come into existence and

then go extinct.

Step Twenty-five: Contact FS person to ask where revisions are. Be told he's busy moving. Or getting promoted. Or moving again. Will Fulmer decides to



contact Congressman Schiff's office.

Step Twenty-six: Get a phone call from the Public Affairs Officer from the Forest Service. After venting and complaining to her about the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder you now have from doing this project, listen to her assurances that you will soon hear from the FS person regarding your revisions. Listen in shock as she assures you that the Forest Service Guidelines for signs do in fact exist and lo and behold, they are even written down! Thank her for sending them to you. Read them and discover that the guidelines do not agree with much of what we were told by the FS person. In fact, discover that our signs already mostly conform with the guidelines that we were told do not exist. Stop wondering why people make jokes about the government.

Step Twenty-seven: Get revisions back from FS person. Then get another set back from the other FS person. Notice that they do not agree with each other. Notice that your grammar has been “corrected” into sub-standard English. Ignore the fact that you have a Master's Degree in English and have been teaching composition classes at Cal State LA for twelve years. Take Advil for headache brought on by massive rolling of your eyes.

Steps Twenty-eight through Thirty: Rewrite, send revisions back, get “corrected” repeatedly, all of which is interrupted by the FS person moving/getting promoted/moving/who knows. Consider entering a monastery. Wonder if designer/husband will ever forgive you.

Step Thirty-one: **FINALLY** get FINAL approval from the FS. Dance a jig. Do a cartwheel. Hope feeling will return to bitten tongue someday.

Step Thirty-two: In the meantime, one of your donors is getting concerned that you have not installed the signs with money they gave you. Stall. A lot.

Step Thirty-three: Go back to Eric at Pasadena Sign Studios for probably the fourteenth time. Order the signs. He searches for place to print graphics and to weld frames. Give thanks for Eric. Discover the price has almost doubled. Give thanks anyway.

Step Thirty-four: Ask FS for help with installation. When request is met with silence, immediately contact Adam Schiff's office. Get immediate results. FS agrees to install the posts for the signs by the end of November. Tell this to anxious donor.

Step Thirty-five: After much prodding and insisting

from Will Fulmer (but that's another whole story), the FS installs the posts and Eric installs the signs on the posts. Meet at the Cobb Estate with Will Fulmer and Norm Arnheim to congratulate each other on our diligence. Go home and take a long nap.

Well, that's it, folks. That's how you install signs at the Cobb Estate in four and half short years. If you are ever so moved to try a similar venture, take a long deep breath and get ready for a rollercoaster ride!

Laura Garrett

[Editor's note: The Cobb Estate sign project was far more challenging than anyone anticipated at the beginning. Laura Garrett showed great leadership and determination in completing it. She and her husband, Jim, deserve the gratitude of all PAS members.]

Thank You for Your Donations to Pasadena Audubon Society

Several PAS members have made donations to our chapter in the period between September 2007 and mid-February 2008.

We are grateful to all of them: Yolanda Adra, Norm & Anna Arnheim, Susan Beery, Frank Burroughs, Ken Carmichael, Kirk Dawson, Wilbur & Pam Dong, Gayle Hackmack, Dave Harpster, Rayma Harrison, Paul & Gloria Kilian, James Martin, Suzanne Martin, Robert Meade, Barbara Pachano, Betty Parker, Ellen Rennick, Don & Karen Rogers, Bob & Jan Stull, John Tobin, Richard Winslow, Margaret Yonekura.

Elections in May

Nominations for officers of Pasadena Audubon Society will be made at the general meeting on April 16th. Voting for officers will take place at the general meeting on May 21st. All members of PAS are eligible to serve as officers. Terms last for one year.

Field Trips

Hahamongna Monthly Walk

Saturday, March 1, 2008

Saturday, April 5, 2008

Saturday, May 3, 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, March 9, 2008

Sunday, April 6, 2008

Sunday, May 11, 2008

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, March 16, 2008

Sunday, April 13, 2008

Sunday, May 18, 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, March 23, 2008

Sunday, April 27, 2008

Sunday, May 25, 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

Piute Ponds/Antelope Valley

Saturday, March 15, 2008

7:00 am – 2:00 pm

Join us for a day at Piute Ponds and other hot spots in the Antelope Valley. The Ponds host an impressive assortment of waterfowl and marsh dwellers, as well as desert species. We will search for LeConte's Thrasher, a shy resident of the Antelope Valley. Note: The Piute Ponds are located on Edwards Air Force Base, which has restricted entry. Participants limited to 12; email Mark Scheel to sign up. Meeting place will be arranged.

Mark Scheel and Ron Cyger

10th Annual Aleutian Goose Festival

March 28-30, 2008

Crecent City/Del Norte, CA.

Come join the "Celebration of Wildness" on the extreme coast of northern California. Experience an in-depth extended weekend in the home of Redwood National and State Parks and the Smith River National Recreation Area, by choosing amongst the 60+ workshops/fieldtrips led by experienced, qualified guides. Outstanding birding, geology, Native American Heritage and more.

Keynote speaker for this year's celebration is Humboldt State University's Professor Stephen Sillett, the leading researcher in the study of the canopy of the towering redwoods. Recently featured in Richard Preston's best selling book "The Wild Trees". Professor Sillett will share his passion for his work in the fog shrouded tops of the world's tallest trees.

Register online at:

WWW.ALEUTIANGOSEFESTIVAL.ORG OR
(707) 465-0888

Huntington Central Park, Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve

Saturday, April 19, 2008

8:00 am – 2:00 pm

Huntington Central Park is one of Orange County's largest public parks, and it still retains lots of shrubs, willows, riparian areas, and a large pond in wet seasons. Over the years more than 200 species have been seen here, including an

impressive number of wintering and migrant warblers, flycatchers, and vireos.

Nearby Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve is one of Southern California's largest remaining tidal estuaries, providing habitat and home to many species of grebes, ducks, herons and egrets, gulls and terns, shorebirds, and raptors. Now that full tidal flow has been restored, it is better than ever, with such rarities as Pacific Golden-Plover and Reddish Egret frequently seen.

From Interstate 210, go south on the 605 and take the 405 east to Golden West St. (exit 18). Go south on Golden West about two miles and turn left on Slater Ave. The parking lot for Huntington Central Park will be a short distance on your right.

Ed Stonick

Owens Lake

Saturday, April 26th, 2008

7:30 am – 2:00 pm

After massive surface water diversions by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, including the diversion of the Owens River to the Los Angeles Aqueduct in 1913, water levels in the Owens Lake dropped and the lake soon dried up exposing toxic sediments in the lake bed. The lake became the single largest source of particulate matter air pollution in the United States. After extensive legal action during the past 15 years the LADWP was forced to deal with the air quality issues they created. Their solution was to add water to the lake bed, thereby recreating extensive mudflats and ideal habitat for migrating shorebirds and waterfowl.

PAS will sponsor a field trip to Owens Lake to focus on shorebirds during the peak of their migration. Meet at the Ranch House Café parking lot in Olancho. Driving time from Pasadena is 3 to 3.5 hours. There are good hotels and restaurants, including a Best Western, in Lone Pine. Information on the history and some of the biology of the region is at WWW.OVCWEB.ORG/OWENSVALLEY. A checklist of the birds is also available at this web site.

Spotting scopes recommended. Trip is limited to 12 persons. Reservations required; contact the trip leader.

Mike San Miguel

May Field Trips

Check Field Trips on PAS website:

WWW.PASADENAUDUBON.ORG

Calendar

Submit material for the next Wrentit by April 1st

March 2008

Date	Day	Time	Event	Location	Leader*
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

(PAS Members Only)

April 2008

5	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Monthly Walk	Ron Cyger
9	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Will Fulmer
13	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Mountain Birding Monthly Walk	Hill Penfold
15	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Rancho Santana Ana Botanical Gardens	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
16	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: Owens Lake
19	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Central Park, Bolsa Chica	Ed Stonick
20	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
26	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	Owens Lake	Mike San Miguel
27	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

(PAS Members Only)

May 2008

2	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Monthly Walk	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
18	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
20	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Lower Arroyo	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
21	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: TBD
25	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

(PAS Members Only)

***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

Pasadena Audubon Society – Strictly for the Birds

[Editor's note: This is an excerpt from an article that will be published in South Pasadena Quarterly this spring.]

Imagine the skies suddenly darkening, not from an incoming storm or the approach of twilight, but from a single flock of birds. Now imagine that the flock is nearly a mile wide and fills the sky from horizon to horizon. Finally, imagine that this flock continues to pass your observation point for fourteen hours!

You have just witnessed the migration of the Passenger Pigeon. One hundred and fifty years ago, such flocks were regularly encountered in the central United States. The total North American population was estimated at five to six billion birds. But by 1900, the Passenger Pigeon was extinct in the wild, and the last known individual bird, a female named Martha, died in the Cincinnati Zoo in 1914.

Many other species of birds, including herons and egrets, eagles, hawks, and other raptors, shore birds, and even songbirds also declined dramatically in numbers as the 20th century arrived. The reason? Market hunters, greedy for profits, killed birds relentlessly for food and feathers. The Passenger Pigeon flocks were so dense that hunters used dynamite to kill them. Many other birds seemed destined for oblivion, and there were no restrictions on hunting or capture.

One of the most distressing chapters in this wholesale slaughter was the killing of plumed herons and egrets, which were hunted continually, even during nesting season, for the sole purpose of providing feathers for ladies' hats, a prominent turn-of-the-century fashion. It has been said the feathers were worth more than their weight in gold, and millions of birds were massacred. Even some Pasadena students took part by hunting birds in the Arroyo to earn spending money. Unlike the ostrich, which could be raised on farms, such as the Cawston Ostrich Ranch which helped put South Pasadena on the map many years ago, egrets could not re-grow feathers.

The scientists and naturalists of the day were horrified and took steps to end this carnage. One of the founders of the movement to save and protect birds was George Bird Grinnell, who had been tutored by Lucy Audubon, the wife of famed pioneer ornithologist (one who studies birds) John James Audubon. In 1886, Grinnell proposed the creation of "an Association for the protection of wild birds and their eggs, which shall be called the Audubon Society." All members would pledge to work against the destruction of birds, nests, and eggs, and refrain from wearing any clothing decorated or

ornamented with bird skins or feathers.

Although Grinnell's original organization did not succeed financially, the outpouring of support was tremendous; the groundwork had been laid for future conservation. The senseless slaughter of birds, however, continued for several more years, almost unabated. As characterized by author Scott Weidensaul in his recent book, *Of a Feather—A Brief History of American Birding*, "Men had tried to mobilize the country to protect birds, and they had failed. Now it was the women's turn."

Some progress was made in the final decade of the 19th century. The first federal wildlife reserve was created, Yellowstone National Park was closed to hunting, and a Pennsylvania school official established Bird Day, modeling it after Arbor Day.

What really turned the tide and led to the creation of the National Audubon Society and the many state and local chapters that now exist from coast to coast were the efforts of Harriet Lawrence Hemenway, a prominent New England socialite. As Scott Weidensaul describes it, "Every great organization has its founding legend, and thus it was with the modern Audubon Society. As the story is usually told, Mrs. Hemenway was a clueless society matron adorned with bird skins and feathers until that January morning in 1896 when she sat down to read a bloodcurdling account of the killing of herons and egrets in Florida for the millinery trade. With this, she experienced a road-to-Damascus conversion and became a champion of conservation."

Mrs. Hemenway began to meet, over tea, with many other ladies listed in Boston's social register and, after getting them on board with the message of protecting birds, convinced naturalists and civic leaders to join her efforts. The renewed Audubon movement spread rapidly. As Weidensaul states, "in less than two years, there were 111 chapters across Massachusetts—and while men were on the masthead of the state organization, all but a handful of the local chapters were headed by women, which made up 80 percent of the society's membership."

This brings us to California, which turned out to not be far behind. Local chapters formed in the state, including our own Pasadena Audubon Society, which was established on March 25, 1904 as the very first California chapter. Some of the founding members included Mrs. Harriet Williams Myers, Mrs. Elizabeth Grinnell, Mrs. Sarah E. Fussel, Arthur W. Line, W. Scot Way, Dr. Garrett Newkirk, and Mira B. Culin.

Flora McIntyre, (chapter president

from 1937-40), writing in a *Pasadena Star News* article, described the event that led to the organization of the Pasadena Audubon chapter: "W. Scott Way of Altadena heard shotgun firing in his eucalyptus grove as he drove home one evening back in 1904. Quickly putting up his horse, he hurried over to investigate. What he saw aroused an anger that was to prove far-reaching. Two men were driving away in a light express wagon the bed of which was heaped high with the bodies of dead mourning doves. Market Hunters! Next day Mr. Way put notices in several papers calling a meeting which was held in the Pasadena Chamber of Commerce rooms then located on Colorado St. (at Arroyo Seco)...."

The first social meeting of the society was held September 17, 1908 at the home of Dr. Emily G. Hunt. In 1910 the Junior Audubon Society had 600 members from Pasadena schools. According to historical records from 1911, meetings included reports on legislative efforts to protect meadowlarks and to halt hunting of grebes, terns and cormorants. That year, the chapter voted to send "\$50 to Miss Gretchen Libby in Sacramento to try to defeat the hunting bill." May 26, 1911 was the date of the first bird walk, when Mrs. Myers invited 35 interested members to join her in a bird ramble.

In 1905, the National Association of Audubon Societies was established. Legislation began to be passed, and New York governor (soon to be President) Teddy Roosevelt, became an ardent supporter. He simply said, "I do not understand how any man or woman who really loves nature can fail to try to exert all influence in support of such objectives as those of the Audubon Society."

For the past 100 years, National Audubon and the myriad of state and local chapters have kept up the fight and the efforts to preserve nature and protect wildlife. The Pasadena Chapter continues to carry out similar activities.

The mission statement of the Pasadena Audubon Society is: "To bring the excitement of birds to our community through birding, education, and the conservation of bird habitats."

Some of the recent conservation issues Pasadena Audubon has been involved with include the following:

With the help of the U. S. Forest Service, six interpretive signs that explain and illustrate flora, fauna and human history were installed in December, 2007 at the Cobb Estate (located at the north end of Lake Ave. in Altadena).

Working with a coalition of other groups to try to protect the Tejon Ranch (near the Grapevine) from being developed. The owners of the ranch wish to build two

new cities and an industrial park.

The establishment of an Arroyo Bird Survey, which will track bird species and help monitor the quality of life in various habitats along the Arroyo. This is being done with the cooperation of the Arroyo Seco Foundation and the Audubon Center at Debs Park.

Continuing efforts to preserve "Hahamongna," the Native American name for a natural area at the north end of the Arroyo Seco near the Jet Propulsion Laboratories, and to find solutions for the maintenance and preservation of the Salton Sea, a truly unique Southern California habitat, and home to millions of water birds.

Another frightening practice of the days before Audubon took hold was a holiday tradition known as the "Christmas Side Hunt." People would choose sides and go out and hunt all day. The one bringing back the biggest pile of game was declared the winner. According to Audubon's current website, "Beginning on Christmas Day, 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman, an early officer in the then-budding Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition – a "Christmas Bird Census" – that would count birds in

the holidays rather than hunt them. So began the Christmas Bird Count."

The Christmas Bird Count (commonly referred to as the "CBC") started with 27 birders who did 25 counts, tallying a total of 90 species. A count is established by laying out a 15-mile diameter circle of land and then counting all the birds within the circle. The Pasadena/San Gabriel Valley count circle is centered at the intersection of San Gabriel Blvd. and Duarte Rd. and includes the peak and south slope of Mt. Wilson, the Arroyo Seco, Eaton Canyon, the San Gabriel River, Whittier Narrows Recreation Area, part of Santa Fe Dam, and the L. A. County Arboretum and Huntington Gardens.

Currently, over 50,000 participants complete more than 600 Christmas Counts across North America, and including Hawaii, Mexico, and several Central American countries. This year's Pasadena count, the first of which took place in 1946, was completed on December 15, 2007 with 53 participants who tallied 164 species.

Ed Stonick

Sea, Sage, and Sibley

Sea & Sage Audubon is pleased to announce that David Sibley, renowned ornithologist, author, and gifted bird artist, will be the guest speaker at their Annual Dinner on March 21st at the Irvine Hilton. He will speak on "The Evolution of a Birding Field Guide." The evening's program will also include the presentation of their chapter's Fern Zimmerman Conservation Award and Letters of

Commendation, a celebration to commemorate their 50th Anniversary, and a silent auction. On the following morning, Sibley will conduct a workshop to help birders improve their birding skills. Full information on these events and how to sign up for them can be found on the Sea & Sage website at:

WWW.SEAANDSAGEAUDUBON.ORG, or contact Nancy Kenyon at (949) 786-3160.

Become a Chapter-only Member of PAS

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 Wrenit*.

We thank you all for your support!

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, March 18, 2008
Peck Road Park

Meet in the parking lot

Tuesday, April 15, 2008
Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Gardens

Meet in the parking lot.

Tuesday, May 20, 2008
Lower Arroyo

Meet at the casting pond.

Tuesday, June 17, 2008
Descanso Gardens

Meet at the entrance.

*Sid Heyman
Madeline West*

PAS on the WEB

Website

[HTTP://WWW.PASADENA AUDUBON.ORG](http://www.pasadenaaudubon.org)

ListServe

[HTTP://GROUPS.YAHOO.COM/GROUP/PASADENA AUDUBON/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pasadenaaudubon/)

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:

Pasadena Audubon Society, 1750 N. Altadena Drive, Pasadena, CA 91107

John's Corner

The Geese and the Mud

Recently, Ron Cyger led another fantastic trip for PAS at the Salton Sea. On the first day, we all had a wonderful adventure filled with Cattle Egrets, Mountain Plovers, White-faced Ibises, and Sandhill Cranes. The weather couldn't have been better, and everyone had a great time.

However, on the second day, the tables seemed to have turned. The sky darkened with clouds instead of ibises, and it began pouring rain. The arid, dirt roads instantly turned so thick and muddy that they were impossible to drive on. All but three of our party had bailed out early in the morning; it didn't seem worth it to continue birding. Ron, my mom, and I still foolishly persisted to the Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters.

Fortunately, the rain became intermittent, so we squished along the mud path. Our hopes were high because we heard some Snow Geese and every now and then a few geese would fly above us, weaving in and out of the clouds. We eventually scaled a small, slimy slope that gave us a view of the whole field and what did we see but twelve amazing Snow Geese. Twelve? Wasn't this place supposed to hold hundreds or even thousands of them? We were somewhat disappointed, having just hiked through all of that mud for just twelve geese. However, there was no point in turning back, so we decided to scope the sea.

Suddenly, over the horizon, something other than the clouds was darkening the sky. We also began hearing that distinctive honking in the distance. Hundreds and hundreds of little dark specks started coming in closer and closer

until, before we knew it, an enormous flock of Snow Geese came in flying toward us through the rain. It was about the largest flock I had ever seen, and it wasn't finished. More and more came in directly above us, blocking the clouds. Above us they swirled, still somehow growing in number, and all we could do was gawk at them. They began to land on the fields, and more landed on some nearby ponds. As they came closer, we could see that there were not only Snow Geese, but hundreds of Ross's as well, and a dozen or so dark-morph snows. Ron estimated nearly ten thousand of them, additional to the Ross's, and there were still hundreds more coming in from each side. It was an experience never to forget, and it made the disastrous weather all worth it.

John Garrett

New Members

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

ALHAMBRA: J. Craig; **ALTADENA:** Wes Cowan; Marcelle Crunkleton; Joan Fritz; Teresita Gomez; Mike Howe; Matthew, Nora & Ben Lee; Julie Parker; **ARCADIA:** Arlene Bakke; Neil Conrad; Marlene Hollingsworth; Linda Moran; Sungwan So; Miyoko Tashiro; **DUARTE:** Carmen Norcia;

LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE: Alex Beebee; Dr. A. Butler; Happi Hicks; Linda Moore; Rita Speck; Bobbi Wooldridge; **MONROVIA:** Virginia Pappalardo; **MONTEREY PARK:** Lewis Amack; Arlene Campbell; Tsi Shan Yu; **MONTROSE:** Mark Raymond; **PASADENA:** William Bloomer; Robert Burks; Ken Carmichael; Shirley Contreras; Rammy Flores; Ethel Hayes; Doyle Herrick; Donald Hoagland; Martha Hope; Jane Jeffers; Andrea Johns; Judith Kirchoff; Sterling & Olga Louviere; Lynn

Marshall; Nancy McIntyre; Sydney Meshkov; James Miller; Lois Moulton; Aubrey & Erin Rawles; Inez Robinson; Dan Roddick; Barbara Stark; John Stewart; Dr. & Mrs. H. Zoff; **ROSEMEAD:** Margaret Rostedt; **SAN MARINO:** Donald Cook; **SIERRA MADRE:** C. Cepielik-Weeks; Michael Geva; Samuel Watson; **SOUTH PASADENA:** Lee Alpaugh; Dallas Russell; Deni Sinnott; **TEMPLE CITY:** Ted Garcia; Colleen Kinsman; Leroy Martinez; Robert Vanvryberg; **VAN NUYS:** Stephen Tabor.

Pasadena Audubon Society Board

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Pasadena Audubon Society

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