



Drawing by
Guy Coheleach

THE WRENTIT

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To bring the excitement of April Fool's Day to our members through
satire, misinformation, and absolute baloney.

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Wrentit Rolls Out New Delivery Fleet

Pasadena Audubon members proudly cut the ribbon on the Wrentit's new fleet of delivery trucks. Issues will reach members up to two days faster! Keep watching for more investments in Pasadena Audubon's flagship publication! (Negotiations with the sign-painting contractor are in progress.)

Rent-It is actually a friendly, family-owned rental truck company located in Chatsworth and surrounding areas.

Taxonomy Turned on its Head

The American Ornithologist Union (AOU) has turned taxonomy on its head, literally! For decades we have thought of birds as evolving from water, as with other life-forms. This can be confirmed in any field guide. Then, some young bird-nerds made the taxonomical leap to go beyond this outmoded way of thinking.

These young ornithologists with the AOU, casting aside the "old way of thinking," have come up with a new taxonomical structure. This new arrangement relies on common sense and is not a slave to DNA. For example, the young guns felt that it just didn't make sense that raptors were placed randomly among the water birds, among other nonsensical placings.

This new "common-sense" approach to taxonomy would place simpler birds before more complex ones. A five-year-old can tell you the simplest bird as she gleefully chases a *Columba livia* through the park. "Rock Pigeons are simply raptor food — haven't you ever read *Red-tails in Love*?" said Will Fulmer, President of Pasadena Audubon. Doves, being cuter than pigeons, would follow in the new order.

On the other side of the new structure would be highly evolved, complex birds. The AOU young ornithologists are still debating how to complete their new taxonomy. Should they use hummingbirds, parrots, or ravens? We may not be sure of the final taxonomical order, but we can be sure that new field guides will be out this fall!

President's Porch

The 2012 Pasadena Audubon elections will be on May 16th this year and I urge you vote for the Party ticket. As the Party candidate for President, I promise to increase the rare bird count in the greater Pasadena area. My plan, if elected, is to erect bird feeders in all of the birding "hot spots" in our foothill district. The extra food stations at these locations will guarantee a increase in "countable" bird species for our PAS membership, possibly making PAS the PBAC (Premier Birding Audubon Chapter) in the Pacific Flyway.

The extra food stations will cost money, but I am sure our members will be glad to pay increased annual dues to finance a cause that will bring National Prestige to our Chapter. Please cast your vote for the Party Ticket at our May meeting!
Good Birding!

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Hazing Scandal Shuttters Audubon Youth Camp

April 1, 2012 - Corpus Christi, TX

Managers of the Kingbird Island Youth Camp in South Texas announced that the camp is closed until further notice as the staff undergoes intensive training in bullying and conflict resolution. Recent lawsuits and police investigations prompted the decision.

In birding circles, particularly among young birders, there is a tradition associated with life birds. The person sighting a life bird is punched in the shoulder by his or her comrades. In most cases these punches are gentle and friendly. At Kingbird Island, things somehow got out of hand. The shoulder punch escalated to the jaw, the nose, the solar plexus.

Regulars at the camp learned to keep their "lifers" quiet, but newcomers often discovered the Kingbird Island custom the hard way. One young birder from Oregon, in Texas for the first time, announced during an outing that he had 42 new life birds that day. Immediately he was buried in a sea of fists, each hazer delivering 42 punches. Some assailants reportedly lost count and had to start over. "It was ugly," said Sergeant Thomas Bewick of the Corpus Christi Cops. "The victim had to be hospitalized. Even though these birdwatchers hit like sissies, if you get enough of them flailing at someone, it can still cause injury."

National Audubon Society, in cooperation with the American Birding Association, is drawing up guidelines for the so-called "lifer punch". Further details will be released when available.



Yet Another Exotic Vagrant

An odd bird has appeared in the Pasadena area. First seen on March 23rd, the bird has been described as a combination of a Mockingbird and a Myna bird. No one has taken a decent photo of it yet, but one birder did make a sketch from her field notes. The weird thing about this species is that some birders swear it can repeat back songs that it hears humans utter. So if you are out on a bird walk and sing a song, or play your iPod to bring in a bird, you may just get an exact response. Please report this sighting to eBird as you may have found the rare Mockingjay. No one is exactly sure where this bird has come from, but ornithologists believe vagrants in the Pasadena area could be accidental migrants from the country of Panem. Submitted by Gale, District 12

Gulls Lumped

The American Ornithologist's Union Checklist Committee has voted to lump the gulls into two species, as detailed in the April 1, 2012 issue of *The Auk*. Members of the family Laridae, formerly divided into 11 genera representing 57 species, will now be placed into a single genus *Larus*, containing two species: *Larus major*, the Large Gull, and *Larus minor*, the Small Gull. *Larus major* will include all the 4-year gulls and some others such as the taxon formerly known as Yellow-footed Gull (*Larus livens*), and *Larus minor* will include the rest.

The decision came in the wake of new DNA evidence indicating that nobody could ever tell gulls apart anyway.

"You wouldn't believe how many times people send me photos of strange-looking gulls and ask me what they are," said Kimball Garrett, Ornithology Collections Manager at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles. "I just don't know. I receive photos of gulls with yellow legs that should be pink, with large bills that should be small, with dark eyes that should be pale. They're all the same; they're all just gulls and you can't tell them apart. And don't even get me started on hybrids."

"This lump simplifies the identification of gulls to species," said well-known author and tour leader Jon Dunn, who starred in two three-hour long videos on gull identification that were presciently titled "The Small Gulls" and "The Large Gulls". Dunn emphasizes that these videos, released in 1997 and 1999, are still useful for those attempting to identify gulls to subspecies, and notes that the videos will be reissued without any changes except the omission of the trailing "s" in their titles. "Gull ID is now easier," declared Dunn, "Small Gulls are generally smaller than Large Gulls. Except there are a few Small Gulls that are quite large gulls, and some Large Gulls are reasonably small gulls. A small Large Gull can even be smaller than a large Small Gull. Some individuals are still best left unidentified."

But the AOU vote was not applauded by all experts. "Yes, the lump was decades overdue," said author and birding guide Steve Howell, "but what an unfortunate choice of English names! Some gulls are intermediate in size, so should they be 'Large' or 'Small'? And there's the uppercase-lowercase problem too. Jeez, first they come up with 'Pacific Wren', which is neither peaceful nor found in the ocean, and now this! I was pushing for 'Dusky-backed Gull' and 'Sooty-backed Gull', but nobody listened. Again."

However, the reaction by most birders has been positive. "I'm really pleased with the decision," declared birder Anita Bettascope, who we encountered at Malibu Lagoon. "It used to take me 3 hours to bird this place; now it takes only 45 minutes!" said Bettascope as she quickly scanned past both species of Gull and settled on some shorebirds. "Hey, do you think the bill on that Dowitcher looks long or short?"