



Drawing by
Guy Coheleach

THE WRENTIT

Founded 1904

Pasadena Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

Volume 55 – No. 4

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

September-October 2007

September Program

ID Workshop

Wednesday, September 19, 2007

Mickey Long and Jon Fisher

The third week of September falls right in the middle of autumn migration and is a perfect time to look at potentially confusing species and difficult IDs. From the small to the large, from the dull to the colorful and from common to rare, we will cover a variety of species occurring in the area. We will also focus on aspects of behavior, status and distribution; especially where they are helpful in making a correct identification.

This program will have something for everyone, from the beginner to the more seasoned birder. We will also review available books on bird ID that are applicable to Southern California. We encourage audience participation, and welcome questions both during and after the program.

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

October Program

Griffith Park Natural History

Wednesday, Oct. 17, 2007

Dan Cooper

Griffith Park's 4000+ acres and miles of hiking trails haven't been studied since the early 1900s but, earlier this year, a group of concerned nearby residents funded wildlife studies of the Park to raise awareness of the Park's natural resources. Dan was hired to coordinate these surveys, and to build a related website. In early May, an 800-acre fire swept through the southeastern corner of the Park, spurring interest in the Park's plants and animals across the city and around the world. He will share preliminary findings from this research, which found remarkably intact examples of Santa Monica Mountains ecosystems, including up to 70 species of nesting birds.

Dan lives in Los Angeles, is staff ecologist for the Puente Hills Habitat Authority in Whittier, and runs his own wildlife consulting business, Cooper Ecological Monitoring, Inc., based in Pasadena. Formerly the Director of Bird Conservation for the National Audubon Society in California, Cooper is the author of Important Bird Areas of California (2004).

November Program

The Northern Saw-whet Owls of Angeles Crest

Wednesday, November 21, 2007

Mary Freeman

During the five years of the Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas survey, data on this owl species was sorely lacking. In response, Mary set out over the past eight years to study the status and distribution of this little-understood owl in the San Gabriel mountains. Come and listen as Mary gives an overview of her findings relating to Saw-whets, other owls and wildlife encountered during the project.

Mary is a native of Los Angeles and has led trips for the both Los Angeles and Pasadena Audubon Societies. She likes to bird by ear, has a degree in art design, illustrates birds, designs jewelry, and has searched out owls throughout the Americas. But her greatest passion is surveying Saw-whets in our local mountains.

President's Perch

Two great things happened this summer! First, Lois and I visited Iceland. This volcanic island country at latitude 66 degrees is a major seabird nesting site for Arctic Tern, Kittiwake, Fulmar, Common Murre & the spectacular Atlantic Puffin. Common Eider with their ducklings were in the city park with Greylag Geese. I took many pictures and had "Guillemot" for dinner. (See Lois's report for more on this trip.)

Second, I received a letter from Congressman Alan Schiff notifying me that

he was successful in getting final approval from the Forest Service on our signage project for the Nature Trail at the Cobb Estate in Altadena. The PAS board approved the signage designed by Laura Garrett twelve months ago. The designs were held up at the local USFS approval level. We are very grateful for Congressman Schiff's assistance on getting this project back on track. Our plan calls for six new signs on the trail that describe to the visitor the flora and fauna in each unique area of the estate.

Will

In this Issue

Conservation	2
Field Trip Reports	3
Field Trips	4
Calendar/Trip Leaders	5
Backyard Birds	6
Morro Bay Festival	6
Resplendent Quetzal:	
Conservation in Guatemala	7
Magpie Group	7
Membership Application	7
Kid's Corner	8
New Members	8

Conservation

AUDUBONATHOME.ORG

When confronted with the news of global warming, most people throw up their hands because the issues are beyond what an individual can do. Audubon believes that every little bit counts, and has created a website www.AUDUBONATHOME.ORG. It includes topics: what is a healthy yard, creating a healthy yard, explore your backyard, bird feeding basics, plants for birds and wildlife, attracting wildlife, keeping wildlife safe, regional resources and Kidspace. There is something for everyone to learn or relearn.

If humans continue to reduce wild habitat, it is possible to put back some of it in your own backyard. That way, some of nature comes to you, and you don't have to drive to nature as often. There is much to learn from sitting quietly in your garden and observing.

Don Rogers

Tern Killings Lead to Charges and Bittersweet Victory

On April 19th the Long Beach Press-Telegram reported that Point Loma Maritime Services owner Ralph Botticelli, 40, and his employees - Alan Schlange, 38, and Scott Caslin, 32 - had been charged with seven misdemeanor counts (including animal cruelty, illegal harassment of wildlife and destroying nests) in connection with a June 2006 incident in which hundreds of recently hatched Caspian and Elegant Terns were frightened, thrown, or hosed off two abandoned rock barges in Long Beach Harbor. Nearly all the 400 young birds drowned, and their bodies washed up on the Long Beach shoreline in subsequent days.

The colony of nesting Elegant Terns was the second largest of only five nesting sites in the world, so the impact on local populations was severe. A year later, in summer 2007, Caspian Terns have once again nested on an unused icebreaking barge in the harbor, but the Elegant Terns have not returned. A reporter for radio station KPCC, visiting the barge this summer, heard California Department of Fish and Game biologist Charlie Collins speculate that they may have moved to the Bolsa Chica wetlands.

Fish and Game conducted an extensive investigation leading to the charges. In May the defendants, through their attorney, claimed that the deaths were an accident, and that the birds plunged overboard themselves when the men boarded the barges to prepare for moving them. However, environmentalists claim that

Raptor Killers Charged

A fourteen-month investigation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service resulted in the arrests of seven men in the Southern California area, and three others in Oregon, last June. They were charged with shooting, trapping, or otherwise harming Red-tailed Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, and Peregrine Falcons, in violation of the Migratory Bird Protection Act. Two more Oregon enthusiasts were arrested in July.

USFWS conducted the investigation as part of Operation High Roller, in response to reports that raptors across the entire nation are being killed in huge numbers. In Southern California alone, the defendants and their associates are suspected of killing between 1000 and 2000 raptors per year.

According to USFWS, the defendants are all affiliated with clubs that promote and compete roller pigeons - also known as Birmingham rollers - which are native to England and have a genetic defect that causes them to flip backwards while in flight. Enthusiasts breed the pigeons with an eye toward having a group of the birds roll simulta-



neously, then recover before hitting the ground. Raptors are attracted by the pigeons' unusual flipping, interpreting the behavior as that of a sick or weakened bird, and thus easy prey.

USFWS is continuing its investigation on the illegal use of traps or other illegal activities effecting migratory birds such as raptors. The traps are large, box-like structures with walls of wire mesh, designed to bait and trap hawks, falcons and owls. They consist of two parts, a bait cage and a trap mechanism constructed with a wooden "A" frame. If you see a trap of the kind shown here, call USFWS so that they can investigate whether it is being used in a crime.

many of the birds were too young to walk, so could not have dived off the barges. Suspicion persists that the defendants used high-pressure hoses to clear the barges.

According to IBRRC, a bird rescue center in San Pedro, twenty-four young terns barely survived the ordeal and were rescued. IBRRC volunteers were traumatized as they collected the hundreds of corpses on the shoreline. Then they began working to rehabilitate the nine Caspian and fifteen Elegant Tern chicks. For six weeks they fed the chicks and tried to teach them feeding behaviors. The Elegant Terns became independent hunters first; the Caspians were more problematic, with behaviors that included begging. The Elegant Terns were released in August 2006 at Cabrillo Beach where others of their species were feeding; the Caspians were released several days later, among thousands of other Caspian Terns at the Salton Sea.

Berkshire Creek

The City of Pasadena has received a grant of \$789,400 to restore Berkshire Creek. The grant will be used to restore 12.3 acres of habitat and develop 2,200 feet of a multi-use trail along Berkshire Creek, within Hahamongna Watershed Park on the Arroyo Seco River Parkway. The trail will pass near the recently completed Flint Canyon bridge and will include amenities such as interpretive signage, a picnic area, upgraded restrooms and improved ADA access throughout the site.

The funding came from Proposition 50, the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002, which authorized the Legislature to appropriate funds for the acquisition, restoration, protection and development of river parkways.

Laura Garrett
PURPLECOW@JPS.NET

Trip Reports

A Visit To Iceland

Field upon field of grass, wildflowers of all colors, wide rivers and huge waterfalls, chunks of lava and black sand beaches, glaciers and boiling mud, more sheep and more horses than people, a multitude of birds – this is Iceland. Will and I visited this beautiful country on a ten-day guided tour in mid-July.

We had originally planned on taking a birding tour, but when that fell through, we joined a cultural tour instead. We saw a variety of birds anyway, including European Golden Plovers, Common Redshanks, Meadow Pipits, Redwings, Whooper Swans, Common Eiders (with cute little diving ducklings), Tufted Ducks, Red-necked Phalaropes, Northern Fulmars (our almost-namesake birds), Black-legged Kittiwakes, thousands of Arctic Terns, and the birds we most wanted to see, Atlantic Puffins.

Iceland is very tourist-friendly; everyone speaks English. Restrooms with running water were present at every scenic spot we visited, no matter how out of the way. The drinking water is cold and pure. The food is good. The hotels are comfortable. Reykjavik has a world-class historical museum. Consider this little dot in the Atlantic Ocean the next time you're looking for a special vacation!

Lois Fulmer

Costa Rica

In July, I went on a tour of Costa Rica. A beautiful country with high mountains, cloud and rain forests, incredible beaches with forests reaching the sand and wonderful people. A country that has a quarter of its land resources dedicated to National Parks and wildlife preserves. We saw monkeys, sloths, snakes, caimans, crocodiles and bugs; we visited coffee and pineapple plantations and two volcanoes (Arenal Volcano, currently active and beautiful, and Poas Volcano and caldera); we drove through small towns and larger ones; we enjoyed the vibrant colors of flowers and foliage that was everywhere. We also learned to close our eyes to the drivers and enjoy the good food (including the ever-present rice and black beans at lunch and dinner and mixed together at breakfast).

And then there were the birds. I expected to see lots of hummingbirds and I did, but birds were everywhere and they proved addictive. There were sixteen of us traveling together with a guide who just happened to like to bird. The first morning (at 6:00 am) we met for an optional bird walk. There were four people, two of whom had binoculars. By

the eleventh day of travel, there were nine of us meeting at six, sharing the available binoculars and experiencing – most for the first time – birding. That was special.

As anyone who knows me is aware, I'm not the world's greatest birder, but in spite of myself I came home with just over 100 life birds (not to mention seeing some old friends like Band-tailed Pigeons and Acorn Woodpeckers). Tanagers, flycatchers, blackbirds, robins, herons, antbirds, toucans, cormorants, anhingas, jacanas, parrots, Scarlet Macaws and more. My biggest thrill was seeing the Resplendent Quetzal with its iridescent green back and red breast. It is truly beautiful. We saw a total of four of the birds at the Gerado De Dota Cloud Forest and I saw a fifth nesting in a tree while we were on a trip extension to the Monte Verde Cloud Forests. Monte Verde is on the Continental Divide and its forests receive moisture from either the Pacific or Caribbean sides of the Divide. These were the forests of legends. Only Tarzan and Jane were missing. It was a spectacular trip. I recommend it to everyone!

Bev McKenzie

East Mojave Mountain Trip August 18-19, 2007

The desert was beautiful; there have been several big thunderstorms out there this late summer and the place looked like a grassland like some places in Arizona. The creosote was blooming again along with many spring flowers that were taking advantage of the rains. Roads had unfortunately been washed out and we had to walk further to get into our usual Keystone Canyon hike. There wasn't running water, but there were little pools that hadn't dried up yet drawing the thirsty bees to the edges.

Birds: the most notable to me were the Grey Vireo pair singing at the base of the canyon. We saw the usual Black-throated Sparrows that were also singing and early migrants like Wilson's Warbler and Warbling Vireo. We saw a few Selasphorus hummingbirds mostly coming into the fall Indian Painbrush that was blooming, but the hummingbird extravaganza we saw previously in Keystone didn't happen this year, due to all the thistle plants and their flowers being washed away in the monsoons.

It was 109° in Baker, but up where we traveled and camped at 5500 feet the temperature was very comfortable, about 75° down to 60 at night.

Kathi Ellsworth

Audubon Film Fridays at Debs Park

Pasadena Audubon, Los Angeles Audubon and Audubon Center at Debs Park are presenting a series of bird-oriented films on Friday nights at Debs Park Center. Information is posted on the PAS web site.

These fun, free events feature a bird walk at 7:00 pm and a film at 8:00 pm. Free refreshments are offered and seating is outdoors, under the stars. August featured "Hoot" and "Happy Feet." There are three more dates:

September 7th: "Winged Migration", in English with Spanish subtitles. (If you've never seen this one, you'll be awestruck.)

September 21st features two films: "Eyewitness Bird", in English with Spanish subtitles; and "Ocean Oasis" (*La Naturaleza de Baja California*), in Spanish with English subtitles.

October 5th features two segments from David Attenborough's, "The Life of Birds: Part 2, The Mastery of Flight", and "Part 7, Finding Partners."

Audubon Center at Debs Park
4700 Griffin Ave. (off the 110 freeway
between Ave. 43 and Ave. 52)
WWW.AUDUBONDEBSPARK.ORG
(323) 221-2255



New Members (continued)

Daniel Temianka, Norman Thomas, Charlene Vert, H. Vocan, Celia & Charles Vorsanger, Ms. R.L. Walsh, Merle Welch, Ward Whaling, Bozena & Alex Wiercigroch, Eleen Wilts; **ROSEMEAD**: Elaine Austria, Margaret Cuenod, Nicholas Gesualdi, Betty Hart, Becky Yamasaki; **SAN GABRIEL**: Dan Rosenthal; **SAN MARINO**: Emily Kookan, Betty Williamson; **SIERRA MADRE**: Geraldine Asher, Deborah Buckwalter, Peter Fay, M.J. Perley, Kimberly Toal, Mary Tumilty; **SOUTH PASADENA**: Carol McCrary, Eric Pettit, Jill Salse; **TEMPLE CITY**: Mary Barlow, Tina Brown, Dr. Paul Burton, Fern Koenig, Isabel Mecum, Penny Miles, Warren Packer.

Field Trips

Hahamongna Monthly Walk

Saturday, September 1, 2007

Saturday, October 6, 2007

Saturday, November 3, 2007

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, September 16, 2007

Sunday, October 21, 2007

Sunday, November 18, 2007

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, September 23, 2007

Sunday, October 28, 2007

Sunday, November 25, 2007

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

Galileo Hills and Beyond

Sat & Sun, September 15-16, 2007

All day

Arguably the best fall migrant trap in the state. Warblers, other passerines, and flycatchers should headline. Reptiles possible! For those who stick around for Sunday, we may return to Galileo Hills and California City, or venture farther afield (did I hear Zzyzx?), as dictated by

our rambling hearts and bird reports. This will be a combined trip for Pasadena and LA Audubon.

Take Hwy 14 about 4 miles past Mojave, then turn right on California City Blvd. Drive through town about a mile past the shops, turn left past the golf course on Randsburg-Mojave Rd., and veer right on 20 Mule Team Rd. Turn left on Rutgers Rd. at the Galileo Hills sign (before the hill), take your first paved right, your first right again, into the Silver Saddle Country Club, followed by two paved lefts into the lot. Park by the first pond. About 2 hrs driving time from L.A. You must sign up via the LA Audubon House phone: (323) 876-0202.

Limited to 12 people. Bring lunches, sun block, FRS radio on 9/15 suggested. Reserve rooms for Friday and Saturday nights in Mojave at Motel 6 or elsewhere (about \$40 through Orbitz). Meet at 7:00 am, Saturday, finish up 3-4ish Sunday.

Nick and Mary Freeman.

Adobe Photoshop Workshop

Saturday, October 20, 2007

12:00 Noon – 5:00 pm, w/lunch break

Eaton Canyon Nature Center

Speaker Tom Stephenson is back by popular demand. A laptop loaded with Adobe Photoshop and equipped with a CD drive is optimal, but not at all required! We should have plenty of time to go slowly, answer questions, and go over particular areas of interest to attendees. For the curious and the serious. This workshop is geared towards anyone who owns a digital camera and Photoshop (or comparable) graphics manipulation software. Fee: \$25. Sign-ups by SASE with Los Angeles Audubon Reservations, PO Box 931057, Los Angeles, CA 90093.

Ventura County

Sunday, October 7, 2007

7:30 am – 2:00 pm

Join us for a fun day of birding in Ventura County. We'll scope the ocean for seabirds and visit several migrant traps. Spots we plan to visit include Sycamore Canyon, the warbler-attracting Laguna Tamarisks, the sod farms off Hueneme Rd, and the Santa Clara River Estuary (time permitting).

Bring a scope if you have one. Meet in the beach parking lot of Leo Carillo State Beach (off Highway 1 at the western edge of LA County) at 7:30 am. There is a parking fee for the Leo Carillo parking lot, but if there is space available it is possible to access Leo Carillo by parking (for free) on the ocean side of Highway 1

Mark and Janet Scheel

High Tide, Back Bay, Kayaks

Sunday, October 28, 2007

8:00 am – noon

An unusually high tide invades the Back Bay in Newport Beach on this day, hopefully driving the rails from their cover in the reeds. And we'll be there in our kayaks to witness it.

Launch promptly at 8:00 am (time and tide wait for no birder), paddle north to view the vast flocks of waterfowl, spy the elusive rail, and ride the strong outgoing tide back to our launch point at: Newport Aquatic Center, 1 Whitecliffs Drive, Newport Beach. Reservations required. PAS members only. A couple of loaner kayaks are available, or ask about rentals from a local store.

*Mark Hunter
(818) 957-5044*

North Slope of the San Gabriels

Saturday, November 10, 2007

7:30am - 2:00pm

We will explore areas on the northern slope of the San Gabriel Mountains, such as Grassy Hollow Visitors Center, Jackson Lake, and locations in Valyermo. We will search for high-altitude species as well as wintering raptors. Unusual species (e.g. Lewis's Woodpecker, Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker, Swamp Sparrow) have been found in some years. Time permitting, we may look for longspurs in the Antelope Valley.

It may be cold, especially at higher elevations, so bring warm clothes. We will meet at the Park & Ride on Ave. S in Palmdale, just off the 14 freeway.

Mark and Janet Scheel

Northwest San Gabriel Mountains

The "Other" North Slope of the San Gabriels

December 8, 2007

7:30am – 3:00pm

If such great birding places as Jackson Lake, Grassy Hollow, and St. Andrew's Abbey are getting old, come join us as we bird some even less visited ground in L.A. County - the northwestern slope of the San Gabriel Mountains. We'll be making a few stops at such often ignored locations as Quail Lake, Holiday Lake, Lake Hughs and Lake Elizabeth in the search for interesting wintering passerines and waterfowl.

Meet in the parking lot at the western end of Quail Lake. Bring a scope and dress warm. Contact me if you'd like to go so carpools can be arranged.

Jon Feenstra

Calendar

Submit material for the next Wrentit by October 1st

September 2007

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
7	Fri	7:00 pm	Film Friday	Audubon Center, Debs Park	"Winged Migration" <i>(English w/Spanish subtitles)</i>
9	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Mountain Birding: Chilao Nature Center	Hill Penfold
15-16	S-S	7:00 am	Field Trip	Galileo Hills and Beyond	Nick & Mary Freeman
16	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
18	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Legg Lake	Sid Heyman & Madeline West
19	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: ID Workshop
21	Friday	7:00 pm	Film Friday	Audubon Center, Debs Park	"Eyewitness Bird" & "Ocean Oasis" <i>(English w/Spanish subtitles)</i>
23	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens <i>(PAS Members Only)</i>	Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

October 2007

3	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Will Fulmer
5	Fri	7:00 pm	Film Friday	Audubon Center, Debs Park	David Attenborough's "The Life of Birds"
6	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Monthly Walk	Ron Cyger
7	Sun	7:30 am	Field Trip	Ventura County	Mark and Janet Scheel
16	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Sid Heyman & Madeline West
17	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: Griffith Park Natural History
21	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
28	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Newport Back Bay <i>(by kayak)</i>	Mark Hunter
		8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens <i>(PAS Members Only)</i>	Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

November 2007

3	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Monthly Walk	Ron Cyger
4	Sun	3:00 pm	Special Program	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Resplendent Quetzal Conservation in Guatemala
7	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Will Fulmer
10	Sat	7:00 am	Field Trip	North Slope, San Gabriel Mountains	Mark and Janet Scheel
17	Sat	2:00 pm	Field Trip	San Gabriel Valley Parrots	Larry Allen
18	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
20	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Whittier Narrows Nature Center	Sid Heyman & Madeline West
21	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: Northern Saw-whet Owls
25	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens <i>(PAS Members Only)</i>	Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

***Trip Leader Information**

Mark Scheel (Chair)	(818) 366-7343	scheel@tapir.caltech.edu
Larry Allen	(626) 288-2701	larryallen@earlymusicla.org
Lance Benner	(626) 791-1187	lbenner@charter.net
Ron Cyger	(626) 449-3625 (before 9 pm)	ron@cyger.org (preferred)
Kathi Ellsworth	(626) 564-0652	pandionsky@yahoo.com
Jon Feenstra	(626) 792-4346	feenstra@alumni.caltech.edu
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

Backyard Birds

Backyard birding is not exactly like birding Betsy and I have done in Antarctica, Hudson Bay or Costa Rica, among other adventuresome places. It's not much like my teenage tramps along the marshy shore of the Bronx River or the Ramble in Central Park in New York City. But age and infirmities take their toll. Thus our enthusiasms have inevitably focused more and more on what's to be seen in the backyard and immediate area.

We had heard about Purple Finches being seen a lot at Eaton Canyon. We live ten minutes away and we have always had feeders in our yard. We have observed dozens of species here over the years, but never Purple Finches. Then, last year, every so often in our yard we'd hear one singing from one treetop or another but, look as we might, we could never locate it. Very frustrating. But this spring we began hearing them again, more and more often. Then as if to make up for all those dry years, several began serenading us at 10 second intervals daily and showing up conspicuously at our feeders. When you see a male through the binoculars in good light, it is not to be confused with our (too numerous) House Finches. It does indeed look, as Peterson says, as if it has been "dipped in raspberry juice". Side by side with a House Finch (wouldn't you rather call it a "Linnet"? Ornithologists Peterson, Grinnell, Apgar and Willett did.) they seem very slightly larger and plumper and occasionally the male will raise his crown feathers briefly to make a noticeable crest. The female is plain, but the light line over her eye identifies her and she, too, comes to the feeders. Some male Linnets are very colorful and an eager birder might be persuaded that he or she is seeing a Purple Finch. My own rule in birding is that if I'm not sure, whatever I'd like it to be, it isn't.

The nice thing about being temporarily yard-bound is that it's a chance to do more than merely list a bunch of species – one begins to notice and appreciate behaviors, calls and songs. Or, have you ever taken the time to entice a Scrub Jay to

come to your hand for a peanut? They, and Oak Titmouse, will respond to the offer, although titmice seem not so bold as the jays. Now Scrub Jay and Oak Titmouse are not a really serious birders' most wanted quarry on a 90- or 100-species Birdathon day, but having one come to your hand is an experience of a different dimension. You should try it some day.

A bird-sit list can be short and dull or it can be highly satisfying—spend enough time waiting and watching and sometimes there's a surprise. For a few days this spring several Lawrence's Goldfinches joined the usual American Goldfinches and numerous and various-plumaged Lesser Goldfinches at the feeders. An Orange-crowned Warbler spent days on and off eating nyger seed from them. A Yellow-rumped Warbler became a habitual hoverer at the hummingbird feeders, as did the Orange-crown. That, as far as I know, is not what is expected of them, or is it? Not a surprise anymore, but at first unexpected, a Hermit Thrush, for several winters now, has established itself under the toyon we planted some years back. Hovering, it plucks one berry at a time until none are left. It takes several weeks; then we see it no longer until next year. Could this be the same individual returning every year?

Black-headed Grosbeaks, males, females and juveniles, attend the feeders daily. We hear the males singing day after day. It doesn't hurt to have a fruiting mulberry tree next to the driveway where they can spend lots of time. Neither does it discourage the Swainson's Thrushes that stop over for a week or two in spring on their way north. A mulberry tree in a yard is highly recommended. Tanagers, parrots, Band-tailed Pigeons, Phainopeplas, not to mention crows, starlings and House Finches are to be discovered among its thick, close-clustered leaves, but it takes some patient watching and waiting in order to sort them out of the dense foliage as they work their way busily from one mulberry to the next. It is *not* highly recommended that you

park your car under a mulberry tree during the fruiting season, however.

It's nice to have a venerable oak shading part of the yard. The goldfinches, hummers, chickadees and titmice take their breaks in it between their frequent feeder meals; if you don't let yourself doze off you might catch a Black-throated Gray, a Townsend's or a Wilson's Warbler slipping through overhead. Often the best way to see the warblers is to sit underneath the canopy and to not try to penetrate it from above or through it from outside. Sometimes, when the acorns are ripe, a plethora of Band-tails will take over the tree and create a great loud rustling as they work their way through the mast. Then, all at once the flock of 20 or more will materialize as they depart with a startling, loud flurry of wings, presumably in search of another munificent supply elsewhere. Or is it because of the Cooper's Hawk which patrols regularly over the yard?

Not all the birds present themselves each year, but the Hermit Thrush has been a regular, expected visitor to the toyon for the last few years. There was one winter when Pine Siskins were all over the feeders, but they have made no encores in subsequent years. For some reason, House Wrens, although they appeared early this spring, did not stay to use the wren box as they have in the past. But there has been some compensation in the continued presence of one or two Bewick's Wrens. They were busy songsters from April through July. They seem sometimes to find the nyger seed attractive. I had thought them to be exclusively insect and spider predators. The Bewick's has many different songs, and it can become confusing. I have heard them sing not unlike Song Sparrows as Peterson noted in the 1947 edition of his guide. Spend some time in the backyard and you begin to realize how variable the song can be. According to Ehrlich et al (*The Birder's Handbook*) it has fifteen or more song versions, happy wren.

(to be continued)

Bob Neuwirth

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival

Friday-Monday, January 18-21, 2008

Come to where the birds are and join Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) for our 12th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival. Located on California's scenic Central Coast, Morro Bay is an important stop on the Pacific Flyway and one of the country's preeminent birding spots. The area is recognized worldwide for its diversity of both resident and wintering birds, and at last year's festival, over 200 species of birds were identified!

The Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival is sponsored by MCAS and gives you the chance to join local and national birding experts on a variety of field trips and workshops. Field trip group sizes are limited to maximize spotting and identification opportunities. The Festival also offers workshops aimed at sharpening your birding skills, as well as evening programs with outstanding speakers.

For more information about the Festival, check out the website at WWW.MORROBAYBIRDFESTIVAL.ORG, or call (805) 772-4677. Registration begins in October, the deadline is January 4, 2008, and early sign-ups are encouraged as the most popular events fill up quickly.

Los Angeles and Pasadena Audubon Societies are proud to present a special event:

Resplendent Quetzal Conservation in Guatemala

**Sunday, November 4, 2007, 3:00 pm
Eaton Canyon Nature Center**

Rob and Tara Cahill will speak on Resplendent Quetzal conservation efforts being conducted in Guatemala by



themselves and other Proeval Raxmu environmental associates.

The Resplendent Quetzal (*Pharomachrus mocinno*) has been described as the most majestic bird of the

western hemisphere. An inhabitant of the highland cloud forests, the Quetzal flourishes in some of the most at-risk natural habitats of Central America. Rob and Tara, associates of Proeval Raxmu, are dedicated to the conservation of the cloud forests of Guatemala's central highlands. Proeval Raxmu is a team of Guatemalan nationals and foreign expatriates, some of whom have been studying the Quetzals for twenty years!

Rob and Tara Cahill have worked in Guatemala for the last six years with projects in agro-forestry, conservation and food security supported by Mennonite Central Committee and Heifer Project International and are working to conserve these last great habitats. They developed an agro-ecology program at a school for Q'eqchi'-speaking youth in Alta Verapaz. In recent years, Rob and Tara have become associates of Proeval Raxmu (pronounced Rash-moo), working ever more intentionally to combine the dual needs of the community, including economic and human development; and the need for conservation, along the vulnerable borderline of the cloud forest edge.

Their presentation on the Resplendent Quetzal brings together current research on the Quetzal itself and a review of conservation efforts that include projects in food security in the communities that border the cloud forest. Their website is: [HTTP://WWW.PROEVAL-RAXMU.ORG/ENGLISH/INDEX.HTML](http://www.proeval-raxmu.org/english/index.html).

There will be a \$3.00 suggested donation taken at the door. No sign up, just show up!

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, September 18, 2007
Legg Lake**

Meet at North Lake parking area, south of the 60 Freeway off of Santa Anita Ave.

**Tuesday, October 16, 2007
Eaton Canyon Nature Center**

Meet at the entrance.

**Tuesday, November 20, 2007
Whittier Narrows**

Meet at the Nature Center

*Sid Heyman
Madeline West*

PAS on the WEB

Website

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

ListServe

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

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 Wren Tit*.

We thank you all for your support!

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

Kid's Corner The Arroyo Seco Bird Census Project

Work has already begun on the restoration of the Arroyo Seco, and the Pasadena Audubon Society is helping with this project. Habitat restoration is key, and ranges from ridding the area of concrete and non-native and invasive plants to planting native plants. The larger goal is returning the Arroyo Seco back to its original state.

To measure the success of the restoration project, the planners have chosen to monitor certain indicator plants and animals, including four key bird species: California Quail, Oak Titmouse,

Yellow Warbler, and Spotted Towhee. According to the Arroyo Seco Watershed Restoration plan, the California Quail was chosen to represent upland habitat connectivity; the Oak Titmouse for oak woodlands; the Yellow Warbler for riparian habitats; and the Spotted Towhee for chaparral and oak woodlands. The Pasadena Audubon Society has been working with North East Trees, the Audubon Center at Debs Park, and The Arroyo Seco Foundation to develop plans to monitor these four species using presence/absence surveys and point counts to search for evidence of breeding. A presence/absence survey records all species present with actual counts. A point count uses previously designated locations

to ensure that the survey effectively encompasses the spatial distribution of the key species. At each point the surveyor checks if any of the four species are present, also the age, sex, plumage, and anything else of interest.

This project has already started, with the first surveys conducted this past spring. The project will continue at least until habitat restoration in the Arroyo Seco is complete. However, members of the Pasadena Audubon Society hope that the Arroyo Seco Bird Census can become an important scientific resource for many years afterwards.

John Garrett

New Members

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

ALHAMBRA: Grace Arroyo, Joseph Campbell, Sandi Reed Chan, Jane Gard, Alex Linn, Ruth Metter, Donna Ragsdale, Richard, Sister Maria Valla; **ALTA-DENA:** Lettice Carroll, Stuart Elliott, Nancy Harkness, Harry Kawahara, Rob & Jeanene MacLean, Elsa Reese, Laura Anne Rowell, Diane Walter; **ARCADIA:** Valerie Angelo, Ira Blitz, Virginia Callan, Marie Cling, Leslie Dahl, Eleanor Dorrance, Louise Duus, Ned Joy, Jeane Kelley, Jean Kusnierz, Cely Malig,

Barbara Pachano, Johnny Rocha, Carol Sartain, Ronald Smith; **AZUSA:** Lester Kau, Lisa Mendoza; **BRADBURY:** Wendy Calhoun; **DUARTE:** Ms. Calderone, Pedro Delaflor, Fuoco, Nancy Salem, Elaine Tomaszewski; **LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE:** Mary Boerger, Shirley Chung, Victoria Hays, Karen Johnson, Linda Klibanow, Mr. & Mrs. Roderick Leonard, Alfred Pedersen, Sam & Ben Whitefield; **LOS ANGELES:** Marilyn Hildebrandt; **MONROVIA:** Diane Anderson, Adrienne & John Bursill, Joan Dykstra, Ignacio Gutierrez, Debra Hosteller, Penny Howard, Esther Macias, Barbara Schultz; **MONTEREY PARK:** Mari Gonzales, Mike Tsai; **MONTROSE:** John Gilles, Stuart Martin;

PASADENA: Yusra Adem, Gary Ambrozich, Dan Ames, Gail Anderson, George Armour, Laurel Beck, Elizabeth Bergholz, Edward Bignell, Joyce Breslin, Wei-Ting Chen, Dawn Cobb, Mr. & Mrs. Laurel Colton, James Dunton, Robert Fabbro, Nancy Feldman, S. Forbes, Gloria Freeman, Valerie Gaber, Nellie Graham, Eleanor Hamilton, Allyn Heck, Tamia Hope, Lucille Hoyme, Rosemarie Krovaza, Sara Lee, Charles Lewis, Ralph Lower, Kyle Mattes, Philip McDermott, Scott Munroe, William Pandolfi, Candice Pegram, Patricia Rankin, John Rodgers, Olga Schamet, Penelope Schopflin, Virginia Shacker, Jay Simons, Kurt Slater, Kathleen Smith, David & Jane Stover,

(see *New Members*, page 3)

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