



Drawing by
Guy Coheleach

THE WRENTIT

Founded 1904

Pasadena Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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

February-March 2011

February Program

Los Angeles County's Sensitive Bird Species

February 16, 2011

Tom Ryan

Too often our perception of how a particular species is doing is based on how often or how many of that species we observe. If we consistently see them in our neighborhood we no doubt feel that they are doing well when, in fact, they may be declining rapidly. Join us this evening as Tom Ryan gives us a perspective on what is really happening in Los Angeles County. We will find out which birds are doing well, which are holding their own, and which are seeing significant declines. Most importantly, Tom will give us some ideas on how we can make a difference.

Tom Ryan is an ornithologist and senior biologist working with local environmental consulting organizations. He is currently involved in studies of the California Least Tern, the Western Snowy Plover, and sensitive bird species in Los Angeles County.

March Program

Pelagic Birds of Southern California

March 16, 2011

Todd McGrath

A common sight on many of the Southern California pelagic trips is Todd Mc Grath standing on the deck of the boat yelling, "There is a Northern Fulmar crossing the bow, and on the stern are five Black-footed Albatross, and if you look to the west there is a South Polar Skua!" Ten-foot seas and rain, or flat balmy conditions, Todd is in his element. Join us this evening as Todd covers most of the common, and some not-so-common pelagic birds that can be seen off the Southern California coast. He will even touch on what can be seen from shore and the best locations for a sea watch. His photographs are superb and you will feel you are right there with him but you won't get seasick!

Todd McGrath is an exceptional pelagic birder with over 400 days at sea off California. He regularly leads pelagic trips off both coasts of the United States.

April Program

Owls of Southern California

Wednesday, April 20, 2011

Lance Benner

Eleven owl species occur in southern California and at least ten of them breed in the area. Due to its geography, Southern California is at the edge of the range of several species, and one, the Elf Owl, is on the verge of extirpation from the state. This talk will expand significantly on the presentation by Lance from several years ago and will complement other recent PAS programs by featuring extensive use of range maps from eBird and owl recordings and sonograms of our local species. Time permitting, after the program we'll look for Western Screech-owl outside the Eaton Canyon Nature Center.

**General Meetings Held At
Eaton Canyon Nature Center
1750 N Altadena Drive
Pasadena CA
Social 7:00 pm, Program 7:30 pm**

President's Perch

Welcome to the year 2011. PAS finished 2010 with a "damp" but very successful Christmas Bird Count (over 150 species) followed by a catered dinner at Eaton Canyon (thank you Hospitality Committee.).

Lois and I spent Christmas Day with family locally and then visited our daughter in the East Bay Area where we drove by (est.) 6,000 Tundra Swans on Hwy 12, west of Interstate 5 — quite a

sight, with some Sandhill Cranes thrown in. It was great to see all these large birds feeding on the partly flooded stubble fields of the area.

Resolutions for the New Year: Provide more bird classes, increase our grant program, and increase participation in our Birdathon program.

Good birding!

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Conservation

Destroying Our Legacy

On January 12, 2011, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works bulldozed an 11.3-acre grove of oak and sycamore woodland (the Arcadia Oak Woodlands), a unique but increasingly uncommon fragment of a once widespread and flourishing habitat. We've tried, but we cannot see the logic behind this action. California is a land with many special, unique places, with unusual flora and fauna, and it is startling how fast we are losing them. From redwoods in the north, to the Sierras, to the deserts, to our endemic coastal sage scrub, to the California Live Oaks in our backyards, there are unusual organisms throughout the state. All natural places should be the crown jewel of our planet, our most prized possession. Instead, as in the case of the Arcadia Oaks, we insist on finding excuses to destroy these places for the so-called progress of man. We cannot understand how we can let ourselves do this and call ourselves an intelligent life form.

By ripping out this patch of trees, we're not only killing some trees, but a whole ecosystem—we're killing untold numbers of organisms and their way of life. Oak obligates, such as Hutton's Vireos, Oak Titmice, and Acorn Woodpeckers obviously cannot survive on sediment, and re-location isn't as easy as it sounds.

So how did this happen? The County bought this land in the 1950s with the intention of using it as dump site for dirt. Arcadia was developed around it, and as the once-vast oak forest shrank, the natural value of this land increased. Three years ago, the County was told by the State that they had to upgrade Santa Anita Dam, and to do this, they had to remove the sediment that had built up behind the dam. The County began the CEQA (California

Environmental Quality Act) process, but did not notify any of the local environmental groups like PAS, the Sierra Club, or the California Native Plant Society. They also only notified the immediate residents, and misled them about the options. They did not tell them they would be cutting down one of the few remaining oak and sycamore forests in the area. In their official report, they called the wood "native vegetation, with some mature oaks." The County also did not let the residents know that a) there was still enough room in the current dump site for 250,000 cubic yards of sediment and that b) they would be using the new site for sediment from other locations outside the city.



Photo: Terry Miller

We local environmentalists and other stakeholders did not find out about this until a few days before the bulldozing was supposed to begin in early December. We joined with some residents who had been fighting this on their own, and the County responded with a tour of the site and a 30-day moratorium on the bulldozing. About 60 of us attended the tour, and the magnificent beauty of what we saw that day will haunt us for the rest of our lives. They also held a public meeting, given with almost no notice, and almost every one of the over 100 people in the room was vehemently opposed to the project. Despite our pleadings, our online petition, a flood of emails, letters, phone calls, and faxes begging Supervisor Antonovich to please continue the

moratorium until we could find a better place to dump the dirt, the County went ahead with its original plan. The very next day after their decision, they toppled the trees. Their haste strikes this observer as panic because public outrage was increasing and even becoming international.

We don't seriously expect most politicians to understand the complexities of nature, or how miraculous even a single grove of trees is, but we would hope that they have the interests of their people in mind. Nature is part of who we are, both physically and morally, whether we realize it or not. A clichéd but nonetheless true example is of how trees provide oxygen for us to breathe. Our county also claims

that they are interested in water conservation: this is a worthy goal, but they don't seem to realize that trees perform much more ably at absorbing water than any man-made item. Perhaps more important is the psychological connection to nature—if we eliminate all of our flora and fauna, we believe that we will all eventually go insane. We hardly need to make this case to a bunch of birders, but the ways in which we are connected to nature or try to recreate in places where we've eliminated it

are astonishing. Where would someone prefer to walk their dog: in a park or on a treadmill? Where do rich people prefer to buy homes: places with trees and rivers and open spaces, or basements? People instinctively like nature, and for a politician in a democratic nation to assume otherwise is foolish.

People have reacted to this travesty with outrage, pain, and grief. Kathi Ellsworth, who could see the destruction in progress, saw a tree fall, and said it was like "watching the Orcs cut the forest in Lord of the Rings." Bev McKenzie said she could smell the freshly broken wood from her house. Many of us cried bitter tears; one advocate said he hadn't cried like that since his dad died. We can't stop

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The Wrentit Club, Year One

The Wrentit Club is a "big year" within L.A. County (i.e. identifying as many bird species as you can during the 2010 calendar year) and is intended to promote birding and www.eBird.org. eBird is a "citizen science" web site that uses reports from birders to bolster ornithological research. It's also a source of interesting and valuable information for birders.

Pasadena Audubon encouraged the use of eBird to keep lists, but eBird was not required. There were five levels you could achieve, See the inset for the 2010 results!

The Wrentit Club for 2010 was a great success! Not only did people get out to enjoy more birds and learn about the status and distribution of local species, but the thousands of checklists that PAS members entered into eBird will help researchers study bird populations. It's also a source of interesting and valuable information for birders.

Eighteen of the top twenty-five eBirders in Los Angeles

Trip Reports & Sightings

Finches 50 - 99

No one! (Come on, we know you're out there.)

Rails 100 - 149

Linda Moore - 112; Pam Dong - 147

Vireos 150 - 199

Deni Sinnott - 151; Mickey Long - 174; Mary-Jane Macy - 184

Owls 200 - 249

Mark Hunter - 200; Grace Wong - 202; Lois Fulmer - 211; Will Fulmer - 211; Elaine McPherson - 217; Lew Hastings - 239

Wrentit Club (250+)

Jon Fisher - 252; Julia Ray - 252; Laura Garrett - 254; Norm Vargas - 262; Brendan Crill - 270; Larry Allen - 283; Nancy Strang - 295; Lance Benner - 301; Jon Feenstra - 311; Kathi Ellsworth - 316; Ron Cyger - 334; Janet Scheel - 341; John Garrett - 345; Darren Dowell - 350; Mark Scheel - 358; Susan Gilliland - 359; Frank Gilliland - 360

County for 2010, including the top eight, were PAS members, and a handful of PAS members were among the top 100 eBirders for the entire country! That being said, the real goal was to help people improve their birding skills, build enthusiasm, and enjoy birding. By those standards, the Wrentit Club was a big success.

Want to give a stab at the Club for 2011? There is lots of help and suggestions out there. All the Pasadena Audubon field trips within LA County are marked with a "WC" in *The Wrentit* newsletter. There are birding guides for the Pasadena area and for Southern California to help find new habitats. Also, you can get advice from any member or send an email to WrentitClub@PasadenaAudubon.org. Either Mark Scheel, John Garrett, or Ron Cyger will respond. If you have a question about the Club, please email

us also.

Finally, congratulations to Frank Gilliland for identifying the highest total of species in the Wrentit Club for 2010!

Mark Scheel, John Garrett, and Ron Cyger

Wrentit Club Experiences

"It was fun! There wasn't any competitive negativity. We were so glad when someone got to see a new bird and we shared disappointment when a bird was missed. Great camaraderie!"

Kathi Ellsworth

Question:

Which species did Frank Gilliland identify that allowed him to gain a one-bird lead on his wife, Susan?

Answer:

Blackburnian Warbler

"I explored many places in L.A. County in 2010 that I had never visited before and, in so doing, became considerably more familiar with where and when many species occur. In a sense, the Wrentit Club turned into a personal form of exploration."

Lance Benner

"I figured I would have maybe 60 birds for the Wrentit Club. Turns out I got 112 without even trying - boy, was I surprised! So now I am really getting into it."

Linda Moore

The Wrentit Club was a brilliant idea! It was a great motivator to get out and bird more often. It revived the slightly jaded, fueled the already fully fired up, and inspired newer converts. Reports of rarities through the year were quickly followed by birders wanting to add to their lists. Some were one-day wonders like the Rusty Blackbird and others obliged by longer visits. The Yellow-billed Loon, Purple Gallinule, Common Grackle and the very surprising Foothill Boulevard Black-throated Green Warbler were seen and photographed by a good number of birders.

For me it was a wonderful impetus in renewing the thrill of being out and working on refreshing the excitement of earlier years of birding. I am proud that the word "excitement" remains in the PAS mission statement because long ago, when we first worked on it, I strongly suggested it be included. Yes, exciting it was to watch the totals mount and see our friends working so hard. I know many

who went to areas they had never birded before.

One of my adventures involved sitting on a log for hours in La Mirada Creek Park waiting for the Northern Waterthrush that, unfortunately, had made its last appearance on the previous afternoon, but my log-sitting partner was a very entertaining birder from the Sea and Sage chapter and the time quickly passed with bird chat. Another loss was being with Judy Bass as she missed her gull trifecta seeking the Black-tailed Gull. More birders than gulls that day. The easiest rarity was the Cabrillo Beach King Eider, seen less than ten minutes after leaving the car. "Dragging" Mickey Long out of his office to go see the Yellow-billed Loon was lots of fun.

Thanks to Ron Cyger, John Garrett and Mark Scheel (who, coincidentally or not, are among the top listers) for starting this project. The chase is on for the new year.

Elaine MacPherson

2010 Christmas Bird Count

All too quickly the 2010 Christmas Count has been held and gone into the record book; all the numbers are in and the regular and rare birds have been tallied. In spite of persistent rain throughout count day, we managed to pull off another very successful count. In fact it did stop drizzling, misting and showering for about 20 minutes, which served only to give false hope that a dry spell might ensue. But in the end it didn't seem to matter so much to the birds.

Much to my surprise, our final total for 2010 was a very robust 161 species which places this count in the top three for the entire count history going back to 1946. In fact the past four years make up the four highest counts for the circle (161, 169, 160 and 164) and we'd been nipping at the heels of 160 for a few years before that. In addition we can throw in two more species for count week, though they don't count toward the official total.

As I've said many times, for starters we're fortunate to have a very diverse count circle, ranging from less than 500 to over 5,000 feet, and encompassing many different habitats. Also invaluable are our count participants, both old and new, who are continually getting better at seeking out and finding both common and rare birds.

While the number of species recorded was very respectable, it should be noted that the individual counts of a few species were obviously affected by the rain, and any below average numbers should be considered with that in mind.

If the rain made the count more difficult for birders, we at least avoided even worse conditions along the very productive San Gabriel River and the Rio Hondo by the narrowest of margins, since it rained for four days following the count. This would have made birding these areas far less productive had the count been run any later.

There were a few head-scratching misses including Cinnamon Teal, White-throated Swift and both Yellow and Wilson's Warblers. We also missed a couple of likely species that can admittedly be tricky to find; American Dipper and Northern Cardinal. But we managed to make up for those misses and then some.

Let's take a look at the highlights...

Waterfowl of interest included a Snow Goose and Ross's Goose along the San Gabriel River and a single Canvasback at Legg Lake. Only three Blue-winged Teal were found along with just four Hooded Mergansers. We also recorded four Common Mergansers which are in fact rather rare on the count. As mentioned, we did miss Cinnamon Teal, but other waterfowl

numbers were pretty much within the normal range; after all, ducks do like water.

The intrepid duo who hiked the Mt. Wilson Toll Road managed to score six often missed Mountain Quail. Mt. Wilson itself however, which could have produced several higher elevation montane species, will have to wait at least until the next count. Currently with the Angeles Crest Highway closed just north of La Canada, it's a very long haul to get there.

White-tailed Kites are hit and miss on the count, but one was at Santa Fe Dam this year as was a single Northern Harrier. Santa Fe Dam is the most reliable spot in the circle for both of these raptors. Three Peregrine Falcons and two Merlins were also found on count day.

Last seen on the count in 2001, two Soras were a most welcome find, but Virginia Rail once again went unrecorded,

although one or two were present along the Rio Hondo just prior to count week.

No unexpected shorebirds were recorded but we did have a very good count of 40 Wilson's Snipe, almost all along the San Gabriel River.

Gulls included 54 of the ever increasing Western Gulls, though this year's count was well below the recent average. Also worthy of mention were two Herring Gulls along the SGR and a Glaucous-winged Gull and a Mew Gull at Legg



Chestnut-sided Warbler. Photo by Jon Fisher

Lake.

We did get a Eurasian Collared-Dove, but this introduced species has not yet increased in numbers on the count. Just a short distance south of the circle boundary, this species is common in the Pico Rivera area. Not too surprisingly, Spotted Dove was missed again. This once common species is now very difficult to find in the San Gabriel Valley. It's hard to believe we were regularly recording eighty or more on counts in the 1980s. Cooper's Hawks are thought by many to be responsible for the decline as they have increased remarkably since DDT was banned in the early 1970s. These hawks are also now frequent breeders in suburban areas where Spotted Doves used to be widespread. This does make one wonder how Eurasian Collared-Doves are expanding so successfully- perhaps they are a bit quicker on the wing or more wary.

Eight species of parrots and parakeets totaling over 2500 individuals were found during count day and in the evening at the Temple City parrot roost. Obviously these birds love the San Gabriel Valley; both the mild climate and many exotic plantings that provide food for them.

With significant effort, early rising owlers managed two

...continued on page 7

Field Trips

Santa Anita Canyon

Saturday, February 12, 2011

3:00 pm — 7:30 pm



Come join us for a late afternoon and early evening hike in Big Santa Anita Canyon. We're going to look for diurnal species before sunset and then owls after it gets dark. Conditions permitting, we intend to hike above Sturtevant Falls for up to six miles round-trip. Meet at at Chantry Flat. Parking may be limited, so please carpool. Bring lights, warm clothing, food, and an Adventure Pass. We'll plan to finish by about 7:30. Rain cancels.

Lance Benner

Debs Park (two events)

Saturday, February 19, 2011

7:30 am — 10:30 am



11:00 am — noon

These two events celebrate the Great Backyard Bird Count, a national effort. Meet at 7:30 at the Audubon Center at Debs Park to explore our backyard, AKA Debs Park! There will be some hill climbing on this walk.

Or meet at 11:00 for the Little Sit. For this hour we will be sitting around the center to see what happens to fly (or hop, or walk) by. All we require is that it have feathers!

Directions: From Pasadena, take

the Pasadena Freeway (110) south, exit on Ave. 52, then take a left onto Griffin. Watch for the Audubon Center driveway on your left in about a 1/4 mile and drive up to the parking lot.

Jeff Chapman and Ron Cyger

Northwest Los Angeles

County

Sunday, March 6, 2011

7:30 am — 3:00 pm



On this trip we'll be exploring the frozen tundra of Southern California: some of the most interesting yet least visited areas 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 get visited by Bald Eagles and interesting waterbirds. Quail Lake might have the highest probability of rarities found per birder visit of any place in the County. The west Antelope Valley farm fields can be the haunts of Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, and Ferruginous Hawk. They can also sometimes have a flock of Mountain Plover, Mountain Bluebirds, or a longspur or two.

Meet in the parking lot at the west end of Quail Lake (about 2 miles east of I-5 on the north side of Hwy 138) at 7:30 am. 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

San Gabriel River



Saturday, February 26

7:30 am — noon

The San Gabriel River Coastal Basin Spreading Grounds in Pico Rivera support a wealth of birdlife in winter. We'll bird the basins and the nearby portion of the San Gabriel River. We can expect a variety of waterbirds including herons, egrets, waterfowl and gulls. Raptors often include Osprey, Merlins and Peregrine Falcon among more common species. A few shorebirds should also be present, along with a variety of landbirds such as introduced Eurasian Collared-Doves, American Pipits, various sparrows and others.

Take the Whittier exit from the 605 Freeway and go west, then left on Passons. Make another left on Mines Ave. and go to the end and park where possible. We'll meet here.

Jon Fisher

Elysian Park

Saturday, April 16, 2011

7:30 am — noon



Where can you hear the call of an oriole, the crack of a baseball bat, and gunshots from a police academy firing range, all at the same time? In Elysian Park, of course! We will search out residents, migrants, and vagrants (the feathered kind, that is.) Last year we had four species of woodpeckers, five of

...Field Trips continued on page 8

Eaton Canyon Monthly Walk



Sunday, February 20, 2011

Sunday, March 20, 2011

Sunday, April 17, 2011

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

Hahamongna Monthly Walk



Saturday, February 5, 2011

Saturday, March 5, 2011

Saturday, April 2, 2011

7:30 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 (Lance Benner on 4/2)

Huntington Library Monthly Walk



Sunday, February 27, 2011

Sunday, March 27, 2011

Sunday, April 24, 2011

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. Members may bring one non-member guest, space permitting. 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

Calendar

Submit material for the next Wrentit by March 5th



= Wrentit Club!

Feburary 2011

2	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	
5	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	Hahmongna	Ron Cyger
12	Sat	3:00 pm	Field Trip	Santa Anita Canyon	Lance Benner
15	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Whittier Narrows	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
16	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Sensitive Bird Species
18-21	Fri-Mon	All day	Great Backyard Bird Count!	Everywhere	See page 8
19	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	Debs Park	Jeff Chapman, Ron Cyger
20	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
26	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	San Gabriel River	Jon Fisher
27	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson

(PAS members only)

March 2011

2	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	
5	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	Hahmongna	Ron Cyger
6	Sun	7:30 am	Field Trip	NW L.A. County	Jon Feenstra
12	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	Santa Barbara County	Mark & Janet Scheel
15	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	SanDimas Park	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
16	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Pelagic Birds
20	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
27	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson

(PAS members only)

April 2011

2	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	Hahmongna	Lance Benner
16	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	Elysian Park	Sue Horton, Ron Cyger
17	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
19	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Rancho Santa Ana	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
20	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	So. Cal. Owls
22-24	Fri-Sun	All day	Birdathon!	All over the place!	See page 8
24	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson

(PAS members only)

* Trip Leader Information

Mark Scheel (chair)	(626) 355-8707	scheel@tapir.caltech.edu
Larry Allen	(323) 288-2701	larryallen@earlymusicla.org
Lance Benner	(626) 791-1187	lbenner@charter.net
Ron Cyger	(626) 449-3625 (before 9:00 pm)	ron@cyger.org (preferred)
Kathi Ellsworth	(626) 564-0652	pandionsky@yahoo.com
Jon Feenstra	(626) 319-4723	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	
Mark Hunter	(818) 957-5044	fishingyak@yahoo.com
Mickey Long	(626) 398-5420	mlongbird@charter.net
Elaine MacPherson	(626) 355-9412	birdergrrl@aol.com
Hill Penfold	(818) 352-4954	hpenfold@gmail.com
Ed Stonick	(626) 796-0595	edstonick@earthlink.net
Madeline West	(626) 574-0429	west266@adelphia.net

Christmas Bird Count, continued from page 4

Western Screech-Owls and three Great Horned Owls. The rain quite effectively hampered any owl-finding efforts.

The count produced two Red-breasted Sapsuckers. This is the most regular sapsucker occurring in our area though all four species have been recorded on the count.

Empidonax flycatchers were represented by a rare and irregular wintering Pacific-slope Flycatcher in Pasadena and a scarce but regular Gray Flycatcher in San Marino. A great find and presumably retuning for a second winter — and second count — was a Tropical Kingbird at Legg Lake. This year marks the third count record for this species.

Just one Cassin's Vireo and one Plumbeous Vireo were found, but then again one is all it takes.

Four species of swallows, including eleven Barn Swallows, four Northern Rough-winged Swallows, twenty Tree Swallows and three Violet-green Swallows was remarkable and a first for the count. All of these species have been recorded before in different combinations, but never all on the same count.

Rather uncommon and irregular on the count were two Red-breasted Nuthatches. Two Marsh Wrens and one Rock Wren (regular at Santa Fe Dam) were also found.

Other single birds included a Golden-crowned Kinglet among the many Ruby-crowns and a California Gnatcatcher at the edge of the Montebello Hills where a small population persists.

Warblers were an interesting story. Wilson's and Yellow Warblers are now regular on the count but both were missed this year. In their place however we had a Northern Parula, a Chestnut-sided Warbler, all at Legg Lake. A Black-and-white Warbler was found on the San Gabriel River. San Jose Creek, a tributary of the river, was also productive with second Chestnut-sided Warbler and a first count record Northern Waterthrush.

A very rare Hepatic Tanager and less rare but still unusual Summer Tanager had been staked out ahead of time in Pasadena and both were found on count day.

Three Swamp Sparrows on the count was remarkable, with two birds and Santa Fe Dam and one at the Huntington Gardens, while a single Vesper Sparrow, a species that has become regular in recent years, was found near the Rio Hondo soccer fields.

Twenty-six Tricolored Blackbirds were at their usual spot at Legg Lake (the only reliable spot for them in the circle), but there was no sign of the hoped for Rusty Blackbird that had been found earlier in the month. Great-tailed Grackles, still relatively recent colonists to California, numbered 128 this year.

Orioles used to be regular at the Huntington Gardens, but have been hard to come by lately. But fortunately, elsewhere in Pasadena two Bullock's Orioles were recorded.

There you have it. Almost always there are a few surprises, some good staked out birds and a lot of regular species. How many were represented by just one bird, any of which could easily have been missed? This year it was 23, or about 15% of the total.

Several areas of the count are extremely productive for uncommon and rare birds. Especially noteworthy in this regard again this year were the San Gabriel River and Legg Lake area. Some of the well-established residential areas of Pasadena held great birds this year. Many of these areas are rife with exotic plantings and well-watered, making them very attractive to

wintering and out of range birds.

What species was the most common? Was it the introduced and pesky European Starling? The abundant winter visiting Yellow-rumped Warbler or White-crowned Sparrow? Or the ubiquitous Rock Pigeon? None of the above actually — it was the American Coot with 2,149 individuals. But certainly that outcome would be different if we were actually able to count every single bird in the circle or with a dry count day.

We've added another year of data to our count history, from abundant House Finches to common Anna's Hummingbirds to scarce Peregrine Falcons to vagrants including Tropical Kingbird, Hepatic Tanager and Northern Waterthrush. All of that data is available for anyone to view. Check it out at www.birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count. You can view any of our past results and those of any other count.

The count is great fun each year, but sadly it's over all too quickly. It's been great to see the count gain popularity over the years and watch the species count continue to climb. We must be doing something right. By far the largest share of the credit belongs to the forty plus counters who scour the circle each year, find so many good birds and really make the Pasadena count stand out. Thanks to all the participants who tolerated the rain and delivered a great count.

Jon Fisher

A Little Armchair Travel



Jon Feenstra went to the Mideast and to East Africa, and all I got was this dumb t-shirt. More photos:

s212.photobucket.com/albums/cc311/feenstra0/Tanzania%202010



Great Backyard Bird Count!

February 18-21, 2011

This is year 14 for the huge event that gets both avid birders and ordinary folks involved in conservation and recreation. By keeping it to a short time period Cornell University and the Audubon Society have been successful in getting very large numbers of participants. For many people the GBBC is their first organized birding activity.

The GBBC has been a gold mine of information for scientists who are trying to determine the impact of climate change on native bird populations. Recent counts show dramatic northward shifts for some winter residents. It would be impossible to get such comprehensive data across the entire continent without the participation of so many volunteers.

You can get an excellent start on involving yourself, or your friends and neighbors, by visiting the GBBC website at www.birdcount.org. The web site has photos from last year's count, a game, and other materials, including a downloadable PowerPoint presentation, a voice narrated tutorial, and regional bird lists. There are many suggestions for including birding into other activities such as a neighborhood potluck or winter sports festival. If you're a teacher (or know one), there are special resources for educators on the web site. The site also features a photo contest (one of last year's winners is shown here),



In Southern California, Ventura Audubon is hosting an event at the Carpinteria Salt Marsh, and Pasadena Audubon is hosting an event at Debs Park (see the announcement on page 5.)

Santa Barbara County

Saturday, March 12, 2011

7:30 am — all day

Beautiful Santa Barbara County offers beaches, mountains, and coastal lowlands, and has a list of over 470 species of birds. We will look for residents and wintering birds in coastal and inland locations such as Nojoqui Falls Park, Refugio Canyon, Guadalupe Beach Park, and Santa Barbara Harbor. Yellow-billed Magpie and Chestnut-backed Chickadee are possible, and we will be on the lookout for local rarities. Bring water and a lunch, and FRS radios if you have them.

Meet at Stowe House in Lake Los Carneros County Park; From US 101 in Goleta, take the Los Carneros Road exit and drive north 0.4 miles to the park entrance on the right next to the fire station. Parking is free in the lot behind the fire station.

Mark and Janet Scheel

Birding 201

Birding 201 is a new class offered for those who have completed Birding 101 or are already advanced beginners looking for more instruction on identification and it's many related topics. We will cover sight and sound identification, habitat, migration, among other aspects related to birding.

Class sessions are on March 23 (Wednesday), March 29 (Tuesday), and April 6 (Wednesday) at 7:00 pm. The field trips will be on Saturday mornings: March 26 and April 2, 2011. There will be pre-assignments and required reading/listening.

Cost is \$60 for the series, or \$40 for those who are members of PAS. You must register via email, prior to the first class, at Birding201@PasadenaAudubon.org. Registrations will receive a response with class and field trip locations. Bring payment to the first class with checks payable to "Pasadena Audubon Society."

Class leaders are Ron Cyger and Mark Scheel. If you have any questions, email us at Birding201@PasadenaAudubon.org.

This class is sponsored by Pasadena Audubon Society and Eaton Canyon Nature Center.

Elysian Park, continued

warblers, and a great view of a nesting Common Raven. There are always surprises; possibly a Redstart (Painted or American) will show up! We will bird in Solano Canyon and other locations as time permits.

Directions: Take the Pasadena (110) Freeway south, exit on Academy Way and go straight down the offramp. Take a right at the first stop light (Park Dr/Solano Canyon). Go about 1/4 mile to the parking area on your left.

Sue Horton & Ron Cyger

Birdathon! Teams Are Forming

April 22-24, 2011

It's time again to prepare for the fundraiser and fund-raiser we call Birdathon! This event is always timed for the maximum of avian diversity: some wintering birds are still present, some summer residents have arrived, and migrants are everywhere.

The idea is to form teams that will try to find as many bird species as possible in some given amount of time of their choosing. Each team asks people ahead of time to sponsor them by pledging some amount of money (e.g. 20 cents per species), and then goes birding on April 22, 23, or 24. Feel free to explore variations on the theme, such as birding only by foot, or only in your backyard.

This year we will add two new twists to Birdathon: The first is that the teams will be announced in the April/May *Wrentit* so that donors can choose teams to sponsor. The second is that in addition to self-organized teams, there will be a few teams organized by experienced leaders that are open to anyone who is interested; these teams will concentrate on certain areas and durations (for example, Hansen Dam for 4 hours). Details of these teams and how to sign up will be included in the April/May *Wrentit*.

If you want to form a team, please email your team members, team name and expected Birdathon duration (e.g. 2 hours, 24 hours, etc), and other pertinent information (e.g. if you are planning to use only public transportation, you will bird only in Pasadena city limits or your backyard, etc.) to birdathon@pasadenaaudubon.org by March 14th so it can be included in *The Wrentit*.

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Boo!!

Photo: Ron Cyger

All who attended the Pasadena Audubon Halloween Walk agreed that the Headless Heron was the highlight of the trip.