



Drawing by
Guy Coheleach

THE WRENTIT

Founded 1904

Pasadena Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

Volume 56 – No. 4

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

September-October 2008

September Program

October Program

November Program

Bird Identification

Wednesday, September 17, 2008

Mickey Long and Jon Fisher

Oh no! Another bird ID program? Well, yes, but this time with a twist. We'll look at a wide range of birds, so there will be something for everyone; from the slightly tricky to the very tricky and from common to rare. As long as the bird has been recorded in LA County, it's fair game.

In this presentation, we'll take some time to look at photos of several species and let the audience test their skills identifying them. Then we'll go back and work through the process of identifying each bird before moving on.

Everyone is encouraged to actively participate in identifying the photos and asking questions. As usual Jon and Mickey will share their insights, knowledge and ID tips. Bring your bird guides, binocs (they work well with the images) and your "birdbrains" ... we'll see you there!

General Meetings held at:

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

Venezuelan Bounty

Wednesday, October 15, 2008

Thomas Ryan

Venezuela supports nearly 1400 species of birds. The reason for this diversity is both its tropical location and highly varied geographical features. Each habitat has its own group of unique and beautiful species.

Thomas Ryan runs Ryan Ecological Consulting in Pasadena. He has been studying birds in Venezuela since his first trip as part of an exchange program in 1991. Most of his work has been in the cloud forest, but he has traveled extensively throughout the rest of the country and will show a sample of what can be found in this beautiful country.



Tejon Ranch Agreement

Wednesday, November 19, 2008

Graham Chisholm

The Tejon Ranch Conservation Agreement announced in May 2008 secures 375 square miles of California's largest contiguous land holding. The ranch is at the crossroads of four distinct ecological regions, and home to innumerable rare species including California Condor, San Joaquin Kit Fox, Spotted Owl, and many more.

Audubon California's Graham Chisholm will discuss the details of the agreement, as well as the many issues at play during negotiations with the Tejon Ranch Company.

Notice of Proposed Amendments to Bylaws

The Board of Directors recommends that the "History/Archive" and "Magpie Bird Study Group" Chair titles be changed to members "At-Large"; the immediate past president to become Member-at-Large; and the Board recommends that its members be required to give prior notification if they will miss a called meeting. These changes will be presented to the membership at our September general meeting for a vote of approval.

President's Perch

On Saturday, July 12 the PAS Board met at Eaton Canyon to review our Audubon mission and come up with better ways to meet our goals. Our goals are to provide: birding, education and conservation of habitat, in our San Gabriel Valley area. Ideas we had were:

- Expand birding trips to include more out-of-town locations.
- Hold birding classes for beginning birders as well as advanced.
- Offer scholarships, awards & grants to support conservation projects.

- Stay informed on proposed land development plans in the Pasadena area. PAS is doing some of these things now, but we need to increase our focus.

We will continue to bring you the best possible speakers/programs to our monthly meetings at Eaton Canyon and provide the local bird trips. I see these as the most important services we can bring to all of our members.

Will

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Conservation

Avian Mortality

Last month, while birding the San Gabriel River, Andrew Lee noticed that the water level had dropped to almost nothing and that the fledgling ducks were all dead as a result. A subsequent report in the LA Times made it clear that the powers that be see the river as “flood control” and not as a river. What they fail to see is that it was a river long before the MWD and the LA County Public Works existed. To allow such carnage is immoral and must be stopped.

So, what can we do? What should we do when we see the water level in the channelized river suddenly drop to nothing or when we see tree trimmers about to trim a tree during nesting season?

Garry George of LA Audubon and Audubon California asks us all to carry a digital camera while birding in LA County. Document events like this so they can be investigated and even prevented from reoccurring. We need to hold individuals, private corporations and government agencies accountable to the federal and state laws that protect migratory birds.

As Garry says, “Documentation is needed for an investigation and while eyewitness reports are helpful, a picture with a written description is worth a thousand words.”

Where should you report problems? Go to WWW.LAAUDUBON.ORG, and click on Wildlife Rescue Info on the Main Menu. Find the state and/or federal agencies listed there and send them your report with documentation. Or, you can send your report to Los Angeles Audubon’s Urban Wildlife Task Force by email:

URBANWILDLIFE@LAAUDUBON.ORG or you can call Audubon House at (323/876-0202). LA Audubon will follow up with reporting to state or federal wildlife agencies if you do not know how, and advocate for prevention of a repeat occurrence.

Laura Garrett - PURPLECOW@JPS.NET

Sepulveda Wildlife Area Spared

From the Audubon California chapter blog at

[HTTP://AUDCALCHAPTERNET.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://AUDCALCHAPTERNET.BLOGSPOT.COM) comes news that planned improvements to the intersection of the 101 and 405 freeways will not encroach on the rich bird habitat at Sepulveda Dam. The wider, faster connector lanes from the southbound 405 to the 101 will require easements from the Army Corps of Engineers, but not in sensitive habitat areas. Some of the other alternatives to the selected plan would have been more harmful.

Pasadena’s Open Space Process

The City of Pasadena has begun the process of developing an Open Space and Conservation Element of its Master Plan. To facilitate this process, the City Council has created an Open Space and Conservation Element Committee and I am pleased to inform you that I, your Pasadena Audubon Society Conservation Chair, am on this committee. This committee has two goals: To develop an Open Space and Conservation Element for the City of Pasadena’s Master Plan, and to educate the public about open space and conservation. The Committee plans to be done with the element by next August.

To that end, we could use your help! If you know of any land in Pasadena that could potentially be open space, or if you have any good information about how to create open space in a built-out urban area, please contact me. Also, if you have any good ideas about how the City of Pasadena could become greener, or how it could better educate the public about conservation, please contact me. If you have websites that you believe should be linked to the City’s Green webpage, please let me know. To learn more about Pasadena’s efforts to become Green, please go to WWW.CI.PASADENA.CA.US/ and click on “Green City.”

One way that the Pasadena Audubon Society will be supporting this work in the coming year is with its ongoing Arroyo Bird Census and additional bird counts within Pasadena.

All are welcome to attend the Open Space Committee meetings, which are held the second Monday of each month at City Hall. For more information, go to WWW.CITYOFPASADENA.NET/GENERALPLAN and click on “Open Space and Conservation.”

I look forward to hearing from you.

Laura Garrett

PURPLECOW@JPS.NET OR (626) 564-1890

Birdathon Reports

Raven Loonatics

I rarely set an alarm or need to: I’m a light sleeper, and I am blessed (or cursed) with a strong internal biological clock that somehow knows when I’m intending to wake up. On Sunday, May 4, I arose at 12:48 am; the alarm was set for 12:50 am: just enough time to meet the other members of the Raven Loonatics at our designated spot at 1:30 am. The Raven Loonatics are Ron Cyger, Jon Feenstra, Janet Scheel, and Mark Scheel. Our quest: to find and identify, by sight or sound, as many species of birds as possible in Los Angeles County in a single day.

We began by driving high in the San Gabriel Mountains to find owls and nightjars. Our first bird of the day was Western Wood-Pewee (why one would be calling at 2:30 am is a mystery), followed shortly by Great Horned Owl. This was the peaceful (and cold) part of the day: finding owls involves a lot of standing motionless and listening. Occasionally we ourselves will hoot, toot, or screech to encourage owls to answer (at least this time the cops didn’t pull over to ask what we were doing.)

But from 5:30 am onward the day was far from peaceful. We had each of the dozens of stops on our route scheduled down to the minute so we could visit a variety of habitats (mountains, oceans, deserts, foothills, marshes, and even a sewage treatment plant) to maximize the number of birds. At each stop we look only for birds that we know should be there, and don’t waste time looking around for anything we should find elsewhere.

We had until 6:15 am to find all the high-elevation birds that we had no chance for anywhere else, like Pygmy Nuthatch and Green-tailed Towhee. (“We have 3 minutes here. If there’s no Brown Creeper we need to move.”) Then rush down to the foothills, where we had our first surprise: a singing Black-chinned Sparrow at 6:45 am at our stop for California Thrasher. By 7:15 am we were skimming the region where foothills blend into the desert (“We’re 10 minutes late, gotta skip the Valyermo Post Office”), and by 8:00 am we were out in the desert, to the only known Inca Doves and Swainson’s Hawks in the county. At 9:15 am, we passed our trusty spot for Burrowing Owl – no owl! –but it had moved about half a mile down the same road. We saw another one 2 miles later (“Don’t slow down, we already got one!”) Our most productive stop is always Piute Ponds, a marsh on Edwards Air Force Base (which we had special permission from the Colonel to enter); this stop doubles our total number of species in a half hour, but we took 40 minutes (“We’re 10 minutes behind again. At Apollo Park we gotta run, not walk”.) We kinda half-ran, half-walked through Apollo Park, a green spot in the middle of the desert that migrating birds see from the air and decide to drop in (“Ignore anything yellow: we got it already.”)

By noon we were heading out of the desert, picking up a few new species while on the freeway (“Look for White-throated Swifts flying near that overpass, they nest in the cracks...got one!”) The rest of the day was more difficult because now

(see *Birdathon Reports* page 3)

More Notes from the Backyard

Bob Neuwirth

When you have a backyard (and a front yard) with hummingbird feeders and seed feeders, and you have some time to just sit and watch the comings and goings of the birds, you begin to notice stuff that, in the absence of the hormonal intensity of the Christmas (oops, Holiday) Count, or the Birdathon, is exhilarating in its own way. You just want everyone to share your enthusiasm, even if it's second-hand. Let me then start these notes with the appearance, in the last week in October, of a Pine Siskin at the nyger feeder. That was mildly adrenaline-producing, but nothing like the spike of satisfaction stirred up a few days later when siskins appeared by the half-dozen and dozen in the yard. This was even more satisfying given that the last time there was a siskin invasion of the yard was at least five years ago. No individuals had appeared in the interim. A notable identifying mark is the strongly notched tail. It's a small bird, goldfinch size, otherwise not unlike the streaked, plain brown female House Finch, but when you see the tail and then the narrower, more pointed bill; you know you're seeing the siskin. The yellow wash on the wings may or may not be conspicuous, such do plumages and the light vary. The larger House Finch is unlikely to feed upside down on the feeder; the siskins and Lesser Goldfinches do so more often. For me, Peterson's Western Guide is the most useful for identification purposes compared to Sibley or the Geographic. Heresy?!

However, if thoughts of Pine Siskin invasions do not stir you, how would you like to see a Praying Mantis catch and eat an Anna's Hummingbird at a hummer feeder? This macabre scene was enacted in our front yard the day after Halloween



(one day too late?). Two days earlier a four-inch nice green mantis settled on the feeder. During that time, as mantids are wont to do, it hardly moved from its original position. What was it doing there? Well, insects – bees, flies, yellowjackets – are attracted to sugar water, so maybe the mantis had found its happy hunting ground. Then, the day after Halloween, it began very slowly to rearrange itself so that finally it was hanging head down under the feeder with its formidable modified front legs folded and ready.

Apparently unaware or unperturbed

overlooking the ocean, aiming our scopes seaward looking for anything that might be flying or floating by. We had perfect viewing conditions (overcast, slight onshore breeze, no waves). The last (and best) birds of the day were two Xantus's Murrelets that landed in the water very far out near some Pacific Loons. Xantus's Murrelet is one of the rarest seabirds in the world (global population estimated about 10,000), and breeds on the Channel Islands. I had never seen one before from land, only from a boat.

In the end we had found 180 species in about 18 hours. Not as good as last year (187) but still respectable. We did very well on the coast, but had trouble especially with owls and hawks (particu-

larly the "easy" ones). Our best finds were Xantus's Murrelet, Horned Grebe, Black-chinned Sparrow, Solitary Sandpiper, and Bank Swallow. Our most embarrassing misses (in order of decreasing shame) were Western Screech-owl, Common Poorwill, Phainopepla, Red-shouldered Hawk, American Kestrel, Brown Creeper, and Northern Harrier. There were also 5 species that we could not count because they were seen by only one member of the team.

by the mantis' presence, hummingbirds continued to come and go. But as I watched the predator close up, which did not seem to disturb it, I saw that it was no bigger and weighed no more than a hummer, or less, perhaps. You could see it turn its head, as only mantids can do, unlike other insects. It was clearly aware of the proceedings. I looked down for an instant and when I looked back up I saw that the hummer had been caught. It fluttered its wings briefly but could not get free. And then it was too late. The mantis had it, the hummer was dead and the mantis had started its meal.

The next morning the mantis was still on the feeder but the hummer was not. What was left of it had been dropped to the ground, under the buckwheat bush where a Ruby-crowned Kinglet sometimes foraged. This Praying Mantis, the carcass of its victim and photographs of the event have since been consigned to Eaton Canyon Nature Center. I believe the mantis, very healthy indeed, and a little fatter, has been placed in a cage with others of its ilk. Was this the "humane" thing to do or should it have been released into the wild? I don't know what disposition may have been made of the remains of its victim.

As for the practice (e.g., ethics) of providing feeding stations for native species – birds, raccoons, etc. – we might question its appropriateness. Does it create a dependency which in the long run will negatively affect their survival? Does it affect hummingbirds, which in a natural setting must flit from flower to flower in order to get minute bits of nectar from each, rather than being able to settle down on a perch located conveniently in front of a spigot and guzzle at leisure and at length? Does it make life too easy for its own good for a goldfinch to be able to gorge at a seed feeder rather than to forage, i.e., work, for its food by searching in the wild for edible seeds?

All in all it was a very fun but exhausting day. We'll have to wait until next year to get 200.

Mark Scheel

(see *Birdathon Reports* page 6)

Birdathon (continued)

"normal people" were awake and outside, so we had to deal with traffic. And with crowds at Hansen Dam Park (perhaps due to Cinco de Mayo) that caused us to pass by a staked-out Cassin's Kingbird (luckily we had another one later in the day). After stops in the foothills of the Santa Monica Mountains, we made it to the coast at about 3:00 pm. We visited several spots on the ocean, looking for Terns, Gulls, Loons, and saltwater-loving shorebirds. By 7:00 pm we had made it down to a park on Palos Verdes Peninsula where we found California Gnatcatcher and Rufous-crowned Sparrow.

At sunset we finished on a cliff

Field Trips

Hahamongna Monthly Walk

Saturday, September 6, 2008

Saturday, October 4, 2008

Saturday, November 1, 2008

8:00 am – noon

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

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

Ron Cyger

Mountain Birding Monthly Walk

Sunday, September 14, 2008

Sunday, October 12, 2008

Sunday, November 9, 2008

8:00 am – 10:00 am

This monthly walk ordinarily begins in the parking lot of Chilao Visitor Center, but occasionally the group will carpool to other nearby areas. Smell the pines and see higher-altitude species not common in Pasadena.

Dangerous driving conditions (chains required, storms, etc.) will cancel the outing. Chilao Visitor Center is located on State Highway 2 (Angeles Crest Highway), 27 miles north of La Cañada. For local conditions and information, call the Center at (626) 796-5541.

Hill Penfold

Eaton Canyon Monthly Walk

Sunday, September 21, 2008

Sunday, October 19, 2008

Sunday, November 16, 2008

8:00 am – 11:00 am

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

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

Hill Penfold

Huntington Library

Birdwalks (PAS Members only)

Sunday, September 28, 2008

Sunday, October 26, 2008

Sunday, November 23, 2008

8:00 am – 11:00 am

A special benefit for Pasadena Audubon Society members is the chance to bird the

Huntington Library grounds. Attendance is by reservation only and limited to 15 participants. We thank our member and Huntington curator, Dan Lewis, for making these trips possible.

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

Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

Point Vicente Sea Watch

Saturday, September 13, 2008

7:30 am – 10:00 am

In September there are large and sometimes impressive numbers of seabirds moving along the coast of Southern California. When conditions are good these birds can be moving close to shore at places like Point Vicente. Bring a chair, your favorite cup of coffee, and join me for a casual morning of birding until mid-morning. We should be able to observe shearwaters, gulls, terns and possibly a few jaegers and alcids. Frequently, there are also whales and dolphins feeding just offshore.

From San Pedro take Palos Verdes Drive South to the entrance of the Point Vicente Interpretive Center, then make a U-turn back for 0.3 miles to the parking lot.

Meet at the Public Fishing Access Parking Lot at Long Point. A spotting scope is a necessity.

Mike San Miguel

Galileo Hills

Sunday, October 5, 2008

Dawn – ?

It's doubtful that any single mainland location in California, possibly the entire west coast, could compete with the Galileo Hills resort property in sheer numbers of vagrant bird species. Every fall (and, to a lesser extent, the spring) birds traversing the arid surroundings get drawn into the only square of greenery for miles. This concentration of passerines often holds something rather unusual, occasionally something quite unusual, and every so often something extremely unusual, and we birders will be there to try and find it. We'll start at dawn and see how long it takes us.

Galileo Hills is about two hours from Pasadena. Carpooling is mandatory. RSVP required. E-mail the trip leader if you wish to attend.

Jon Feenstra

Parrots and Parakeets

Saturday, October 25, 2008

3:00 pm until dusk

The San Gabriel Valley is the center of diversity for naturalized parrots and parakeets in Southern California. We will start in South Pasadena searching for flocks of Mitred Parakeets, then move east to Temple City in search of pre-roost

flocks of Amazona parrots and additional parakeet species.

From the Pasadena (110) Freeway, exit Orange Grove Ave, and proceed south across Mission St. (where Orange Grove jogs to the right) to El Centro St. Turn west (right) on El Centro and park in the first block. Thomas Guide 565 G2

Larry Allen

Newport Back Bay by Kayak

Sunday, November 9, 2008

Noon – 3:00 pm

Last year's kayak adventure was a success – no one fell out, and we got close looks at shorebirds and waterfowl and even some passerines like Marsh Wren. It was scheduled around an unusually high tide. This year's trip, in contrast, is scheduled around a moderate low tide, so we'll see vast exposed mud flats and lots of feeding shorebirds, as well as winter-resident waterfowl. It's a blissful and interesting outing. We have a few kayaks available to borrow, and you can also rent kayaks right there at our launch point: Newport Aquatic Center, WWW.NEWPORTAQUATICCENTER.COM OR (949) 646-7725. RSVP to the trip leader for more details and helpful advice.

Mark Hunter

North Slope of the San Gabriel's

Saturday, November 10, 2007

7:30 am – 2:00 pm

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



Calendar

Submit material for the next Wrenit by October 1st

September 2008

Date	Day	Time	Event	Location	Leader*
3	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Will Fulmer
6	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Watershed Park	Ron Cyger
13	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	Point Vicente Sea Watch	Mike San Miguel
14	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Mountain Birding Monthly Walk	Hill Penfold
16	Tues	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Legg Lake	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
17	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: Jon Fischer & Mickey Long
21	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
28	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

(PAS Members Only)

October 2008

1	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Will Fulmer
4	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Watershed Park	Ron Cyger
5	Sun	Dawn	Field Trip	Galileo Hill	Jon Feenstra
12	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Mountain Birding Monthly Walk	Hill Penfold
15	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: Venezuela
19	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
21	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
25	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Parrots & Parakeets	Larry Allen
26	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

(PAS Members Only)

November 2008

1	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Watershed Park	Ron Cyger
5	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Will Fulmer
8	Sat	?:??	CaCCof Audubon	Debs Park	PAS hosts Council
9	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Mountain Birding Monthly Walk	Hill Penfold
9	Sun	Noon	Field Trip	Kayak on Newport Back Bay	Mark Hunter
15	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	North Slope of San Gabriels	Mark & Janet Scheel
16	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
18	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Whittier Narrows Nature Center	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
19	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: Fort Tejon Agreement
23	Sun	7:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens	Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

(PAS Members Only)

*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	
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
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

Birdathon *(continued)*

The Raven Guide to Birdathoning

The alarm clock didn't have a chance to go off at 12:25 am; I was already awake. The excitement of another Birdathon was already mounting! After brewing coffee (lots of it), I left the house at 1:10 am to meet the rest of the Raven Loonatics team.

As you can tell from Mark Scheel's write-up, Birdathoning (or a Big Day) is all about location, or actually many locations. We have target locations with target species at that location. The trick is to hit as many of these locations as possible in the time allotted. So, there's no loitering to watch behavior or admire a bird's cuteness.

While a Birdathon route is one of the most prized and protected secrets of a Birdathon team, I'll let you in on a secret; we drove a lot! We were out for 16.25 hours, spent a little over 9 hours birding, and racked up 425 miles of driving.

So why did we punish ourselves like this? The Pasadena Audubon Society Birdathon had a dual purpose for us. Not only we love to bird, but we also raised money for some good causes. This year PAS donated the Birdathon proceeds to Eaton Canyon Nature Center, the Audubon Center at Deb Park, and the Owens Valley Committee.

And, there's always next year! Hope we run into you in the field.

Ron Cyger

Garretts

Before I get started, let me thank all our donors for supporting us. You helped us raise well over \$2,000 for the Pasadena Audubon Society this year!

Birdathon began at midnight, with calling Northern Saw-whet and Great Horned Owls near our relatives' Wrightwood cabin. We tried owling elsewhere, but it was too windy.

At about 5:30 am we found plenty of woodpeckers, including Hairy. Our next stop was Grassy Hollow where we found a plethora of species we wouldn't find later, including Mountain Quail, Red-breasted Sapsucker, all three nuthatches (including Red-breasted), Hermit Warbler, Green-tailed Towhee, and several species of finches including the irregular Red Crossbill. We briefly popped by several other mountain hotspots, but didn't find anything worth mentioning.

Our next stop was Bob's Gap, where we found Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, Cactus and Rock Wrens, Scott's Orioles, and a few others. At tiny Pearblossom Park we found Verdin, Hermit Thrush and, best of all, Lawrence's Goldfinch. After stopping at a few other localities, we got to the Piute Ponds at Edwards Air

Force Base. Mike San Miguel, a local bird expert who was planting willow trees, told us of a vagrant Semipalmated Sandpiper in a flock of 400 Western Sandpipers (birds that are sometimes notoriously difficult to separate). We somehow picked out the bird in perhaps record time, and minutes later saw a fairly rare Solitary Sandpiper (easily recognized by its 'peet-WEET!' call in flight). After Piute Ponds came the delightful Lancaster Sewage Ponds, which was surprisingly birdy. Both species of phalaropes were there, as well as Bonaparte's Gull. Our last stop in the Antelope Valley was Lake Palmdale, with nesting Tricolored and Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

Although Placerita Canyon hasn't really been the same ever since a fire there, we still found Costa's Hummingbirds, Phainopeplas, and a Lazuli Bunting, to name a few.

We stopped by Hansen Dam to pick up a few species we'd never found on a Birdathon before: Bell's Vireo, Gray Flycatcher, and Blue Grosbeak. A few other interesting migrants were also present.

We drove through Balboa Park to get the Ross's Goose and, at Sepulveda Basin, although we missed nearly everything we hoped for, we still found Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, White-crowned Sparrow, and Bullock's Oriole.

Next was Malibu Lagoon. We were much too late in the day this year, and although LA County's third record of Gull-billed Tern was here the very same morning, by the time we got there, even most of the regular terns were missing. Yet we still eked out Elegant, Caspian, and even a few Royal Terns, plus a flock of Brants flew by.

Last stop: Marina Del Rey jetties. Finally, we found most of the 'rocky coast shorebirds' such as Wandering Tattler, both Turnstones, and Black Oystercatcher. At the nearby freshwater Marsh, we found three new species, Short-billed Dowitcher (whose bill is about the same length as the Long-billed Dowitcher), Common Moorhen, and best of all, a normally secretive Sora walking in the open.

Despite an incredible number of common species that eluded us this year, we still found enough weird species that we managed to find 172. This was yet another personal record for the Garretts.

This year, your donations went directly to the Audubon Center at Debs Park and Eaton Canyon Nature Center, two local centers that provide programs for children. We are also supporting the Owens Valley Committee, a group that is overseeing the restoration of the Owens River and Valley.

John Garrett

Trip Reports

Piute Ponds

August 2, 2008

On August 2, eight hardy birders threw sand in the face of the sun and braved the oppressive heat of the Antelope Valley. We spent the morning at the Piute Ponds. There were a few shorebirds poking around including Western and Least Sandpipers, with a few of the newly-arrived-from-the-north-sharply-feathered juvenile Westerns. Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes, local specialties, were in attendance. Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, Greater Yellowlegs, Willet, and both dowitchers were there. While watching the autumn's first arrival of Northern Shovelers, marveling at the Black-crowned Night-Herons swimming around, humming along to the abrasive screeching serenade of Loggerhead Shrikes, and drawing straws to decide who should stick their arm down the badger hole, we were loudly scolded by Marsh Wrens, the most abundant invisible bird at the Piute Ponds. The best birds of the day were landbirds – the three Bank Swallows perched in a dead snag. A couple of Black-chinned Hummingbirds, an Ash-throated Flycatcher, plus Tree, Northern Rough-winged, and Cliff Swallows were also migrating through.

After all that, it was off to the Lancaster Sewage Ponds, at the height of pleasantness when it's hot and windy (a few beach-front bungalows and a palapa for lounging would be a good investment for the Sanitation District). Other than some Snowy Plovers, it wasn't very exciting bird-wise, but a lunch break and a cooler full of cold beer took the edge off and wrapped up the trip. Too much longer there and we have been panting in the shade with the ravens.

Overall, another good day at one of Los Angeles County's most birdy, least visited spots.

Jon Feenstra

Size Matters

A Cackling Goose, next to Canada Geese at the LA County Arboretum



in May 2008, shows the significant size difference that partly contributed to Cackling Goose being declared a separate species in 2004.

Will Fulmer

Pasadena Audubon Society
 Financial Report for the Fiscal Year
 07/01/2007 through 06/30/2008

A. Statement of Gain and/or (Loss):

Income:	
National Audubon "base-line" Payment	\$2,742
Pasadena Membership Dues	\$4,955
Grants and Member Contributions	\$2,645
Fundraising Events (net)	\$4,161
Income from T-shirts & Birdguide (net)	\$480
Transfer from Savings & Investments	\$7,874
Total	\$22,857
Expense:	
Administration	\$5,161
Newsletter/Postage/Mailing	\$3,791
Educational Programs & Events	\$1,875
Fundraising	\$1,294
Cobb Estate signage	\$11,354
Grants to Debs Park	\$1,080
Grants to Eaton Canyon Nature Center	\$2,081
Grants to the Owens Valley Committee	\$1,080
Total	\$27,716
Gain (Loss)	(\$4,859)

B. Balance Sheet as of 6/30/2007:

Assets:	
Cash (Checking & Savings Accts)	\$3,225
Investments (Fidelity Brokerage Acct.)	\$260,115
Total	\$263,340
Liabilities:	
	\$0
Fund Balances:	
Restricted Bequest (Jackson Endowment)	\$211,051
Investment in PAX Mutual Fund	\$12,741
Unreserved	\$39,548
Total	\$263,340

**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 16, 2008
 Legg Lake**

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

**Tuesday, October 21, 2008
 Eaton Canyon**

Meet at in the parking lot.

**Tuesday, November 18, 2008
 Nature Center of Whittier
 Narrows**

Meet in front of the nature center.

*Sid Heyman
 Madeline West*

**Thank You For Your
 Donations To PAS**

We are very grateful to Arthur Cohen, who made a donation to Pasadena Audubon of \$1,500.00, in memory of his wife, Barbara, a long-time member of our chapter.

We also thank Sharon Girdner, another PAS member who made a donation to PAS this past spring.

**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

John's Corner

The Young Birder Conference

Every other year, the American Birding Association (ABA) conducts a Young Birder Conference (YBC). With a scholarship from winning the Young Birder of the Year (YBY), I soon found myself attending this year's YBC – in Minot, North Dakota! Beside me, there were thirteen other young birders from around the country, and our four leaders: Steve NG Howell, Ron Martin, Michael O'Brien, and Louise Zemaitis.

Constantly, I found myself sweeping up lifebirds at every turn, and after the six short days were over, I ended up with 33 more than at the beginning. They varied

from the abundant Common Grackles and Bobolinks, to some of our target prairie species such as Sharp-tailed Grouse and Baird's Sparrow, to eastern woodland birds such as Ruffed Grouse and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. However, lifebirds were certainly not the only thrill out of this trip.

Being around other birders my age was something I had never really done before. There aren't too many of us. That's why it was great making friends from across the country, and discovering kids even dorkier than I.

Learning from the extremely experienced leaders was also incredible. There were four workshops: Ron's on birds of

North Dakota, Michael's on birding by ear, Steve's on bird molt, and Louise's on conservation and the bigger picture. Not only were these informative presentations very helpful, but also being around these leaders and learning from them every day also improved my birding skills substantially.

All in all, this was one of the most educational, exhilarating, and memorable weeks of my life. Not only am I eager to return to North Dakota, I also am anticipating the next YBC.

John Garrett

New Members

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

ALHAMBRA: Florence Maloski, Evelyn Needham, Chumporn Yuttawongs;
ALTADENA: J.R. Cooley, Robert Powe;
ARCADIA: Mila Check, Elizabeth Daggett, Ronald Denino, Juan Diaz-Carreras, Ellie Dorrance, June Hughes, Mike San Miguel, Marvee Schulz, Audrey Swanson; **AZUSA:** Alejandra Bencomo;
DUARTE: Maria Coontz, Dortha Treat;
GLENDALE: Margaret Morrison; **LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE:** Linda Golovko, Renee Klang, Kent Kuster, Mayfield Marshall, Jeanette Norman,

Mary Otte, Charles Plowman, E. Tietjen-Cutler; **LA VERNE:** John Skelton;
MONROVIA: Ruth Bailey, Jenny Cano, Bonnie Loveland; **MONTEREY PARK:** Robert Blyth, Rose Eng, E. Quimby;
PASADENA: Robert Barnes, Trey Borzillieri, John Camlin, Ms. Clark, Sharon Girdner, Ann Halloran, Robert Henderson, Carol Mark, Paul Michabofsky, Alice Mueller, Siegfried Muessig, Amy Oldham, Eugene Queshenberry, Leah Rizk, Isaac Shikuma, Ross Sonne, Ellen Strauss, Judith Vergun, Susan Zucker; **ROSEMead:** Robert Chua, Terry Tang; **SAN GABRIEL:** Sylvia Clark, Kim Do, Peggy Seyfert, Joan Severa, Douglas & Diane Walkley, George Yee; **SAN MARINO:** Doris Hartstone, Bill Woods;

SOUTH PASADENA: Bo Bonyo, Maryann Costantino, Sally Cullman, Jason Hashmi; **TEMPLE CITY:** Eichhorst Family, Violet Kloss, Robert Mata, Veronica Raymond, Joanne Rosso, Peter Sidenfaden.

PAS on the WEB

Website

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

ListServe

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

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