



Drawing by  
Guy Coheleach

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Founded 1904

**Pasadena Audubon Society**  
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

Volume 57 – No. 1

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

January-February 2009

## January Program

### From Rain Forests to Polar Bears

Wednesday, January 21, 2009

**Lauren Hierl,**  
National Audubon Society

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

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

## February Program

### Cactus Wrens in Crisis

Wednesday, February 18, 2009

**Robb Hamilton**

Robb Hamilton will discuss conservation issues facing Cactus Wrens on the coastal slope of Southern California. Robb has been working for the last 12 years on the 37,000-acre Nature Reserve of Orange County (NROC) with Cactus Wrens and their associated habitats, and has helped to document at least a 90% decline of NROC's population. He and others believe Cactus Wrens to be at risk of extirpation in this area due to loss, fragmentation, and degradation of their habitat, much of it due to increasing size and frequency of wildfires. Scientists and conservationists have recently begun to study the decline more carefully and are developing solutions. Robb will encourage PAS members to become involved in two new volunteer-based efforts by The Nature Conservancy and the NROC: one to monitor the region's Cactus Wren populations; the other to collect detailed information on productivity and survivorship of color-banded birds in the NROC.

Robb Hamilton has worked as a consulting biologist in Orange County and surrounding areas for the past 20 years. He has co-authored two books, "The Birds of Orange County: Status and Distribution" and "Rare Birds of California."

## March Program

### What Gull Is That?

Wednesday, March 18, 2009

**Larry Allen**

Of course you know the names of the gulls you look at — at least the English names as found in your field guides. But the scientific names have been changed recently, and the sequence in which the birds are listed (a reflection of the chronological order in which each species is thought to have appeared) has been altered as well. Larry will use the scientific results supporting these changes as a stepping stone to explore the variation among some of our local gulls, and will provide some identification hints as well.

Larry Allen is Project Coordinator for, and co-author, of the forthcoming Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas, has conducted gull identification workshops for local Audubon Chapters and the Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, and has had a long-time fascination with gulls. Larry will lead a gull-watching field trip on March 21.

*(See Field Trips page 4)*

### General Meetings held at:

Eaton Canyon Nature Center  
1750 N. Altadena Drive, Pasadena

7:00 pm Social  
7:30 pm Program

## President's Perch

### Cobb Estate Signage

Almost a year ago we installed six interpretive signs at the Cobb Estate, in Altadena. Within days they were covered with graffiti, cleaned, and covered again! The problem is that Cobb Estate is open and unattended 24/7. Apparently, some youths, also unattended, have made it a meeting place in the evenings and bring marker pens & spray paint to draw on our signs. The signs are now unreadable and uncleanable. There is hope that we can solve the problem. We are having discus-

sions with Outward Bound Adventures, an organization that works with at-risk youths, to see if joining together we can clean up the Cobb Estate. The US Forest Service is also trying to help. Meanwhile, we are looking into a different faceplate for the signs that is more resistant to graffiti. A big problem, but we are working on it

*Will*

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## Conservation

### Conservation and the New Year

Regarding conservation, 2008 seems to be ending on a positive note. Despite a new snag, it looks like Cerritos Wetlands will be protected, and the toll road in San Onofre seems to be dead, at least for now. We can celebrate these victories, and look to the future with hope and optimism.

As we enter the New Year, let us not forget what made these victories possible. It took many people, mostly volunteers, to write letters, to go to city council and planning commission meetings, to organize people who wanted to help, and to telephone political leaders. The Secretary of Commerce received over 35,000 letters regarding the toll road. Our voices made a difference.

If you are not already working on saving our planet, I urge you to make 2009 the year that you get involved in these issues. If you don't know where to get started or what to do, the easiest way is via the internet. You can sign up for Pasadena Audubon's listserv, and that way, if there is an interesting bird in the area, or an important issue that needs your attention, you can get the information easily.

To sign up for our listserv, visit [WWW.PASADENAUDUBON.ORG/LIST-SERV.HTML](http://WWW.PASADENAUDUBON.ORG/LIST-SERV.HTML) and follow the directions.

If you would like to get more national information about conservation, visit [HTTP://CA.AUDUBON.ORG/](http://CA.AUDUBON.ORG/) and click on the link on the left that says "action alerts." Just follow the directions to subscribe, and you will receive occasional alerts about bird and conservation issues in California and in the US. Because these alerts provide a link to your representative, they are wonderfully easy to use, and your voice can make a huge difference, just like it did with the toll road in Orange County. Both PAS and Audubon California take special care not to flood your inbox with emails, only sending out alerts when it is critical.

We do have reason to be optimistic. Let's make 2009 a year to celebrate!

### Open Space Update

As you may recall, the City of Pasadena is working on revising and updating its Open Space and Conservation Element of the General Plan. To that end, the Open Space and Conservation Element Advisory Committee is working diligently to educate the public about Open Space and Conservation, and is equally dedicated to collecting ideas from the public about these issues. In January and February, a traveling kiosk will be visiting farmers markets, parks, libraries, community centers and other public

spaces throughout Pasadena to provide this education and to collect ideas from all of you. Keep your eyes open for a kiosk near you, and if you would like the kiosk to visit your organization, please visit [WWW.CITYOFPASADENA.NET/PLANNING\\_COMMENTS](http://WWW.CITYOFPASADENA.NET/PLANNING_COMMENTS) or call (626) 744-6767. You can also call this number for updates or you can email Laura Dahl at [LDAHL@CITYOFPASADENA.NET](mailto:LDAHL@CITYOFPASADENA.NET). Remember, the public is welcome at our monthly meetings, which are the second Monday of the month at 6:30 at City Hall.

If you know of any potential open space in Pasadena, please contact me at [PURPLECOW@JPS.NET](mailto:PURPLECOW@JPS.NET) or (626) 564-1890.

*Laura Garrett*

### Project FeederWatch Benefits Birds and People Connection with nature promotes wellness Ithaca, NY

More than 100 studies have shown that getting closer to nature reduces stress and promotes a feeling of well-being in children and adults. So, filling feeders and counting the birds that visit may be just what the doctor ordered! For more than 20 years, that's what participants in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project Feeder-Watch have been doing—benefiting themselves and the birds.

"It is a great winter time activity for the whole family," says Alaska Feeder-Watcher Nancy Darnell. "If you have children, they will come to love watching the birds. All of this is fun and a chance to contribute to scientific studies, too!"

The 2008-09 season of Project FeederWatch got underway November 8 and runs through April 3. Participants count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders each week and send the information to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Participants submitted more than 115,000 checklists during the 2007-08 FeederWatch season, documenting unusual bird sightings, winter movements, and shifting ranges—a treasure-trove of information that scientists use to monitor the health of the birds and of the environment.

"Being a FeederWatcher is easy and fun, and at the same time helps generate the world's largest database on feeder-bird populations," says project leader David Bonter. "We are grateful for the contributions our participants have made for the birds and are proud of the joy they say it brings to their busy lives. Since we started in 1987, more than 40,000 people have submitted observations, engaging with the wildlife beyond their windows."

"Project FeederWatch opened up a whole new world for me," says partici-

pant Cheri Ryan of Lockport, Kentucky. "It's so interesting to watch the activities of the birds. I learn something new each time I participate."

Scientists learn something new from the data each year, too, whether it's about the movements of common backyard birds or unusual sightings of rarely-seen species. Highlights of the most recent season include the largest southward movement of Red-breasted Nuthatches in the history of the project—part of an expected influx of northern birds that fly farther south when their food supplies run short. Other northern species showing up in record numbers included Common Repolls and Pine Siskins. Among the rare birds reported was a Streak-backed Oriole in Loveland, Colorado—the state's first report of this bird, native to Mexico. A December nor'easter deposited a Dovekie in Newton, Massachusetts, the first time this North Atlantic seabird has ever been reported to Project FeederWatch.

Long-term data show some species increasing in number, such as the Lesser Goldfinch in the Southwest. Other populations continue a downward trend, such as the Evening Grosbeak throughout their range. Once one of the most common species seen at feeders in the northern half of the continent, the grosbeaks are declining for unknown reasons.

Beyond the benefits to birds and science, however, is the benefit to participants. "Nature is not merely an amenity; it is critical to healthy human development and functioning," says Nancy Wells, Cornell University assistant professor of design and environmental analysis. Her studies find that a view of nature through the window or access to the environment in any way improves a child's cognitive functioning and reduces the negative effects of stress on the child's psychological well-being. Wells also notes that when children spent time with nature early in life it carries over to their adult attitudes and behavior toward the environment.

Project FeederWatch welcomes participants of all ages and skill levels, from scout troops and retirees to classrooms and nature center visitors. To learn more and to sign up, visit [WWW.FEEDERWATCH.ORG](http://WWW.FEEDERWATCH.ORG) or call the Lab toll-free at (800) 843-2473. In return for the \$15 fee (\$12 for Lab members) participants receive the FeederWatcher's Handbook, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds in their area, a calendar, complete instructions, and the FeederWatch annual report, Winter Bird Highlights.

Many FeederWatchers echo this

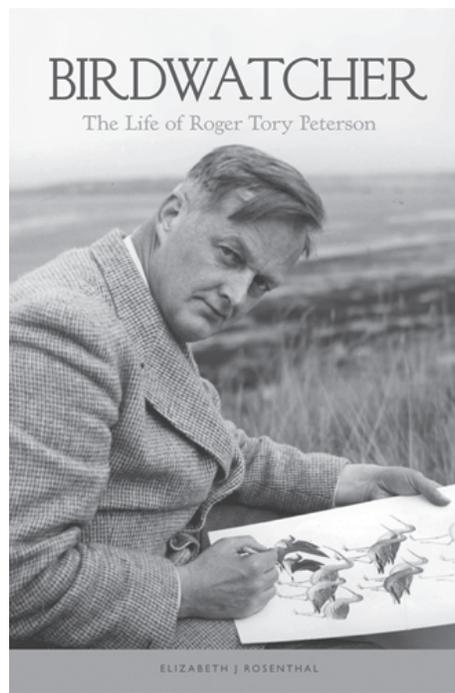
*(see FeederWatch Page 7)*

## Birdwatcher, The Life of Roger Tory Peterson

### Book Review

Birds are the most eloquent expression of reality." That phrase sums up Roger Tory Peterson's love of birding and his philosophy of life. It became a central part of his lectures for decades. He was truly a renaissance man. Although he is known for his peerless birding skills (he could identify every bird in North America by sight, not to mention European birds and many others), he was also an expert on butterflies and generally a superb naturalist. He was an early advocate of conservation because he clearly saw that birds didn't exist in a vacuum. They were part of a greater system and each species of animal, bird or plant was an essential part of that system.

His love of birding started at the age of 11 when one of his teachers formed an Audubon club (membership dues 10¢) for the purpose of learning about the local



birds. By the time he was 14 he was working a before-school job delivering newspapers to earn money for a camera so that he could photograph the birds he was now obsessed with.

The landmark 1934 *Field Guide to the Birds* is, of course, what Mr. Peterson is most famous for. Prior to his field guide there was no easy way to identify birds in the field. The only bird books were great volumes with inconsistent pictures and rambling, not-so-helpful descriptions. He also pioneered the idea of identifying birds in the field by sight instead of shooting them!

If you want to know all about Roger Tory Peterson, his life, his marriages, his art and his life's work, this book is a must-read. It's well written and fascinating. You'll even find out about the one (and only) time Roger was fooled during a Christmas Bird Count by a duck decoy!

Jeanene MacLean

## Trip Reports

### Newport Back Bay by Kayak

November 9, 2008

I spent some warm October afternoons with a friend boogie-boarding at the beach; as we rode our boards up on to the beach, we sometimes found ourselves surrounded by long-legged brown and white birds, who weren't disturbed at all by our approach from the sea. When the weather got cooler, we were happy to discover Mark Hunter's kayaking trip on Sunday, November 9, offering us another chance to get out on the water up close to the birds and learn something about them as well.

Things did not look good when we met at Newport Aquatic Center in Newport Back Bay. It was very windy and consequently the center would not rent kayaks. Fortunately, Mark had extra kayaks and soon our group of eight birders was paddling, or rather being pushed by the wind, out into the bay. We maneuvered our kayaks to the mud flats where Mark had spotted a loon, a Pacific Loon, not the common one. We also saw lots of the long-legged birds we had seen at the beach, and I realized that the mud flats that looked devoid of life to me were actually teeming with life below the surface, and no matter how deep a little morsel might bury itself, there was a bird with a bill the right shape and length to reach it. We got very close looks at Killdeer, Semi-palmated and Black-bellied Plovers, Whimbrels, Willets, Marbled Godwits, Least and Western

Sandpipers, the little Lesser Yellowlegs, and a Long-billed Curlew, and learned to spot the small but important differences – collar stripes meeting and not meeting, yellow legs, pink bills, upturned bills, downturned bills.

With all these subtle differences, I was longing for some pronounced color like a yellow rump or a red crown when suddenly I got my wish – a spectacular black and white bird flew by at water level, with an astounding stretch of bright red bill! It disappeared down the bay but returned about half an hour later – the perfectly named Black Skimmer, in the Tern family of birds. Mark explained that the bird flies with its lower bill in the water to catch small fish near the surface.

As we paddled out across the water, Ring-billed Gulls and Forster's Terns circled overhead and Brown Pelicans dive-bombed into the water. A Red-tailed hawk flew over, and later an Osprey, and then a Turkey Vulture. Blown to the far shore, we found a fresh water drainage with American Coots and ducks – Mallards, Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teal, Northern Pintails, American Wigeons, the Eared and Pie-billed Grebes, and the odd-looking Buffleheads. Mark warned us if we continued up the bay it would be hard for us to paddle back against the wind but we agreed to go farther, adding Snowy and Great Egrets to the day's list. A Great Blue Heron flew in and walked in an angular lope through the shallow water. I was hoping to get a better view of the Osprey and, as we headed back, we spotted it sitting on a pole in the water. I wanted to stop to look but couldn't because the wind blew me

backwards and I was falling behind the others. For part of the return trip we were in the wind shadow of the bluffs so the going wasn't too bad, but for the final quarter mile, we paddled directly into the wind. It was a hard ending to a great trip, and soon we were back on shore hosing off the kayaks and putting them back on the cars.

We learned that last year's trip fell on a warm late-fall day with no wind. We plan to go back again on that kind of day to review the birds we've learned. Thanks to Mark for a great trip, and for sharing his list of birds for this article. Any mistakes are mine!

Ginny Heringer

### Parrot Chase

October 25, 2008

The usually cooperative flock of South Pasadena Mitred Parakeets was less so this year, but a goodly number of birds were eventually run to ground near their customary roost on Ramona Ave. After a leisurely examination of the plumage variations manifest in Mitred Parakeets (as well as Halloween costume variation manifest among some of the neighborhood children), the group reassembled at Temple Park, in Temple City, which sometimes serves as a pre-roost staging area for numbers of psittacids. But on the 25th, only a few Red-masked Parakeets were present.

A quick check of a historical parrot roost on Daines Dr. was without result, but parrots were being heard to the northeast, and a zig-zag path through suburban Temple City eventually inter-

(see Reports page 7)

## Field Trips

### Hahamongna Monthly Walk

**Saturday, January 3, 2009**

**Saturday, March 3, 2009**

**8:00 am – noon**

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

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

*Ron Cyger*

### Eaton Canyon

#### Monthly Walk

**Sunday, January 18, 2009**

**Sunday, February 15, 2009**

**Sunday, March 15, 2009**

**8:00 am – 11:00 am**

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

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

*Hill Penfold*

### Huntington Library

#### Birdwalks (PAS Members only)

**Sunday, January 25, 2009**

**Sunday, February 22, 2009**

**Sunday, March 25, 2009**

**8:00 am – 11:00 am**

A special benefit for Pasadena Audubon Society members is the chance to bird the Huntington Library grounds. Attendance is by reservation only and limited to 15 participants. We thank our member and Huntington curator, Dan Lewis, for making these trips possible.

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

*Elaine MacPherson*

### Bolsa Chica Ecological

#### Reserve

**Saturday, January 17, 2009**

**8:00 am – noon**

Welcome to the new, improved Bolsa Chica! Since the new channel was cut from the south end of the wetlands to the open sea, the resulting tidal flows have caused an explosion of life that exceeded even the expectations of the conservation-

ists who planned the new environment. We will see a full assortment of wintering waterfowl, shorebirds and much more.

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

*Mark & Janet Scheel*

### Santa Fe Dam

**Saturday, January 24th, 2009**

**7:30 am – noon**

Santa Fe Dam offers a nice variety of habitats and thus a good mix of birds. We can expect to encounter a variety of raptors, waterfowl, herons, egrets and sparrows. Cactus Wren is probable. Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon and Mountain Bluebird are all possible here, though rare. Sparrows should include Lark, Chipping, Savannah, Song, Lincoln's, and of course, White-crowned as well as Dark-eyed Juncos. Last fall, Sprague's and Red-throated Pipits and Grasshopper and Clay-colored Sparrows were found here. Though these birds have all since gone, they illustrate the birding potential of this area.

From the Pasadena area, take the 210 Freeway east and exit at Irwindale Ave, then go south. Turn right at Arrow Highway and then right again when you see the dark brown wooden sign for the dam. You'll need to pay the entrance fee at the kiosk at the top of the dam. When you reach the bottom of the hill turn left and follow the road to the west end of the lake. We'll meet in Parking Area #5 at 7:30.

*Jon Fisher*

### Salton Sea

**February 7-8, 2009**

**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? No problem, just down-load 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) [RON@CYGER.ORG](mailto:RON@CYGER.ORG) or call.

### Legg Lake & Peck Road Park

**Saturday, February 7, 2009**

**7:30 am – 11:30 am**

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 hourglass-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*

### Western Antelope Valley

**Sunday, March 1, 2009**

**7:30 am – 2:00 pm**

On this trip we'll be exploring some of the most interesting yet least visited area of Los Angeles County. The western end of the Antelope Valley is a diverse composite of reservoirs, desert vegetation, and agricultural expanse. The lakes and ponds are used by large numbers of diving ducks and occasionally also get a visit by Bald Eagles and interesting waterbirds. Quail Lake might possibly have the highest probability of rarities found per birder visit of any place in the County. The west Antelope Valley farm fields are reliable for Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, and Ferruginous Hawk. They can also sometimes have a flock of Mountain Plover, Mountain Bluebirds, or a longspur or two. We'll be out there for all these things.

Meet in the parking lot at the west end of Quail Lake (off highway 138, a few miles east of I-5) at 7:30am. It's a long drive, so don't even think about driving alone. Bring a scope, and dress for cold and windy conditions.

*Jon Feenstra*

### Gull Chase

**Saturday, March 21, 2009**

**8:00 am – noon**

Mark your calendar, but not with a location. We will probably gather at Doheny Beach, but the exact location will be based on the number and variety of gulls present at this and other localities later this winter. Full details will be in the March/April *Wrentit*.

*Larry Allen*

(see Field Trips Page 7)

## Calendar

*Submit material for the next Wrentit by February 1<sup>st</sup>*

### January 2009

Date	Day	Time	Event	Location	Leader *
3	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Watershed Park	Ron Cyger
7	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Will Fulmer
17	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve	Mark & Janet Scheel
18	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
20	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
21	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: Alaska
24	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	Santa Fe Dam	Jon Fisher
25	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson

*(PAS Members Only)*

### February 2009

Date	Day	Time	Event	Location	Leader *
4	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Will Fulmer
7-8	S-S	All Day	Fied Trip	Salton Sea	Ron Cyger
7	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Legg Lake/Peck Pit	Ed Stonick
13-15	F-Su	All Day	Event	Great Backyard Bird Count	Hill Penfold
15	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
17	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Santa Fe Dam	Program: Cactus Wren
18	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Elaine MacPherson
22	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	

*(PAS Members Only)*

### March 2009

Date	Day	Time	Event	Location	Leader *
1	Sun	7:30 am	Field Trip	West Antelope Valley	Jon Feenstra
4	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Will Fulmer
7	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Watershed Park	Ron Cyger
15	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
17	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Rancho Samta Ana	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
18	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: Gulls
21	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Gull Chase	Larry Allen
22	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson
<i>(PAS Members Only)</i>					
28	Sat	6:00 pm	Field Trip	San Gabriels Owling	Lance Brenner

#### \*Trip Leader Information

Mark Scheel (Chair)	(626) 355-8707	SCHEEL@TAPIR.CALTECH.EDU
Larry Allen	(626) 288-2701	LARRYALLEN@EARLYMUSICLA.ORG
Lance Benner	(626) 791-1187	LBENNER@CHARTER.NET
Ron Cyger	(626) 449-3625 (before 9 pm)	RON@CYGER.ORG (preferred)
Kathi Ellsworth	(626) 564-0652	PANDIONSKY@YAHOO.COM
Jon Feenstra		FEENSTRA@ALUMNI.CALTECH.EDU
Jon Fisher	(818) 800-2776	JONF60@HOTMAIL.COM
Nick & Mary Freeman	(818) 247-6172	MNFREEMAN@EARTHLINK.NET
Sid Heyman	(626) 571-5991	
Mickey Long	(626) 398-5420	MLONGBIRD@CHARTER.NET
Elaine MacPherson	(626) 355-9412	BIRDERGRRL@AOL.COM
Hill Penfold	(818) 352-4954	HPENFOLD@GMAIL.COM
Tom Ryan		TRYAN@SWCA.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

## Western Bluebirds and Nest Boxes

I became interested in monitoring and recording Western Bluebird activity in nesting boxes after seeing Huell Howser do a show on KCET. The Southern California Bluebird Club has excellent information on the subject ([WWW.SOCAL.BLUEBIRDS.ORG](http://WWW.SOCAL.BLUEBIRDS.ORG)). I contacted this group, comprised of mostly Orange County residents, and indicated an interest in monitoring nesting boxes at Victory Park, because it was near my home. It so



happened that there were two boxes in Victory Park and the man monitoring them was looking for someone to carry on the work. This man was Dick Purvis, who invented the Purvis Lifter and the concept that is used to monitor the boxes all over Orange County and other locations in California. You need a Purvis Lifter, a telescoping pool pole, and a logbook to get started. I purchased a lifter, pool pole and a few more nesting boxes. I read what I could about the process and began this important work last March. March is the beginning of nesting season for the Western Bluebird. All in all I monitored six boxes located in Victory Park, Gwinn Park and Brookside Park from March until August. I recorded that approximately 35 nestlings successfully hatched, matured and left the six boxes. From March until August it is recommended that you visit your boxes once a week and record in your logbook. House Sparrows are a direct threat to the nesting of bluebirds. The hole in the nesting boxes is small enough to prevent starlings from entering and nesting. Weekly monitoring is recommended to make sure bluebirds, and not sparrows, are nesting in the boxes. During the monitoring you will log, weekly, the progress that you see as to the eggs being laid and the hatchlings' development. Bluebirds can nest twice during the period from March through August, so it is important to follow their progress and clean the box for the second nesting, when that time comes.

Nesting boxes are typically hung on trees in parks, golf courses or graveyards, due to the large stretches of grassland; places where insects are readily available for the parents to feed the nestlings. The boxes should be hung in a tree as high as you can reach with the pool pole, approxi-

mately 15 to 20 feet. The boxes must be spread out from one another at a distance of 100 to 150 yards (this is called a trail), because bluebirds are territorial during nesting season and only the male and female will be seen together at this time. In the winter they may flock together and feed on berries.

I would encourage any and all to join this endeavor and to go the the Southern California Bluebird Club's website for more detailed information. You may also e-mail me at the address below and I will gladly answer any questions, if I can. Victory Park, Gwinn Park, Sunnyslope Park and parts of Brookside Park are already occupied with my boxes, and I'm going to increase the numbers, but there are plenty of other grassland areas in Pasadena and surrounding cities that could be targeted.

Gerald Orcholski

GERRYJIM@SBCGLOBAL.NET

## South of the Birder

When you're a birder, even a casual one like me, it surfaces in unexpected ways. My girlfriend Janet and I recently traveled to Ensenada for the weekend and I deliberately left the binoculars at home, in order to make it clear that this trip was for her, not for me.

We stopped at the vista point in the middle of Camp Pendleton during our drive south and it was there that I remembered that I had a pair of low-end compact binoculars in the glove compartment. (Uh-oh!) I was not actually looking for birds; there were several fishing boats about a mile off the coast and I was hoping I could determine whether they had connected with a good yellowtail bite (I like fishing, too.) But in the course of looking at the boats, my line of sight dipped down to a large stretch of bare land at the bottom of the embankment, and there in the dust were a group of Horned Larks foraging. I wouldn't have thought to place that species in this oceanfront location, but in retrospect the habitat was pretty well-suited for them.

There are no restroom facilities at that vista point, so we stopped several miles down the road at the Aliso Creek Rest Area. I had never been there before. Upon opening the car doors we heard the din of hundreds of Starlings. Janet pointed out some Red-winged Blackbirds among them and we watched them for some time. That species has been a favorite of mine since I was a kid, although I didn't start birding until my fifties. I'm always glad to spot them again in Southern California. Janet likes the paint job of male Starlings, and her appreciation makes me realize that despite my contempt for them as eco-

villains, they are interesting birds.

On we went to the border parking lot, then onto an ABC bus to Ensenada, rolling down the toll road along the coast. There were tantalizing glimpses of dark birds bobbing just off the rocky headlands, too far away to identify. There were many small streams and lagoons where the canyons came down to the coast. They looked birdy...oh, well, another time. When we arrived in town the only species apparent was Rock Dove. As we walked toward the more touristy area close to the port I mentally added Heermann's Gull.

And that's pretty much how it remained, through an afternoon and evening of good food, good drink, music, and shopping. On our way back to the hotel, walking over the bridge on Lopez Mateos above the dark, smelly estuary, we paused to watch what we thought were bubbles in the water. By the distant lights of the port, I discerned that the bubbles were the boils of thousands of anchovy-sized fish. And as we watched, a single Black Skimmer worked this area, 30 meters wide and 150 meters long, with a mechanical, crop-duster smoothness. Whenever it connected it would rise for a second or two while it swallowed the fish, then get back down on the deck again, never ceasing that sort of rowing motion of its wings. We watched it for several minutes until I noticed some movement in the corner of my eye and turned to see a Great Blue Heron, belly-deep near us, swallowing a small fish. The two disparate species, one needing keen vision and the other using touch instead, exploited the night and the estuary, oblivious to the occasional pedestrian and the traffic booming over the bridge. We walked on to our hotel. The next morning, when we recrossed the estuary on the way to the bus station, there was no sign of any creatures at all. Ensenada has lots of nightlife, including some that only birders are likely to notice.

Mark Hunter

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS TO PAS

We are very grateful to The Christen C and Ben H Garrett Family Foundation, which has made a donation to Pasadena Audubon of \$5,000.00. We also thank these PAS members who have recently made donations to our chapter: Kirk Dawson, Suzanne Martin, Beverly McKenzie, and Don & Karen Rogers.

**FeederWatch** *(continued)*

comment from Mary Strasser of Wisconsin: "The greatest reward for me as a participant in Project FeederWatch these many years has been observing birds and behavior that I might have missed had I not been part of this project."

**Reports** *(continued)*

sected some of the moving flocks. Everyone obtained good views of Red-crowned and Lilac-crowned Parrots; with Red-ored, White-fronted, and Yellow-headed Parrots reported by various participants. The group followed the flocks back to the Daines Dr. site, where twilight was accompanied by the cacophony of thousands of parrots and parakeets settling into the Liquidambar trees to roost.

*Larry Allen*

**Galileo Hill**

**October 5, 2008**

Jon Feenstra led a great trip to Galileo Hill and California City. Highlights included Palm, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, and Chestnut-sided Warblers, and an Eastern Phoebe. I filed eBird reports for Galileo Hill, California City, and the area of S. Loop Blvd. and 97th St. (E-mail me for the specific links.) Thanks to Jon Feenstra and Kathi Ellsworth for pointing out that I was missing Tree Swallow and Warbling Vireo from the original eBird reports.

*John Garrett*

**Field Trips** *(continued)*

**Owling in the San Gabriel Mountains**

**Saturday, March 28, 2009**

**6:03 0pm – midnight**

Six owl species breed in the San Gabriel Mountains, five occur year-round, and several are at or close to the southern edge of their range along the Pacific slope. This trip will search for Northern Pygmy, Northern Saw-whet, Western Screech, Great Horned, and Spotted Owls, which all vocalize at this time of year. We will start shortly before sunset when we'll look for Northern Pygmy Owl and diurnal montane species, and then after dark we'll look for the others and for Common Poorwill, which is active in this area.

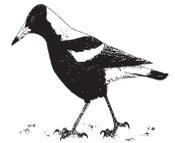
Limited to 10 people. Please email or call Lance to reserve a spot and for other trip logistics.

*Lance Benner*

**Members** *(continued)*

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**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 20, 2009**

**San Dimas County Park**

Meet at in the lower parking lot.

**Tuesday, February 17, 2009**

**Bonelli Park**

Meet in the parking lot to the right before you enter the park.

**Tuesday, March 17, 2009**

**Santa Fe Dam**

Meet at the Nature Center.

*Madeline West  
Sid Heyman*

**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!

**Membership Application**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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 State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
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**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

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**John's Corner**

**Unlicensed Birding**

A car is a remarkable device; with enough time, gas money, and a license, a driver can reach one side of the continent to the other in a matter of days. Lacking any one of these will have a severe impact on one's traveling options. As a 15-year-old without a license or a car, I have to think creatively and rely on others. Fortunately, I have the Pasadena Audubon Society and other birders, my parents, friends' parents, my bike, and public transportation help me go birding. Despite this, it can still be difficult to get somewhere just two counties away. Here is just one example. Fellow young birder Neil Gilbert and I found out about a pelagic trip with Buena Vista Audubon to the Los Coronados Islands off northern Baja California. We were obsessed with the idea of going to Mexico, and besides, there was a Brown

Booby colony on the islands. Luckily, we each had the seventy dollars we needed to get on the boat, and our parents didn't object. The only problem left was getting down to the harbor and coming back. Neil lives in Orange County, and my dad kindly offered to drive me that far. Neil's dad also kindly offered to drive us to the harbor in San Diego. Everything seemed settled, until we realized that we had to arrive at the harbor by 6:30 am. Neil's parents don't mind getting up early, but mine might object to getting up at 3:00 am. Plus, we needed plenty of sleep before we went on a pelagic. It was decided that I would go to Neil's house the day before and spend the night; so far so good. Then there was the question of returning north. None of our parents were willing to spend the night in San Diego waiting for us to finish our pelagic, so we had to find other means of getting back.

Neil suggested we take the train – it runs by both of our houses and the harbor. To get to the train from the harbor, Neil contacted Terry Hunefeld, who coordinates and co-leads most of the pelagic trips in Southern California. He kindly offered to drive us to the train station. Finally, everything seemed set in place. Everything worked out as planned: my dad drove me to Neil's house, I spent the night, Neil's father drove us early the next morning to the harbor, we went on the pelagic and had a wonderful time going to Mexico and marveling at boobies, Terry drove us to the train station, Neil went back to Orange County, and I went to Union Station, where my dad picked me up. It wasn't too ridiculously complicated; however, it would have been greatly simplified if Neil and I had driver's licenses.

*John Garrett*

**New Members**

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

**ALHAMBRA:** Floyd Apodaca; Cam X. Chi; Anne Cristiano; Rosemary Flores; Evelyn Hilton; Amy Ho; Daniel Hutchinson; Barbara Inamoto; Jeanne Knepper;

Rosemarie Marshall; Charlotte Phelps; Tracie Todd; Juliana Wong; Frank Yan; **ALTADENA:** Glenn Arbuthnot; Robert Bertin; Molly Bosted; Kingsley & Camille Hin; David Carroll; Donna Chandler; Steve Chung; Chris Considine; Celine Dove; Joanne Gram; A. & S. Holt; Jennifer Lewis; Ann Murga; Jean Patterson; Norma Sublett; Joyce Thoeni; Elsa Vasquez; Camille Warnberg; Chrystal Watson; **Arcadia:**

Patricia Arkosy; Eleanor Chambers; R.E. Dion; George Dsilva; Evelyne Monte Glaser; Ying Lin; Morassini; C. Sawaya; Dorothy Tyson; **DUARTE:** Joy Beanland; Angela Fontes; Loida Roberts; Marsha Stokes; **LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE:** Suzanne Bravender; R. Covey; Victoria Duisternars; Rony & Nancy Garret; Ewald Heer; Phillip Moynihan; Anna Wohl; **LOS**

*(see Members Page 7)*