



Drawing by  
Guy Coheleach

# THE WRENTIT

Founded 1904

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

Volume 64 — No. 2

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

November 2015-January 2016

## Scaly-breasted Munia

A few location tips from David Bell's blog. Read his full post at:  
<http://www.birdseyebirding.com/blog/2015/02/finding-scaly-breasted-munia/>

Scaly-breasted Munias are locally common in San Diego, Ventura, Orange and Los Angeles Counties, especially along the major rivers. They also occur in Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Riverside and San Bernardino counties, although they are generally less common there.

Scaly-breasted Munias prefer riparian vegetation especially around the edges of water, such as reeds and reeds mixed with grass. They are closely associated with tall seeding grass and other seeding plants. Learning their distinctive calls will make them much easier to find, as they often remain hidden in vegetation and can be inconspicuous.

Scaly-breasted Munias are somewhat seasonal in Southern California, which is a bit odd since they don't migrate. Munias are easiest to find between June and November and are a bit harder to find between January and April. It appears that at least some of this seasonality is related to dispersal away from breeding areas and changes in habits. Outside of the breeding season, munias tend to stay low in vegetation and are best found by their calls. Listen to them at <http://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Lonchura-punctulata>

The locations described below are also good places for general birding.

San Gabriel River in Pico Rivera: A thriving colony of Northern Red Bishops (formerly known as Orange Bishops) and Scaly-breasted Munias is in the weedy grasses going to seed, upstream side of Whittier Narrows Dam flood control gates. Directions: Park near Pico Rivera Municipal Golf Course. Take the river trail/bike path north, up and over the dam and down into the river bottom right in front of the gates. This area is often damp and full of seeding grass, and attracts large numbers of seedeaters including buntings, munias, bishops, grosbeaks, blackbirds, towhees and sparrows.

Peck Road Water Conservation Park: A colony of Northern Red Bishops and Scaly-breasted Munias lives at the north end of the lake and also near the narrow canal that separates the North and South Lakes. Note that this area has an active homeless encampment, so enter this area with caution and at your own risk. Do not go alone.

Note that this is a great area to find seedeaters of many types in the fall. A more accessible area to check is west of the main parking lot.

David Bell



Photo: Mark Scheel

## President's Perch

I absolutely love this time of the year. Fall brings colorful trees, football, and birds migrating through the Pacific Flyway. Hope you have taken advantage our field trips to enjoy the birds – see upcoming trips on page 5.

I recently attended the Southern California Chapter leadership meeting. Reports from the various chapters show ever-increasing work to preserve and protect bird habitats in Southern California through education and messaging to leaders who can affect public policy. Proudly, PAS has been a force in the local effort to save Hahahmongna and stop the "Big Dig." PAS has also set a plan in motion for capacity building – we will be hiring a Program Manager in the coming months. That person will give us more feet on the ground and help us expand our current level of work and influence in the community.

Happy Birding,

Deni Sinnott

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### November Program

#### Bringing Butterflies, Birds and Beneficials to your Garden

Wednesday, November 18, 2015  
7:30 pm – 9:00 pm

Tempt butterflies and birds to your backyard using colorful native plants that also save water. Join **Orchid Black**, a native plant expert and garden designer who teaches at the Theodore Payne Foundation and President of the San Gabriel Mountains Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, and find out how planting native plants can bestow new life on your garden by providing a food source and living space for pollinators like birds and butterflies.

With the right plants, it is possible to attract a host of hummingbirds, songbirds and beneficial insects, and yourself! to the garden. Some butterfly species have had population losses of 90% due to loss of habitat. Come and find out how to turn your yard into an important backyard habitat!

### December Program

#### Christmas Bird Count Pre-meeting

Wednesday, December 16, 2015  
7:30 pm – 9:00 pm

Be part of the biggest citizen science event in America! See page 7 for details.

#### Christmas Bird Count Dinner

Saturday, December 19, 2015  
6:00 pm – 8:30 pm

Join your fellow birders and friends for a post-count celebration dinner! Share the day's events and a delicious Italian dinner catered from Luciano's.

RSVP by Dec. 12th with a check for \$10 per person, made out to "Pasadena Audubon Society", mailed to the address on the back cover. Write "CBC" on the check memo field.

*Nina Clark*

### January Program

#### Out of Africa

Wednesday, January 20, 2016  
7:30 pm—9:00 pm

Not Meryl Streep nor Robert Redford but, rather, Pasadena Audubon Society's own John Garrett talking about one of the most exotic-looking and interesting additions to Los Angeles avifauna: the Pin-tailed Whydah. This dramatic brood parasite from Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the more recent additions to Pasadena's breeding avifauna. Come find out what John discovered during his studies of this intriguing species, supported by a PAS grant.

John's talk will take a look at some of the other exotic species that call Pasadena home: from tickable ones like the Scaly-breasted Munia that graces the cover of this issue to the parrots whose roosts we will search out on upcoming field trips this winter.

*General meetings are held at Eaton Canyon Nature Center (address on back cover). Refreshments and socializing begin at 7:00 pm and programs are presented from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm. Occasionally programs for kids begin at 7:00 pm; check the announcements.*

### Conservation

#### Ivory and Vultures

As if the imminent extinction of elephants isn't bad enough, it turns out that the wide-spread poaching of elephants is driving African vultures to extinction as well. Wildlife biologists estimate that the eight species of African vultures have declined nearly 90%, in part due to habitat loss and urbanization, but also largely due to poison. According to the National Geographic Society, 60% of vulture deaths recorded since the 1970s were caused when the birds ate poisoned carcasses. So what's the connection to elephant poaching? Poachers poison the elephant carcasses so the presence of vultures won't give their location away to law enforcement. One tainted carcass can kill hundreds of birds. I know these birds live far from us in Africa, but this is a huge crisis. If you think we ought to get involved, please send me an email or let me know at a meeting and we'll make it a Pasadena Audubon Society project for this year.

*Laura Garrett*

#### New Environmental Advisory Committee

Assemblymember Chris Holden of the 41st District has created several new stakeholder committees that he hopes will help him stay up to date with many issues. He has asked

these committees to advise him on legislation and offer ideas for new bills. One of these committees is the Environmental Advisory Committee and it is well-represented with birders: Karen Suarez of the Monrovia Environmental Advisory Commission and Laura Garrett of the Pasadena EAC. We had our first meeting on July 23, 2015, and are looking forward to working with each other and supporting Assemblymember Holden. We applaud him for involving the community and for including the environment. If you have ideas for environmental legislation, please contact me at purplecow@jps.net. Thank you!

*Laura Garrett*

#### Polystyrene Ban in Pasadena

The Pasadena Department of Public Works has released a draft of its ban on single-use polystyrene containers in Pasadena (the ones used for take-out and doggie bags). Please email your city council person to ask them to support the "polystyrene food packaging" ordinance.

The birds will thank you!

*Laura Garrett*

## Review of *Subirdia*

*Subirdia, Sharing our Neighborhoods with Wrens, Robins, Woodpeckers and other Wildlife. John Marzloff, Yale University Press 2014; Illustrations by Jack DeLap*

One of the best aspects of this book is that it reveals how our neighborhoods are important to the survival of birds and other wildlife. It demonstrates how our actions and how we live in our homes and community can offer a wide range of habitats in small areas. Marzloff's extensive research and fieldwork following the lives of thousands of tagged birds provides an important window into conservation.

The book frames the things that enrich species in our neighborhoods as well as the things that are destructive. Bird species are characterized by responses to urbanization: avoiders, exploiters, or adapters. Avoiders are those species that are too specialized for the demands of urbanization. As we build into their habitat, they decline or are extinguished. Forest specialists such as the ovenbird and wood thrush are avoiders. Adapters are primarily native species that thrive on open, shrubby and dissected native habitats. Finches, sparrows, tits, corvids, and hummingbirds are adapters. Exploiters are species that thrive in our presence and often coevolve with humans. These include House Sparrows, European Starlings, Mallards, Canada Geese, and Rock Pigeons. Other birds are included depending upon where you live.

One of the most interesting discussions concerns how fast some species evolve. This idea was first demonstrated by Rosemary and Peter Grant in the Galapagos and described in *The Beak of the Finch, A Story of Evolution in Our Time*, by Jonathan Weiner. (One of my favorite books!) When we think of evolution, we think of a long, slow process. The Grants began their study in the early 1970s and it continues today. Their work has influenced how we think about evolution and Marzloff continues this work, brilliantly describing cultural and genetic evolution in birds. The chapter titled "The Junco's Tale" is fascinating. Birds fashion their behavior and their physiques to adapt to our neighborhoods. Marzloff states, "the lightning-fast pace of evolution in subirdia, I suspect would take even Darwin aback," and the social and cognitive abilities of birds may also reduce their risk of extinction.

How birds are impacted is up to us. Marzloff depicts the web of life we share with other species and how we appreciate or abuse our place in that web. He gives scientific evidence on how providing food, habitat, and water can enhance species. Cavity nesting opportunities and nest boxes are also included. There is an excellent discussion on how important local native predators can be and how we need to tolerate them. There are numerous examples of the harmful things we bestow on our bird neighbors. House and feral cats are invasive species that have contributed to the extinction of 33 bird species across the world and, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, cats are one the world's worst non-native invasive species. In the US it is estimated that free-roaming cats kill 1.4 to 3.7 billion birds and 7 to 20 billion mammals annually. He recommends the American Bird Conservancy's Cats Indoors program. There are discussions on window collisions, toxic chemicals, non-native gardens, lawns, light pollution, sound

pollution, and cars.

The book ends with an empowering request: "Do unto your land, and the natural web of life it sustains, as you would have the land do unto you." And, "love thy wild neighbor." It is our civic and moral duty to speak on behalf of the species around us to benefit them and our community. Conservation begins where you live. Restore degraded lands, preserve important wild corridors, grow community gardens, and educate on the importance of wild nature. A richly biodiverse neighborhood is better for all of us. Working to keep nature intact at home and in the wild is the best action for a richer, more beautiful world.

Marnie Gaede

## PAS Grants at Work

*Recently the Cavity Conservation Initiative sent a report to PAS describing how grant funds from PAS were used to strengthen its mission. Space does not permit a full reprint of the report, but here are some highlights.*

In 2014 Pasadena Audubon Society awarded the Cavity Conservation Initiative (CCI) \$810 to support the development of a mailable Wildlife Tree Educational kit for elementary school teachers and environmental educators who work outside Orange County and the State of California. This kit is a condensed version of the science-based school program offered by CCI volunteers in classrooms and in the field. Its portability increases the program's availability to educators. Consistent with that of CCI's school program, its goal is to increase the environmental awareness of young people, with a specific emphasis on the vital role dead trees play to cavity-nesting birds and to habitat diversity.

The award funded the purchase of 50 copies of the book *A Log's Life* for the kit and the printing of 500 copies of a student activity booklet for the kit. CCI later determined that the purchase of flash drives to contain kit materials offered more flexibility and effectiveness than printed materials.

Since the kit's availability in January 2015, 34 were provided without charge to environmental educators and elementary school teachers. California State Park Rangers made up the largest group of recipients, followed by Orange County Park Rangers, elementary school teachers, home school educators and nature centers. An additional 35 Ranger Reserves in Orange County received electronic copies of all printable teacher/student materials within the kit. 16 fully-equipped kits are still available and are expected to be donated by the end of 2015.

An estimated 1,700 students and more than 2,000 adults have used the kits. Reactions have been overwhelmingly positive. California State Park Rangers have incorporated kit elements into their own park programs, as have docents at Eaton Canyon Nature Center.

Our indebtedness to Pasadena Audubon heaps upon that of the previous year. We are so very grateful for your loyalty in supporting our humble strides to increase habitat for cavity-nesting birds and wildlife that use dying trees.

## Recollections from John Pepin

More than 25 years ago, I found myself within the beautiful confines of Eaton Canyon, among a group of people I increasingly came to know as friends – the members of the Pasadena Audubon Society.

Drawn to the rugged canyon like me they were, fascinated with the natural world, thirsting for knowledge, adventure and discovery.

Some were keen on plants or environmental activism — like the campaign to save Mono Lake — but for most, it was the undying wonder of birds that lighted the path to the canyon.

The kinship of the group, I find in retrospect, was like an unspoken code we all knew and understood, but if you didn't think about it deliberately you might never realize it was there.

In those days, I was one of the younger members. I was in my 20s, married, with two boys. A transplant to southern California from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan the western birdlife and the towering San Gabriel Mountains for me were stunning, new and inviting.

My introduction to Eaton Canyon was provided by Jon Fisher of Altadena and later, Mickey Long, then director of the canyon's nature center. I worked with Jon and we discovered our common interest in many things, among them birding.

Field tripping — either leading or just being one of the group — with Jon, Mickey, Tracey Alsobrook and other members of the group was where I found my favorite moments at Pasadena Audubon.

Looking back through issues of "The Wrentit," I'm reminded of some of those halcyon days — trips to Newport Back Bay, the West Fork of the San Gabriel River, Big Rock Creek Canyon, St. Andrews Priory, Whittier Narrows, Charlton and Chilao flats and the Sulphur Springs Campground in the Angeles National Forest.

A field trip report I wrote in the January 1989 issue detailed a trip Mickey Long led to El Dorado Park, attended by 21 birders who located 63 species.

"Townshend's warblers hopped from branch to branch, a red-shouldered hawk kept watch from a tree and an American bittern stepped into plain view for a few moments before retreating to the reeds," I wrote.

In February 1989, Pasadena Audubon took its first-ever bus trip, a bald eagle excursion to Big Bear. Among the 28 birders, many were seeing their first glimpses of our national symbol.

"With the bus parked on an icy wind-swept causeway, an immature bald eagle was spotted perched in a tall tree near the lakeshore," my report read. "A moment or two later, another 'baldy' was seen gliding through the trees and perching on a high branch above the roadway. Down below, birders frantically focused scopes, thumbed through field guides and moved in for a closer look."

Reading these accounts takes me immediately back to the excitement and fun of those times.

In those days, Judy Johnson was the chapter's president; Joanne Getze, vice president; Walt Teilmann, treasurer; Jeannette Sogorka, secretary and Mickey Long, Bob Neuwirth and Pat Brame directors.

Others among the many notables included Elaine MacPherson, Karen Rogers, Judy Bass, Joan and Bill Graham, Bill Bair, Helen Mary Williams, Carolyn Nolan, Russ Stone, Betsy

Neuwirth and Hill Penfold.

I can plainly see their faces as I type their names and remember them from Pasadena Audubon events, including programs in the nature center's old auditorium.

In January 1990, 15 birders found 67 species at Newport Back Bay and Bolsa Chica.

"With morning's blushed sky a crimson backdrop, the dark silhouettes of dozens of busily foraging shorebirds cast shadows across Bolsa Chica's still shallow waters," I reported.

In April that year, I traveled north with some of the chapter's other members to Asilomar to the Western Regional Audubon Conference. A field trip there got me rare views of marbled murrelets.

That same month, I camped in the San Gabriels with my son James, 4, and Mickey Long on an overnight spotted owl survey. We heard great horned, western screech and northern pygmy owls, in addition to common poorwills and a mountain lion. This was among the early efforts Mickey and I would engage in concerning owls.

In May 1990, the Pasadena and Whittier Audubon societies constructed eight nest boxes which were placed in oak grove areas at Eaton Canyon and at Whittier Narrows in hopes of attracting and studying western screech owls.

By summer 1991, owls had been using the nest boxes at Eaton Canyon. The birds were banded by Mickey with my help and a few of the tiny owls from Eaton Canyon were released near the Whittier Narrows Nature Center.

Jon Fisher and I had our own experiences with owls, finding barn owls nesting in a pipe under the Whittier Narrows dam and spotted owls at Big Rock Creek, a trip I later wrote about in "Bird Watchers' Digest."

In July 1991, Karen Rogers and I drove to Estes Park, Colorado for the week-long Audubon National Conference, representing Pasadena Audubon. Ted Turner was among the speakers. This was my first somewhat in-depth experience with the Rockies and it was astounding.

Christmas Bird Counts were another favorite of mine at Pasadena Audubon. I fell forward from a rock on one of these outings and bent the bottom of my binoculars, with the eye pieces jamming into my chest — good times.

Bob Neuwirth and I led Birdathon teams in historic friendly competitions, which covered hundreds of miles in a single day, yielding more than 120 species.

"Some of the most interesting moments on the day include barbecue potato chips, Wheat Thins and orange Wallaroots in the van on the way from Quail Lake, at least two team members' frantic battle with a mob of pesky ticks near Pyramid Lake's Emigrant Landing and of course, slamming to a stop in a cloud of dust along the Pearblossom Highway in the hopes of getting a better look at a soaring Swainson's hawk," I reported.

Before moving back home to Michigan in December 1993 — just a month ahead of the Northridge earthquake — I had divorced and remarried.

I was completing my master's thesis at California State University, Northridge on Cactus Wren distribution over the previous century in Los Angeles County. Kimball Garrett was on

**Continued on page 9**

## Field Trips

### North Slope San Gabriels

**Saturday, November 14, 2015**

**7:30 am — early afternoon**

We will explore areas on the northern slope of the San Gabriel Mountains, such as Grassy Hollow Visitor's Center, Jackson Lake, and locations in Valyermo. We will search for high-altitude species as well as wintering raptors. Ferruginous Hawk, Prairie Falcon, and Golden Eagle are possible, as are Red-breasted and Red-naped Sapsuckers. Unusual species (e.g. Lewis's Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Swamp Sparrow) have been found in some years. Time permitting, we may look for Mountain Plovers or longspurs in the nearby Antelope Valley.

It may be cold, especially at higher elevations, so bring warm clothes. Also, bring lunch. We will meet at Pearblossom Park, which is at the corner of 121st st. East and East avenue V14 in Pearblossom, just south of Hwy 138 (Pearblossom Highway).

*Mark & Janet Scheel*

### Big Santa Anita Canyon

**Saturday, November 21, 2015**

**6:30 am — noon**

Join us for a fall hike as we search for Pacific Wren, American Dipper, Canyon Wren, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Hutton's vireo, and other lower montane species.

We're planning to hike past Sturtevant Falls as far as the Cascade Picnic Area for a total of about six miles. Parking at Chantry Flat is crowded on weekends so please carpool and arrive early if possible.

Bring sturdy shoes, water, some food, sunscreen, a hat, warm clothing, and an Adventure Pass for your car. Heavy rain cancels but drizzle does not.

*Lance Benner*

### Eaton Canyon Monthly Walk

**Sunday, November 15, 2015**

**Sunday, December 20, 2015**

**Sunday, January 17, 2016**

**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, November 7, 2015**

**(replaced by Legg Lake Dec.-Feb.)**

**7:30 am — 11:30 am**

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.

*Leaders vary; see calendar*

### Christmas Bird Count Circle Sweep

**Sunday, December 13, 2015**

**7:30 am — 10:30 am**

Join me for a tour of spots that are contained within the Pasadena CBC Circle. The circle takes in a wealth of interesting sites, a variety of habitats, and always turns up a great variety birds. After meeting at the Vina Vieja Park parking lot, we will decide where to head next based on recent reports and the sites that we would like to explore.

Meet in the parking lot at Vina Vieja Park at 7:30 am. We will carpool where possible from there. The entrance to Vina Vieja is on the south side of East Orange Grove Blvd between Canyon Wash Drive and Lomora Avenue.

*Luke Tiller, streatham2003@aol.com*

### Wintering Hawks in the Antelope Valley

**Saturday, January 9, 2016**

**7:30 am — 1:00 pm or later**

Put on your warm clothes and join us as we tour the west Antelope Valley in search of wintering raptors. Red-tailed and Ferruginous Hawks should be present in good numbers. We may also find Prairie Falcon, American Kestrel, and we may even turn up a Golden Eagle. It's a great opportunity to study a variety of raptors and their plumages.

Bring binoculars, scopes, and cameras. Dress warmly, as it can be downright cold. Bring lunch, water (hot cocoa?), a map, and make sure you have a full tank of gas. We will be out until at least 1:00 pm.

Meet at Ave. S and Hwy. 14 in Palmdale, at the park-and-ride spot. Take the 5 north to highway 14 (toward Palmdale and Lancaster). Take the Avenue S exit in Palmdale, turn right, and make a right turn into the big parking lot. Look for birders.

*Larry Allen, Frank & Susan Gilliland*

**Field trips continue on page 7!**

### Huntington Library Monthly Walk

**Sunday, November 22, 2015**

**Sunday, December 27, 2015**

**Sunday, January 24, 2016**

**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.

For reservations contact me (see bottom of calendar page) by email (preferred), or by phone. Trip leaders vary.

*Mark Hunter*

**WC** = Wrentit Club!

**Calendar**  
Submit material for the next Wrentit by January 1

**WCC** = Wrentit Club  
Count Circle!

**November 2015**

4	Wed	7:15 pm	Board Meeting		Eaton Canyon	Deni Sinnott
7	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	<b>WCC</b>	Hahamongna	Darren Dowell
8	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	<b>WC</b>	Chilao Visitor Center	Hill Penfold
14	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	<b>WCC</b>	County Arboretum	Julia Ray
14	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	<b>WC</b>	North Slope San Gabriels	Mark & Janet Scheel
15	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	<b>WCC</b>	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
17	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	<b>WC</b>	Santa Fe Dam	Julia Ray, Sid Heyman
18	Wed	7:30 pm	General Meeting		Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Birds, Butterflies, Beneficials
21	Sat	6:30 am	Field Trip	<b>WCC</b>	Big Santa Anita Canyon	Lance Benner
22	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip*	<b>WCC</b>	Huntington Library	Mark Hunter

**December 2015**

2	Wed	7:15 pm	Board Meeting		Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Deni Sinnott
5	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	<b>WCC</b>	Legg Lake	Ed Stonick
12	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	<b>WCC</b>	County Arboretum	Julia Ray
13	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	<b>WC</b>	Chilao Visitor Center	Hill Penfold
13	Sun	7:30 am	Field Trip	<b>WCC</b>	CBC circle	Luke Tiller
15	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	<b>WCC</b>	County Arboretum	Julia Ray & Sid Heyman
16	Wed	7:30 pm	CBC pre-Meeting		Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Jon Fisher
19	Sat	All day	Christmas Bird Count	<b>WCC</b>	Pasadena Area	Jon Fisher
19	Sat	6:00 pm	CBC Dinner		Eaton Canyon Nature Center	See page 2
20	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	<b>WCC</b>	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
27	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip*	<b>WCC</b>	Huntington Library	Mark Hunter

**January 2016**

2	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	<b>WCC</b>	Legg Lake	Ed Stonick
6	Wed	7:15 pm	Board Meeting		Eaton Canyon	Deni Sinnott
9	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	<b>WCC</b>	County Arboretum	Julia Ray
9	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip	<b>WC</b>	Antelope Valley	Larry Allen, F&S Gilliland
10	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	<b>WC</b>	Chilao Visitor Center	Hill Penfold
10	Sun	7:30 am	Field Trip	<b>WC</b>	L.A. Urban Core	Jon Feenstra
17	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	<b>WCC</b>	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
17	Sun	10:00 am	Field Trip	<b>WC</b>	Redondo Beach Pelagic	Lance Benner, M&J Scheel
19	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	<b>WC</b>	S. G. Coastal Spreading Basin	Julia Ray & Sid Heyman
20	Wed	7:30 pm	General Meeting		Eaton Canyon	Out of Africa
23	Sat	7:30 am	Field Trip*		Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge	Frank & Susan Gilliland
25	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip*	<b>WCC</b>	Huntington Library	Mark Hunter
30-31	Sat-Sun	All day	Field Trip*		Salton Sea	Ron Cyger

\* - reservations required, PAS members only

\* Trip Leader Information

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## Pasadena/San Gabriel Valley Christmas Count 2015

Each year, season and month in the San Gabriel Valley is different for birders. There are changes in the weather to be sure, but also substantial changes in birdlife.

Some birds spend only the summer or winter here, while large numbers of migrants pass through in spring and fall. Taken together these migratory movements occur nearly the entire year. Other species are present year round, but even many of these essentially resident species shift their distribution to take advantage of available sources of food.

Most of us have witnessed the morning and evening flights of parrots to and from feeding areas and roost sites. These introduced parrots and parakeets are just some of the many species we record each December on the Pasadena-San Gabriel Valley Christmas Bird Count (CBC).

Occasionally in fall and winter, irruptions occur. The large numbers of Varied Thrushes present last year come to mind. This year – not surprisingly – none have yet been found in the area. Red-breasted Nuthatches also sporadically irrupt, and a handful of them have already been detected in the lowlands this fall. Just what this portends for the Pasadena CBC is as yet unknown, but we'll know soon enough.

In the past, Yellow Warblers were virtually unknown on the count, but have since become regular. Great-tailed Grackles had not been recorded until the 1980s and are now common. There has been an explosion of Eurasian Collared-Doves and an essentially complete disappearance of the once common Spotted Dove over the past few decades.

Since DDT and shooting were banned in the 1970s, we've seen Osprey, Cooper's Hawk, Merlin and Peregrine Falcon all recorded with increasing frequency on the CBC.

These are just a few of the changes that have been and continue to be documented by the Christmas Bird Count. We assign participants to count areas within the circle and try to record as many birds and as many species as we can on count day. The Pasadena data has helped monitor local birds since 1946 and all the records from every count reside in the CBC database where they are available to anyone.

The center point of the count is the intersection of San Gabriel Boulevard and Duarte Road. The territory covered extends seven and one half miles in every direction from that spot, thus creating the fifteen mile diameter required of a count circle.

Aside from the famous landmarks in the circle – the Rose Bowl, JPL, Cal Tech and the Mt. Wilson Observatory – the San Gabriel Valley supports many different species of birds. Over 280 different kinds have been recorded during the history of the count.

Adding habitat diversity to the count are areas such as Big Santa Anita Canyon, the Whittier Narrows area, the San Gabriel River, Peck Road Water Conservation Park, Eaton Canyon, the Huntington Gardens, the L.A. County Arboretum and a portion of Santa Fe Dam. The northern border of the circle reaches 5,700 feet at the top of Mt. Wilson, offering the potential for birds typically restricted to higher elevations. In past years, lushly vegetated and long established residential neighborhoods have produced some good finds.

Clearly there's a great deal of variety within the circle and that variety gives us count totals of well over 150 species each year. Adding another appealing dimension are the unexpected vagrants that inevitably turn up. Some are discovered well in advance of the count, but others surprise us on count day. No two years are the same and every year seems to offer something unexpected.

The 2015 Christmas Bird Count will take place on **Saturday, December 19**. We'll have the usual pre-count meeting at the Eaton Canyon Nature Center on **Wednesday, December 16** at 7:30pm. At the meeting an overview of the count will be presented and checklists and other count materials will be available. We'll also review count rules and procedures and assign count areas. If you can't be at the meeting, you can still sign up for an area to count via e-mail.

**Newcomers are always welcome** on the Pasadena-San Gabriel Valley CBC. If you're new to birding or to Christmas Bird Counts, this is a great opportunity to learn more about our local birds and to meet others who share that interest. You can either team up with more experienced participants, or count an area on your own.

As always, we will hold the traditional **post-count dinner and wrap-up** on count night. We'll not only have some good food, but be among the first to find out what interesting birds were found on the count. Check page 2 for details.

For additional information, you may contact count coordinator Jon Fisher at [JonF60@hotmail.com](mailto:JonF60@hotmail.com).

*Jon Fisher*

### Field Trips, continued

#### Salton Sea

**Sat-Sun, January 30-31, 2016**

**All day**

The Salton Sea Trip is a great way to get your year-list cookin'! The sea is one of the premier birding areas in North America, but is in major transition at this time. On the weekend we usually end up with over 100 species and a few surprises. We will bird all day on Saturday and through lunch on Sunday.

This trip is limited to 12 PAS members (it's easy to become a member on our website). Preference is given to those who were not on the trip the previous year and can do the entire weekend.

Please email me for more information or to make reservations.

*Ron Cyger*

#### The Urban Core

**Sunday, January 10, 2016**

**7:30 am – 11:00 am**

Far from the natural beauty of the local mountains, the space and solitude of the desert, and the tranquility of the scenic coastline, right in the middle of the crushing hardscape of Los Angeles lies one of the city's few urban parks, the only park



within walking distance for thousands of Angelenos. While birding is hardly what most people associate with MacArthur Park, it is quite possibly the best place in the County to observe gulls. Thayer's Gull is a regular winter visitor, and various and mysterious hybrids are also often present. Further, as the only park around it attracts a surprising diversity of waterfowl and passerines. The morning of birding will begin here then continue at Echo Park Lake, another urban refuge a few miles away, and maybe some scoping of Silverlake Reservoir, if we've still got time.

Meet at the Levitt Pavilion in the northwest corner of MacArthur Park at 7:30AM. Metered parking there costs \$2 for two hours.

*Jon Feenstra*

## Pelagic Birding Flash Mob

**Sunday, January 17, 2016**

**10:00 am — 1:00 pm**

Join us for a whale watch and pelagic birding trip with Voyager Excursions out of Redondo Beach on Saturday, January 17 at 10 am. This is a public whale watch and, although the main objective will be gray whales, pelagic birder and cetacean expert Bernardo Alps will be the naturalist on board so we will also be able to stop and see birds.

Several experienced pelagic birders are coming and can also help identify what we see. We have a chance to see Rhinoceros Auklet, Common Murre, Cassin's Auklet, Scripps' Murrelet, Black-vented Shearwater, Pomarine and Parasitic Jaeger, Northern Fulmar, three loon species, three cormorant species, various gulls, rocky shorebirds, and more.

Regular price is \$25 but our group has negotiated a price of \$10. Contact Lance Benner at [lbenner@charter.net](mailto:lbenner@charter.net) to reserve your spot and special rate. This trip may fill up, so reserve early.

## Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge

**Saturday, January 23, 2016**

**7:30 am — noon**

Be part of the lucky 20 Pasadena Audubon Society members to enter Seal Beach tidal salt marsh habitat. (What?! You're not a member? It's easy. Go to our website for more information and please join us.)

We'll look for several interesting species including Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Ferruginous Hawk, Light-footed Clapper Rail, Red Knot and others.

Sign-up is required. To reserve your space contact Susan at [gillilandsusan@gmail.com](mailto:gillilandsusan@gmail.com) before January 16, 2016 and provide the following information: Full name (first, middle

## L.A. County Arboretum

**Second Saturday of every month**

**8:00 am — 10:00 am**

This easy walk is for birders of all ages and experience levels. Meet on the steps leading to the entrance of the Arboretum. Admission is \$5 – free for members of the Arboretum or Audubon, and free for children under 12.

*Julia Ray*

initial, last), address (street, city, state, zipcode) and home phone number.

Only US citizens are allowed (per Navy rules). Bring government-issued photo ID.

Cameras are allowed but *only* for bird photography.

If you sign up and cannot attend, please let Susan or Frank know at least 24 hours ahead of time. There's always a waiting list.

Meeting Location and Time: Meet at the parking lot located at 800 Seal Beach Blvd. at 7:30 a.m. We will bird from 8:00 AM until noon. From the 405 Freeway, take the Seal Beach Boulevard exit and head west. Continue for approximately 0.5 miles on Seal Beach Boulevard to the entrance of the Seal Beach Naval Weapons Station (800 Seal Beach Boulevard). Spotting scopes and FRS radios are useful. Restrooms will *not* be available until about 8:30 am on the base, so plan ahead.

*Frank and Susan Gilliland*

## Legg Lake & San Gabriel River

**Saturday, December 5, 2015**

**Saturday, January 2, 2016**

**Saturday, February 6, 2016**

**7:30 am — 11:30 am**

In winter, the Hahamongna monthly walk is replaced by one at Legg Lake. These trips will cover some consistently good lake and park birding areas. Legg Lake has lots of water and scattered trees and has produced good waterfowl numbers and varieties as well as an impressive list of migrants and wintering birds. Time permitting we'll include the Pico Rivera spreading grounds or some other river locations, based on what's around. An excellent trip for beginning and young birders.

Meet in the Santa Anita Ave. parking lot, closest to the 60 freeway. Take the Santa Anita exit and turn south from the off-ramp (going south). The lake and parking lot will be on your right.

*Ed Stonick or Darren Dowell*

## Chilao Visitor Center

**Second Sunday of every month**

**8:00 am — 10:00 am**

The Chilao Visitor Center walks continue each month, weather and roads permitting. (If things look rainy, snowy or brush fire-y, check first.)

Chilao, 26.5 miles north of I-210 on Angeles Crest (State Hwy 2), is a good place to see woodpeckers and we often see four or more species on a walk. Mountain Quail are somewhat elusive but still seen or heard about half the time. You can also expect Purple Finches, Steller's Jays, Dark-eyed Juncos and several species of nuthatches and others totaling about 30 species during the 2-hour walk.

*Hill Penfold*

**Recollections, continued**

my thesis committee.

As I left Pasadena Audubon, my wife, Sharon and I were presented with a homemade oversized card signed by many members of Pasadena Audubon.

I just re-read the card tonight. Looking back, I'm touched that those people found in me what I found in them — that kinship, fun and happiness, pursuing always better days and better birding.

Sad to say, some of those I traveled with have since started new life lists in the great beyond.

Jon Fisher remains the best friend I've had in life.

I got an email from him a day or so ago. We no longer have had the luxury of annual Memorial Day weekend birding trips to southeastern Arizona — something we did from Pasadena, but haven't managed since 2005.

I did get out to Los Angeles in 2007 and we did some birding then. Things seemed to have changed a great deal since I left — more freeways, more noise, more everything. However, I was comforted to again walk within the walls of Eaton Canyon and feel the California sunshine.

After 21 years writing for the largest daily newspaper in the Upper Peninsula, I was recently offered a wonderful position as deputy public information officer for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in Marquette.

The news release on my installation to that job caught the eye of your editor. He asked me if I'd consider writing a bit about those old times at Pasadena Audubon.

Clearly, I remember my times there with fondness. I wish for all of you, the best of everything, hoping you've found the same happiness and friendships I discovered in my experience.

Perhaps we'll meet again some time, as evening begins to cool the day, on the dusty road winding up to Henninger Flats.

I hope the cold pop machine is still at the ranger's station up there.

I'll buy.

*John Pepin*

**Announcements**

**Call for Grant Applications**

The Pasadena Audubon grant policy has changed and the next application deadline is January 15, 2016. For details about the grant policy and applying for a PAS grant, see our web site: [www.pasadenaaudubon.org](http://www.pasadenaaudubon.org).

**Birds 'n Beers**

Good food, good beverages, and good bird talk at this casual monthly gathering led by Luke Tiller, Catherine Hamilton, and David Bell. Everyone is welcome! 5:00 to 8:00 pm November 11, December 9, and January 13, at Lucky Baldwin's at 1770 E. Colorado Blvd.

**Magpie Bird Study Group**

We meet the third Tuesday of most months. We bird 9:00 am to 11:30 am and have a sack lunch and a short meeting. All PAS members welcome!

**Tuesday, November 17, 2015**  
**Santa Fe Dam**  
*Meet in first parking lot, directly ahead as you enter the park.*

**Tuesday, December 15, 2015**  
**L.A. County Arboretum**

**Tuesday, January 19, 2016**  
**S. G. Coastal Spreading Basin**  
*Mines St. entrance off Rosemead Blvd., just south of Whittier Blvd.*  
**Trip leaders: Sid Heyman, Julia Ray**

**DONATIONS TO PAS**

These PAS members and friends have recently made donations to our chapter: Edwina Berg, James Birsner & Pamela Stones, Kathy Degner, Diane Dennis, Thomas Keeney, Jeannine Lubeshkoff, Shirley McCulloch, Susan McCurdy, Marcia Miller, Doris Popoff, Lois Tandy, Sharon Vaughan, Dave Weeshoff. Thank you all!

**Become a Chapter-only Member of PAS**

Local chapters of the National Audubon Society, such as Pasadena Audubon, receive only a small share of NAS membership dues. In order to finance our programs and services, including publication of *The Wrentit*, PAS 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, per family, or \$15 for seniors and students, all of which remains with our local chapter to fund our programs. We thank you all for your support!

**Chapter-only Membership Application**

Name ..... Phone .....  
Address .....  
City ..... State ..... ZIP .....  
Email .....

If this is a gift, please also provide donor's information below:  
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Address .....  
City ..... State ..... ZIP .....

Yearly dues:  
 \$20 (individual or family)     \$15 (senior or student)  
 \$35 (T-shirt or Birding Guide, plus a PAS pin)  
 \$\_\_\_\_\_ (donation)

Make checks payable to, and mail to:  
**Pasadena Audubon, 1750 N Altadena Dr, Pasadena, CA 91107**

**Pasadena Audubon Society Board**

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## New Members

**ALHAMBRA:** David Lang; **ALTADENA:** Francine Crapuchettes, Karen Holgerson; **ARCADIA:** Aaron Beck, Rita Singman; **CALIMESA:** Rhonda Anderson; **EAGLE ROCK:** E. Adwin Edwards; **LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE:** Pauline Goldfinger, Gaye Hagegard, Susanna Owens, Teresa Wilde; **LOS ANGELES:** Heather Sabi; **MONROVIA:** Marcia Teasdale; **PASADENA:** Andrew Evangelisti, Rebecca Kuzins, Jean Poole, Mariann Reardon, Connie & David Speltz; **REDONDO BEACH:** Daniel Bonn; **SOUTH PASADENA:** Mary & Dana Gioia, Sara Kano

## The Pasadena Audubon Idea

One evening in 1904 W. Scott Way was in his eucalyptus grove in Altadena when he heard gunshots ringing out. Going over to investigate, he saw an express wagon piled high with Mourning Doves by hunters taking them to market. Outraged, Mr. Way vowed at that moment to form a society to protect native birds, discourage the wearing of feathers (very common at that time), and to educate the public and schools about the relation of birds to agriculture and the environment.

A notice was printed in the *Pasadena Evening Star* announcing the meeting, which took place the following day, March 25, 1904, at the Chamber of Commerce on Colorado in Pasadena. Over 40 people showed up at that meeting. Mr. Way became the Secretary/Treasurer and Dr. Garrett Newkirk of Altadena, a noted ornithologist, became Chairman. Thus formed the first Audubon Society in California, known as the California Audubon Society until 1909, when the name was changed to Pasadena Audubon Society, to avoid confusion with others that had since formed in the state.

The estate of the late Don Rogers is to be thanked for the materials in our Archive upon which this account is based.

*Ira Blitz, Secretary*

**PAS is looking for two members with some experience in finance or accounting to serve on the ad hoc Finance Committee. For more information, please contact the Treasurer, Eileen Burton.**