



THE WRENTIT

Founded 1904

Pasadena Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

Volume 64 — No. 3

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

February-April 2016

Eurasian Wigeon

Anas penelope. Greek for (literally) “Penelope duck”. Penelope, she who weaves, she who waits for Ulysses. Quack. Ulysses is in love with a duck!

I remember meeting a male of the species up close for the first time, at Conejo Creek North Park, in Thousand Oaks, CA.

The Eurasian Wigeon’s normal range is actually a few thousand miles from where this aberrant stood; in summer the ducks are found in Europe and inland continental Asia, and in winter large flocks migrate as far south as Africa. They occupy fields, marshes, ponds, and bays.

The female builds a nest of vegetation, hidden in reeds and lined with down, in which she deposits 7-8 cream-colored eggs. The males utter a descending whistle “whee-oo” and the female gives a low growling “krr krr” especially when flushed.

The breeding males are handsome; they have a mostly grey body, with a buffy pink breast, a white belly and rump and a black vent and tail. Their heads are chestnut, with a buffy yellow streak adorning the forecrown – like a drunken king whose crown perches precariously on his forehead!

Other birds acknowledge this crowning feature, it seems; Eurasian Wigeons follow diving ducks and snatch prey from them. And, here in the park, this male scared off the American Wigeons and the larger Mallards (20 to 25 in. to the Eurasian Wigeon’s 18 to 20) in order to have his personal space and (of course) the bread handouts.

In comparison, our American counterpart has a grey speckly head, with a streak of iridescent green extending from behind the eye to the nape, and a creamy white crown. Also, the body of the American Wigeon is mostly brown in the front half, darkening to gray towards the tail. The females of both species are very alike; both have a speckled gray-brown body and head, with a white belly and vent. But the head of the American Wigeon female is paler and grayer, and the greater coverts (the row of feathers above the shiny green speculum) are much paler than those of the Eurasian female.

The males of the two species are similar in that they both have white extending from the belly ending right under the rump, wrapping all around it before the body ends in a black vent and tail. They also share the white forewing, visible at rest, which they retain in their eclipse plumage and which separates them from the females. From a distance, the male Eurasian Wigeon appears dark-headed with a light body, while the male American Wigeon appears dark-bodied with a

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Photo: Don Klabunde

President's Perch

PAS had a smashing 2015, but there are many of ways you can make 2016 an even better Birding Year! You can work on your “personal best” in birding with our Wrentit Club — all levels of birders can participate with the ultimate goal of seeing 250 species of birds in L.A. County. In February there is an opportunity to participate in the nationwide Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), birding in your own backyard! We also have two large-scale events this spring: our Birdathon (April 30th) and a chapter-wide conservation project at Peck Road Watershed Park.

We are now even better positioned to get all our programs up and running since we have hired a Program Manager! I am happy to introduce you to Kym Buzdygon who will be instrumental in helping us build our capacity, facilitate membership growth and involvement, get PAS out to community events, and staff the volunteers for our Peck Road Watershed Park project. I am sure many of you will be hearing from Kym soon.

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February Program

Saving the Maui Parrotbill

Wednesday, February 17, 2016
7:30 pm—9:00 pm

Everything that has evolved in the isolated Hawaiian archipelago is both unique and irreplaceable. Gradual but extensive habitat loss across the Hawaiian Islands, and a more recent influx of exotic species, have made Hawaii one of the extinction capitals of the world. Most people think about extinction in terms of dinosaurs, but Maui's most recent extinction happened in about 2004.

Dr. Hanna Mounce from Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project will describe the group's attempts to reverse this extinction trend. They are currently protecting one of the rarest birds of all, the Kiwikiu (Maui Parrotbill). This charismatic honeycreeper, characterized by its parrotlike bill, is found exclusively along the East Maui Volcano's windward slopes and numbers perhaps as few as 500 birds. Come and hear about this incredible recovery effort.

March Program

Species and Subspecies

Wednesday, March 16, 2016
7:30 pm—9:00 pm

Deciding how to divide biodiversity into nameable units (taxonomy) has implications for birders and for conservation. Professor **John McCormack** will discuss best practices for applying the latest technologies to the naming and discovery of species and subspecies with a focus on two case studies of local interest: the Western Scrub-Jay and the controversial coastal California Gnatcatcher, which land developers have long sought to remove from the Endangered Species List.

He is Director and Curator of the Bird and Mammal Collection at the Moore Laboratory of Zoology and an Assistant Professor of Biology at Occidental College. The McCormack Lab has pioneered the use of new DNA sequencing technologies to better resolve the Tree of Life and is currently applying these advances to unlock the genomes of museum specimens dating back to the 1800s.

April Program

Tejon Ranch

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

Situated about halfway between Bakersfield and Los Angeles, Tejon Ranch straddles an incredible 422 square miles and is the largest contiguous private property in the whole of California. The extraordinary convergence of San Joaquin oak woodlands, Mojave Desert Joshua trees, the fir forests of the Sierra Nevada and the chaparral-studded South Coast Ranges on this vast acreage provides an important home for the more than 60 at-risk plant and animal species that are protected here.

Scot Pipkin, Public Access Coordinator of the Tejon Ranch Conservancy, will introduce us to the incredible wealth of wildlife diversity that is to be found just a stone's throw from Downtown Los Angeles as well as discuss the work that the Tejon Ranch Conservancy is undertaking to preserve this incredible site.

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 youth begin at 6:45 pm; check the announcements.

Conservation

Polystyrene Ban Update

On December 8, 2015, staff from the Pasadena Department of Water and Power presented to the Municipal Services Committee an excellent draft of an ordinance to ban the use of polystyrene takeout containers in Pasadena. People close to the process expected the MSC to support the draft and send it on to City Council for a vote. Over fifteen members of the public spoke in favor of the ban. But Dart Industries, a supplier of polystyrene takeout containers, had organized some folks to speak out against the draft ordinance. Some owners of small businesses said they would go out of business if the ordinance passed. Despite the lack of evidence that this has happened in any of the 90 cities in California that have banned polystyrene, the MSC declined to support the ordinance, asking city staff to investigate the issue further.

So what can you do? Please write to the members of the MSC, Mayor Terry Tornek, Councilmember Margaret McAustin, and Councilmember Andy Wilson, to ask them to support the ban on polystyrene when it comes back to them. Tell them that the issue is not that we need to remove polystyrene from the waste stream, though we do, but that the issue is that we need to keep it out of our streams. For example, after every Rose Bowl event, the Arroyo Seco is overflowing with trash, much of it polystyrene. While it is true that a ban won't end that

problem, it will improve the situation greatly. This polystyrene travels down the Arroyo Seco to the L. A. River and into the ocean, where it acidifies the ocean and is eaten by animals. We need to ban polystyrene now. Please help. Mayor Tornek: ttornek@cityofpasadena.net, Margaret McAustin: mlmorales@cityofpasadena.net, Andy Wilson: pthyret@cityofpasadena.net

Laura Garrett

Wild and Free after 30 Years

On December 29, 2015, 10 Pasadena Audubon Society young birders and their parents were invited to witness a historic event at the Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge. AC-4 (AC for Adult Condor), one of the original wild California Condors, was going to be set free on this very day after 30 years in captivity. In the 1980s, there were only 22 California Condors left in the wild. The condor population was declining rapidly and heading



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Young Birders

Wild and Free, continued

toward extinction. By 1987 all of the California Condors were taken into captivity. The plan was to increase the population by a captive breeding program. On August 7, 1985, AC-4, a male, was captured at Bitter Creek and brought to the San Diego Zoo, where he sired 30 chicks in 30 years. He has played an important role in helping to bring back the condor population.

The young birders had the opportunity to meet and interview three important people who were present 30 years ago when AC-4 was captured. Pete Bloom was the one who captured AC-4 in a pit he had built for trapping condors. Jesse Grantham, who was a condor biologist and involved in the recovery from 1980-2011, was also part of the team. Back in the 1980s, the refuge was Hudson Ranch, a private property where developers planned to build houses. Jesse played an important role in protecting this condor habitat from development. The young birders also met Jan Hamber, who worked with the condor recovery program since the 1970s. She also was present when AC-4 got captured.

Jesse Grantham gave a presentation about the significance of releasing AC-4. He talked about AC-4's history and explained that this condor is a connection between the wild condors in the past and wild condors today. Jesse explained that before they started capturing condors, they needed to find out where the condors were located and how many were left. They took pictures to identify individual condors and they put transmitters on the birds to determine their location. It became clear that biologists needed to capture the condors to save them from extinction and in 1987, AC-9, the last wild condor, was taken into captivity. Today the California Condor population is about 420 birds. In 2008, the number of free flying California Condors was greater than the number of condors in captivity. Three of the original wild condors got released into the wild. Unfortunately, two of them did not survive; one was shot and the other one died from lead poisoning. AC-9 was the surviving condor.

At about 11:00, Joseph Brandt, the supervising field biologist, signaled to let AC-4 free. Everybody looked at the flight pen and wondered how AC-4 would respond when he was set free. Would he fly out immediately or would he be cautious and take his time? A wildlife biologist who was hiding in the flight pen opened AC-4's cage. It took AC-4 a little while to figure out that the door was open. After he discovered the open door, he flew out of his flight pen without any hesitation. He soared in the sky, free and wild again. It seemed that he had not forgotten how to be a wild condor after 30 years in captivity. Condors still face threats such as lead poisoning, microtrash, and predators. In the past, the young birders educated the public about not using lead bullets for hunting and never throwing trash. We need to keep educating people to make sure that AC-4 and all the other condors will survive in the wild. We thank Mike Brady and Susan Gilliland, who made it possible for the young birders to witness this spectacular event.

Dessi Sieburth; photo by Beatrix Schwarz

PAS Young Birder Club Meetings

Eaton Canyon Nature Center

Join us at 6:45 to 7:30 pm.

February 17, 2016

The Lost Art of Field Notes

Mickey Long, biologist/naturalist/birder extraordinaire will share some of his many years of field notebooks with us and teach us about the art of taking good notes in the field. Don't miss this important session!

March 16, 2016

An Eagle Soars Amongst Us

Diego Blanco will speak about his efforts to earn the Boy Scouts highest honor – the coveted Eagle Scout badge. Way to go Diego!

April 20, 2016

Young Birder of the Year 2015 – takes photos in 2016

Dessi Sieburth, winner of the national Young Birder of the Year Award 2015, will talk about his efforts to compete in the photography competition. Join us at 6:30 for about an hour. Snacks will be served.

May 18, 2016

What's that Bird Call?

When a bird sings, it's telling you what it is and where it is. Join Lance Benner for a fun hour and learn a few bird calls. It's guaranteed to open your ears to birding.

Birding 101

Begins Tuesday, March 15, 2016

(Sponsored by Pasadena Audubon Society and Eaton Canyon Nature Center.)

Birding provides enjoyment and challenge throughout life. Birding gets you outdoors in your neighborhood or around the world. Birding increases your ability to observe and appreciate the world around you. And, finally, birding is just gosh darn fun! So, why would you put off learning how to be a better birder any longer?

This class is designed for beginners, but all are welcome. We will cover identification, optics, field guides, note-taking, habitats, birding ethics, and many other topics. Class size is limited, so don't delay!

Classroom sessions: March 15, 22, and 29, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

Field trips: March 19 and 26, 2015 from early morning to early afternoon.

Location of the class and field trips will be sent to the class participants. Cost: \$50 for Pasadena Audubon members, \$70 for non-members (but will include membership in Pasadena Audubon Society). This fee will cover all three classes and two field trips. Fee is payable to "Pasadena Audubon Society" and is due at the first class session.

For questions or to make reservations, contact leaders Ron Cyger and Mark Scheel at Birding101@pasadenaaudubon.org.

Christmas Count Wrap-up

It was 115 years ago that Frank Chapman, an ornithologist in the recently conceived Audubon Society, first proposed a Christmas Bird Count. There were just 27 participants on that first year of the count. From those inauspicious beginnings the count has grown to include more than 70,000 participants conducting over 2,300 CBCs, mainly in North America.

Although the Pasadena count didn't begin until 1946, hundreds of birders have participated in the Pasadena-San Gabriel Valley CBC over the seven decades since its inception. Pasadena is far more famous for any number of other things, yet all of these counters have made a worthwhile contribution to the scientific record.

Of course the area has become more urbanized and suburbanized over these years, yet with persistence and ever growing knowledge we've been able to find more and more species as the count has moved into the 21st century.

Our count is especially productive for an inland CBC and scouting count areas beforehand and good coverage of the variety of habitats within the circle has been the key to finding as many birds as possible. Each year the count typically records over 160 species, with 2015 being no exception. Birders on the most recent count found 162 as well as a half dozen "count week" species that weren't seen on count day.

Although it's impossible to know what the weather is going to be like when the count day is selected months ahead of time, December 19 of 2015 turned out to be a very pleasant day. The effects of El Nino had yet to be felt and the temperatures were mild. Of course the birds have to cooperate too, and for the most part they did.

We didn't find anything totally unexpected, but a few rare wintering birds were in the count circle and we managed to turn up a handful of species that are only intermittently recorded on the count.

A Greater White-fronted Goose continued at Legg Lake as did a rare inland Red-throated Loon. An early start also garnered a Least Bittern at Legg. This species is resident here but can be difficult to find.

Five Thayer's Gulls included four along the San Gabriel River and one at the Livingston-Graham Gravel Pits. Also of note was a Mew Gull at the always productive Legg Lake.

Owling efforts recorded a Northern Saw-Whet Owl and Northern Pygmy-Owl in the Mt. Wilson area. These species (as well as Spotted Owl) are undoubtedly present in the circle every year, but finding them requires a dedicated effort and a bit of luck. Small numbers of Western Screech Owls and Great Horned Owls were also recorded as was a count week Barn Owl.

Mt. Wilson also produced a rare, for the count, Williamson's Sapsucker. Also found on count day were two scarce Red-naped Sapsuckers.

A Pacific-slope Flycatcher was at the Huntington Gardens where they are somewhat regular in winter. Rarer in winter was a Hammond's Flycatcher continuing at Legg Lake and another one found at Mountain View Cemetery. Peck Road Water

Pasadena Audubon's Very First Employee!

Hi there! Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Kym Buzdygon, and I am excited to be the new Program Manager for the Pasadena Audubon Society. A few important things to know about me are:



1. My last name is pronounced "Buzz-duh-gone," but I won't be upset if you say it wrong.

2. My favorite bird is the Northern Saw-Whet Owl because it is fierce and fantastic despite being the size of a potato.

3. I have traveled a lot, but I am originally from Maryland and most recently from Seattle. Yes, I love the sunshine here. No, I do not love the traffic.

4. I have an academic background in environmental studies and biology from Oberlin College and a master's in public administration from the University of Washington. I have spent a lot of the last five years doing program management and wildlife rehabilitation as well as hiking as much as possible around the Pacific Northwest.

5. I currently live with my fiancée Ema, who is in vet school at Western University, one shaggy black dog, and one fluffy white cat in Claremont.

I am already so impressed with the level of involvement and dedication that I've seen in this Audubon chapter. I can't wait to meet more of you and hear what your hopes and goals are for the organization. We already have plans in the works to ramp up community outreach, conservation projects, and education programs, and I will be reaching out for volunteers in the upcoming weeks.

So if you're interested in becoming more involved, you have a great idea for a project for the chapter, or you just want to talk about how awesome birds are, please feel free to get in touch at kym.buzdygon@pasadenaaudubon.org. Happy birding!

Movie Review: Poached

The documentary, *Poached*, chronicles people who illegally collect bird eggs. The more endangered the species, the better to possess. They raid nests in tall trees and on cliffsides. They drain the eggs and keep the shells. Unlike other animal poaching which is widely condemned, these destructive activities are scarcely reported.

Timothy Wheeler, director of the documentary, managed to connect and gain trust from some collectors. Some say they have reformed but there is one who wears a skull mask to disguise himself from the authorities. Mr. Wheeler was able to draw out the psychology of their obsession, self-reflection, and, hopefully, some redemption.

The movie features excellent photography of wild birds and aerial landscapes. The accompanying music conspires well with the emotion and atmosphere of the film.

Grace Wong

Continued on page 8

Book Review: Birding by Impression

Kevin T. Karlson and Dale Rosset, *Birding by Impression, a different approach to knowing and identifying birds*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015, 286 pp. + xiii, . \$30.

The authors of this work offer a holistic method of bird identification, using first a set of “unchanging physical characteristics”. They point out that this is “not a field guide, but an opportunity to learn a different approach to field identification.” I was asked to review this book and see if it works for beginning as well as advanced birders, as the authors claim it is “for birders of all skill levels”.

The first 18 pages are dedicated to an introduction to the method of birding by impression (BBI). Then 243 pages are devoted to accounts taking on individual bird species generally at the family and generic level. A lot of thought went into the book and in carefully arranging quality photos of bird species groups for easiest comparison. There are over 200 photos in the book and some are captioned to discuss the species identification characters. Some are offered as quizzes throughout the book, requiring readers to make their own decisions, using text provided nearby, and then check their answers at the back of the book.

The key components of BBI, used throughout the species accounts in order of suggested importance, are to study size, shape and structural features, behavior, plumage patterns and general coloration, habitat use, vocalizations, and comparisons with nearby or similar species. Will beginning birders trust this “initial impression” technique over the standard study of color patterns and field marks? It’s hard to quickly make a comparison of sizes and shapes of, say, a flock of shorebirds if the observer is not already somewhat experienced with the varied species in the group in North America.

The birding by impression approach is very similar to the age-old GISS, General Impression Size and Shape approach, touted by birders for decades. But the authors suggest BBI incorporates long-lasting structural and behavioral differences in birds. The BBI approach is not meant to replace conventional field ID approaches, but rather to “improve on them with a foundation of unchanging ID features.” For me, having returned from a spring birding trip through the mid-west, with challenges of overlapping ranges of look-alike Eastern and Western Meadowlarks, Wood-Pewees and others, the specific details on separating these paired counterparts was helpful.

I was intrigued by the authors tips that, among other marks, Hairy Woodpeckers have a longer-necked look vs. the compact look of the Downy; or that among the large grebes, Clark’s has a somewhat shorter bill with a slightly up-curved upper mandible compared to Western Grebe. Among the species accounts, I thought the one for Loons and Shorebirds (especially Long-billed vs. Short-billed Dowitchers) were quite helpful and the Raptors with flight profiles and good discussion of the troublesome Cooper’s vs. Sharp-shinned Hawk identification, were particularly well done. The large flycatcher group seems to get a short, but to-the-point treatment.

Overall, many beginning birders may appreciate the short,

succinct vs. lengthy discussions when it comes to species identifications. This book has a lot to offer for almost any birder, even if the less-experienced only jump to the species or groups that especially give them trouble. Advanced birders should still find interesting characteristics or ID tips in the groups that give everyone trouble in the field.

Mickey Long

Pasadena's First Bird List

Pasadena was 20 years old in 1894 when a local physician, Dr. Hiram A. Reid, decided that it was time for someone to record the local history. He embarked on an ambitious tome concerning all aspects of Pasadena including the local natural history. He had heard of the reputation and vast bird knowledge of Joseph Grinnell who had amassed a preserved collection of every bird in the area, neatly recording the scientific and common names. Grinnell, who was to become the editor of the Condor, one of the early Ornithological journals, as well as the director of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at Berkeley, was then only 17 years old. He was a local Pasadena boy attending Throop College (now CalTech). He was not the first expert on Pasadena birds. Pasadena’s first taxidermist, A. Wakefield, was from 1881 for 10 years the guru on all the local birds, but Grinnell had outshone him in eminence by the early 1890’s.

Grinnell was asked to write the section on birds for Reid’s book to which he devoted 10 pages. Included was the first list of Pasadena birds ever printed. He limited his list only to land birds seen within 8 miles of Pasadena. About 200 species were then known to be local to the Los Angeles area of which Grinnell listed 158 as being in the Pasadena area. He did not include water birds in his list of which he acknowledged there were between 20 and 30 local species.

Some on the list are now never, or hardly ever, seen in Pasadena. such as the Condor and the Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Others were birds familiar to us but with names we would no longer recognize. A few examples are Marsh Hawk (Northern Harrier), Pigeon Hawk (Merlin), Gairdner’s Woodpecker (Downey Woodpecker), Western Flycatcher (Pacific-Slope Flycatcher), Arkansas Goldfinch (Lesser Goldfinch), Intermediate Sparrow (White-Crowned Sparrow) and Pileolated Warbler (Wilson’s Warbler.)

Grinnell’s list was simply a compilation of local birds. There was no data as to time of year collected, their numbers, or the circumstances in which they were found. Eventually, when Grinnell became a Professor at Berkeley, he developed the “Grinnell Method” of recording natural history.

Grinnell’s complete description and list of local birds can be found online at <https://archive.org/details/historyofpasaden01reid> on pages 587-598 of Dr. Reid’s book (History of Pasadena, Pasadena History Company, 1895) which is in the public domain. The list itself can also be found on the Pasadena Audubon website together with an accompanying list in which I have given the modern names of those difficult to otherwise discern.

Ira Blitz

Field Trips

Veteran's Park, Sylmar

Sunday, February 7, 2016

8:00 am — 10:30 am

Who wouldn't like to spend a morning looking for sapsuckers?

Veteran's Park in Sylmar is known for having several different species of sapsuckers during the winter, and we'll try to find all of them! We'll also be on the lookout for Varied Thrushes, Mountain Chickadees, and maybe Golden-crowned Kinglets or a Plumbeous Vireo if we're really lucky.

From the 210, exit Hubbard St. and go north (a right from the westbound 210). Turn left on Eldridge, then make a right on Sayre. Follow Sayre until it ends at Veteran's Park. Turn right and park. We'll meet near the building at the southeast area of the park.

Brittany O'Connor

Santa Fe Dam

Saturday, February 13, 2016

7:15 am — 11:30 am

We'll look for possible raptors, Loggerhead Shrikes, Lincoln's Sparrows and Western Meadowlarks in the southern bare fields. Then we'll turn our attention to the groomed park area and lake for water birds, warblers and other berry and seed eaters. Finally we'll head to the nature center area and look through the scrub for Cactus Wren, California Thrasher and California Quail. Who knows what else we'll find?

We'll meet in parking lot 6 to start (once you've paid and driven down the hill to the stop sign beyond the pay kiosk turn left and continue until you can't go any farther). We will use our vehicles to relocate once or twice since it's a big park. Even so, be prepared for walking some good distances on level, gravel trails through the fields and on sidewalks through the

Eaton Canyon Monthly Walk

Sunday, February 21, 2016

Sunday, March 20, 2016

Sunday, April 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, March 5, 2016

Saturday, April 2, 2016

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

Huntington Library Monthly Walk

Sunday, February 28, 2016

Sunday, March 27, 2016

Sunday, April 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.

Mark Hunter



park proper. Bring hats, sunscreen, water, snacks and/or lunch and of course your binoculars, scopes and/or cameras! It does cost to get into Santa Fe Dam on weekends: \$10 per vehicle, so you may want to carpool to share the expense.

Amy Williamson

Chasing Parrots in Pasadena

Saturday, February 13, 2016

4:00 pm — dark

Most PAS members now know that the famous "Temple City" parrots have moved to Pasadena! Join us as we follow the evening flock as it gathers size and moves to roosting sites in suburban Pasadena. Study and compare the looks and vocalizations of Red-crowned, Lilac-crowned, Red-lored, and Yellow-headed Parrots and perhaps other parrot and parakeet species as well. Birders of all ages and non-members welcome. Bring scopes if you have them.

Meet at La Pintoresca Park in Pasadena, at the northeast corner of Fair Oaks Ave. and Washington Blvd. Exit the 210 Freeway at Fair Oaks and proceed north c. 1 1/4 miles. Park on the surrounding streets and gather around the small parking lot on the east side. Depending on the location of the roosts, we will either walk or drive from there.

Larry Allen

Frank G. Bonelli Regional Park

Saturday, February 20, 2016

7:30 am — 11:30 am

Come join us for a morning of birding in Bonelli Regional Park. This is an ideal spot for all levels of birders. Families and young birders are most welcome. The habitat is primarily coastal sage scrub, with some chaparral, mixed woodland, riparian, park land, and a big reservoir, Puddingstone that supports wintering waterfowl. We'll be on the lookout for

Field trips continue on page 8!



WC = Wrentit Club!

Calendar
 Submit material for the next Wrentit by March 1

WCC = Wrentit Club
 Count Circle!

February 2016

| | | | | | | |
|----|-----|---------|--------------------|------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 3 | Wed | 7:30 pm | Board Meeting | | Eaton Canyon | Deni Sinnott |
| 6 | Sat | 7:30 am | Field Trip | WCC | Legg Lake | Darren Dowell |
| 7 | Sun | 8:00 am | Field Trip | WC | Veterans Park | Brittany O'Connor |
| 13 | Sat | 8:00 am | Field Trip | WCC | County Arboretum | Julia Ray |
| 13 | Sat | 7:15 am | Field Trip | WC | Santa Fe Dam | Amy Williamson |
| 13 | Sat | 4:00 pm | Field Trip | WCC | Pasadena Parrots | Larry Allen |
| 17 | Wed | 7:30 pm | General Meeting | | Eaton Canyon Nature Center | Recovery of the Kiwiku |
| 16 | Tue | 9:00 am | Magpie Study Group | WC | Bonelli Park | Julia Ray, Sid Heyman |
| 20 | Sat | 7:30 am | Field Trip | WC | Bonelli Park | Frank & Susan Gilliland |
| 21 | Sun | 8:00 am | Field Trip | WCC | Eaton Canyon Nature Center | Hill Penfold |
| 27 | Sat | 7:30 am | Field Trip | WC | Quail Lake | Mark & Janet Scheel |
| 28 | Sun | 8:00 am | Field Trip* | WCC | Huntington Library | Mark Hunter |

March 2015

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|----|-----|---------|--------------------|------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 5 | Sat | 7:30 am | Field Trip | WCC | Hahamongna | Darren Dowell |
| 12 | Sat | 8:00 am | Field Trip | WCC | County Arboretum | Julia Ray |
| 15 | Tue | 9:00 am | Magpie Study Group | WC | San Dimas Canyon | Julia Ray & Sid Heyman |
| 16 | Wed | 7:30 pm | General Meeting | | Eaton Canyon Nature Center | Species & Subspecies |
| 19 | Sat | All day | Field Trip | | Anza-Borrego Hawkwatch | Luke Tiller |
| 20 | Sun | 8:00 am | Field Trip | WCC | Eaton Canyon Nature Center | Hill Penfold |
| 26 | Sat | 7:30 am | Field Trip | WC | Castaic Lagoon | Jon Feenstra |
| 27 | Sun | 8:00 am | Field Trip* | WCC | Huntington Library | Mark Hunter |

April 2016

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|----|-----|---------|--------------------|------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2 | Sat | 7:30 am | Field Trip | WCC | Hahamongna | Lance Benner |
| 6 | Wed | 7:30 pm | Board Meeting | WCC | Eaton Canyon | Deni Sinnott |
| 9 | Sat | 7:30 am | Field Trip | WC | San Gabriel Mountains | Lance Benner |
| 17 | Sun | 8:00 am | Field Trip | WCC | Eaton Canyon Nature Center | Hill Penfold |
| 19 | Tue | 9:00 am | Magpie Study Group | WC | Rancho Santa Ana | Julia Ray & Sid Heyman |
| 20 | Wed | 7:30 pm | General Meeting | | Eaton Canyon | Tejon Ranch |
| 23 | Sat | 7:30 am | Field Trip* | | Tejon Ranch | Frank & Susan Gilliland |
| 24 | Sun | 8:00 am | Field Trip* | WCC | Huntington Library | Mark Hunter |

* - reservations required, PAS members only

* Trip Leader Information

| | |
|---|---|
| Mark Scheel (chair), (626) 765-5408, scheel@tapir.caltech.edu | Frank & Susan Gilliland, (626) 441-8487, gillilandsusan@gmail.com |
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| Ron Cyger, (626) 840-2566, ron@cyger.org (preferred) | Hill Penfold, (818) 352-4954, hpenfold@gmail.com |
| Darren Dowell, (626) 344-4003, dowell.darren@yahoo.com | Julia Ray, (818) 314-5127, jraymusic@att.net |
| Kathi Ellsworth, (626) 524-0652, pandionsky@yahoo.com | Ed Stonick, (626) 796-0595, edstonick@att.net |
| Jon Feenstra, (626) 319-4723, feenstra@alumni.caltech.edu | Luke Tiller, streatham2003@aol.com |
| Jon Fisher, (818) 800-2776, jonf60@hotmail.com | |

CBC Wrap-up, continued

Conservation Park produced a Gray Flycatcher, our most expected wintering Empidonax.

Miscellaneous passerines included a Pygmy Nuthatch at Mt. Wilson, a Pacific Wren continuing in Santa Anita Canyon and single Townsend's Solitaires found near Mt. Wilson and at Chantry Flat.

Legg Lake had a continuing Northern Parula and Black-and-white Warbler, the only unusual warblers on the count.

A Hooded Oriole — likely present most years but often missed — was at the Huntington Gardens, while more regular were two Bullock's Orioles at the Arboretum.

Wrapping things up was a small group of Cassin's Finches at Mt. Wilson. This locale is our best chance for higher mountain birds that may descend to lower elevations in winter.

All the unusual birds and count day surprises are fun, but these are birds either at the edge of their ranges or outright vagrants. The more important data are the numbers of more common species, especially those that are increasing (Eurasian Collared-Doves, Great-tailed Grackles) or decreasing (Spotted Doves, Loggerhead Shrikes). The count also helps track irruptive species, though aside from a handful of Red-breasted Nuthatches, there was little evidence of them this fall and winter.

Each year we miss a few expected species, but this year those misses were few. Mountain Quail, White-tailed Kite, Plumbeous Vireo and Northern Cardinal fell into that category, but none of these are a slam dunk on the count in recent years.

The 2015 count results were nothing to complain about, though inevitably we wonder what next year will bring. What year will we crack the 170 species barrier? We've been very close on past counts and it will certainly happen at some point.

But next December is a long way off and there are many great birds to see and enjoy between now and then. I hope to see everyone back- as well as a few new faces- for the 2016 count. As always, a big thank you to all who participated.

Jon Fisher

Field Trips, continued

Bonelli specialty species such as California Gnatcatcher, Cactus Wren, Bald Eagle, Greater Roadrunner, and Mountain Bluebird, as well as over-wintering vagrants. A spotting scope will be helpful. Bring lunch if you'd like and enjoy the day in the Park.

Carpooling is encouraged as there is a \$10 per vehicle admission fee. We will assemble at the East Shore Parking Lot near Bathroom 11. From Pasadena, take the 210 East to the 57 South. Exit at Via Verde and turn east on Via Verde. Enter the park on Via Verde and follow the road to East Shore Drive. Turn left and follow East Shore Drive approximately one-half mile and find a large parking lot adjacent to the lake. Look for birders! A detailed map can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1bJkKt>

El Niño rain cancels the outing, but sprinkles do not.

Frank & Susan Gilliland

Quail Lake and Vicinity

Saturday, Feb 27, 2015

7:30am—2:00 pm



Join us for a trip to the extreme northwest corner of LA County, where we will look for waterbirds, raptors, and other winter visitors that are hard to find elsewhere in the county. Both Scaup species are usually present, along with Common Goldeneye and Common Merganser. Both Bald and Golden Eagles are possible, as are Ferruginous Hawk and Prairie Falcon. Past rarities seen on this trip include Barrow's Goldeneye, California Condor, Long-tailed Duck, and White-winged Scoter. We will bird Quail Lake and then move to other hot spots in the area. If people are especially enthusiastic, we can bird past 2:00 pm.

Meet in the parking lot at the west end of Quail Lake at 7:30 am. To get there, take the I-5 Freeway north, then take the Hwy 138 off-ramp east for about two miles. Quail Lake is on your left. Bring food and water, and a scope and an FRS radio if you have them. Note that we will be walking the entire length of Quail Lake, which is slightly more than a mile each way on level gravel. It can be cold and windy, so don't forget warm clothes. It takes about 1.25 hours to get to Quail Lake from Pasadena, so please don't drive alone. Also keep in mind that there are no gas stations in the area.

Mark and Janet Scheel

Gull Chase and ID Clinic

Saturday, March 5, 2016

8:00 am — noon

For Larophiles, Southern California is a great place to study wintering gulls, with nine species being somewhat regular here. The downside, however, is that many of the species present are most common in their immature plumages. Join us as we sort through these sometimes confusing plumages and learn the regularities that allow us to separate the various species (at least most of the time).

Although it is a drive, Doheny State Beach in Orange County tends to be more reliable for its variety of gull species than other locations that are closer. We have had large numbers of gulls on previous field trips here, including Glaucous Gull twice, and a Lesser Black-backed Gull once.

Take I-5 south to Pacific Coast Highway exit; proceed west to the first left turn (Harbor Dr.) and take the first left into the park (official address: 34422 Park Lantern, Dana Point — there is a fee to park); and meet in SE corner of the main lot by San Juan Creek.

Larry Allen

Borrego Springs Hawkwatch and More

Saturday, March 19, 2016

Come join expert hawkwatcher Luke Tiller for a day at Borrego Valley Hawkwatch in Borrego Springs. We will spend the day checking out the flight of Swainson's Hawks at the watch but also take time to explore an area which can hold a variety of interesting desert species like White-winged Dove, Black-tailed

Continued on page 9

Gnatcatcher and Black-throated Sparrow. We will also explore local mesquite woodland for perhaps three species of thrasher (including Crissal) as well as another local specialty: Lucy's Warbler. There are a couple of local migrant traps to explore too, so expect a full day.

You can find out more about the Borrego Valley Hawkwatch on their website borregohawkwatch.blogspot.com, or on the hawkcount website at/hawkcount.org/siteinfo.php?rsite=545

Borrego Springs is about 2.5 hours drive from Pasadena so participants may want to consider an overnight stay. To book a place on the trip and receive details on where to meet etc contact me at streatam2003@aol.com

Luke Tiller

Castaic Lagoon

Saturday, March 26, 2016

7:30 am — noon

As one of the large, deep mountain reservoirs in northwestern LA County, Castaic Lake attracts a wide variety of waterbirds: diving birds like loons and grebes, diving and dabbling ducks, and loafing gulls. The list of vagrants and rarities is also impressive (Le Conte's Sparrow and Yellow-billed Loon come to mind). The manicured picnic/recreation area on its western shore can be good for a number of wintering and migrant species and always worth a walk around. We'll bird the park and lake shore and maybe take a detour to a few other points on the lake to scope out any ducks we may have missed.

Parking is \$10/vehicle. Enter the recreation area through the gate on Castaic Lake Drive, make a left and park in the last parking lot.

Jon Feenstra

San Gabriel Mountains

Saturday, April 9, 2016

7:30 am — noon

This is a trip to find montane species in the early spring when some of the resident species are most vocal and active. We will devote special effort to finding Mountain Quail and the dark subspecies of Bell's Sparrow, which actively sings in April. Other targets include Black-chinned Sparrow and Sooty, Slate-colored, and Thick-billed Fox Sparrows.

We'll make several stops along the roads and do some short walks but there won't be any long or steep hikes. We're going stop along the Angeles Crest Highway, Upper Big Tujunga Canyon Road, Charlton Flats, Cloud Burst Summit, and perhaps Buckhorn if time permits.

Meet near the base of the Angeles Crest Highway in La Canada-Flintridge. Exit 210 at Angeles Crest Highway, go north, and turn right onto Milmada Drive, which is the second street up from the freeway. Then turn left *immediately* onto Flanders Road and park on the west (left) side of the street.

We'll organize a carpool and then head up. Bring an Adventure Pass, warm clothes, sturdy shoes, a hat, sunscreen, water, and lunch. Rain or snow cancels.

Lance Benner

Tejon Ranch

Saturday, April 23, 2016

8:00 am — 5:00 pm

At 422 contiguous square miles, or 240,000 acres, Tejon Ranch is the largest piece of privately held property in California. Tejon Ranch is a hotspot of biological diversity and lies at the confluence of four major biogeographic regions. Be part of the lucky 20 Pasadena Audubon Society members to enter Tejon Ranch. What?! You're not a member? It's easy. Go to our website for more information and join us.

Sign-up is required. To reserve your space contact Susan at gillilandsusan@gmail.com before April 16, 2015 and provide the following information: Full name (first, middle initial, last), address (street, city, state, zipcode) and home phone number and email address. Location directions will be provided to registered participants.

Note: El Nino style rains/snow/ice will cancel.

If you sign up and cannot attend, please let Susan or Frank know more than 24 hours prior to the trip. There is always a waiting list.

Frank & Susan Gilliland

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

Legg Lake & San Gabriel River

Saturday, February 6, 2016

7:30 am — 11:30 am

This trip focuses on birds associated with water and wintering passerines. We'll start with a loop through the prime habitat at Legg Lake. If conditions warrant, we'll then move on to the San Gabriel River Coastal Spreading Grounds in Pico Rivera, where we'll check out the potentially massive flocks of ducks and gulls. Scopes recommended at the latter site.

Meet by 7:30 near Restroom 7 on the east side of Legg Lake, closest to the Santa Anita Ave. parking lot. Google Earth coordinates: 34.0354, -118.0582. Precipitation heavier than mist cancels.

Darren Dowell

Chilao Visitor Center

Suspended Until At Least April

This El Niño winter is likely to cause major problems on high mountain roads. Check the web site in early April to see whether these monthly walks will resume that month.

Remember, Birders, When Choosing a Scope and Tripod...



...Weight Can Be a Factor

Photo by Jared Knickmeyer

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 12-15, 2016

The GBBC is an annual event sponsored by the Cornell Lab, who also administer the eBird reporting system and the Merlin bird ID app for phones and tablets. The GBBC encourages you to count birds in your "backyard," whatever form that takes, and submit the results using eBird. The citizen science data that you submit is extremely valuable in studying population trends in bird species.

If you are new to eBird, you will be surprised at its ease of use and its ability to "give back" by providing you with maps and lists of bird sightings in your area, both very recently and over many previous years. You can also generate life lists for your own back yard, a particular region or state, or the entire planet. It's also easy to share lists with others, for example, in group outings.

Last year GBBC participants submitted almost 150,000 checklists, with over 5,000 species reported and over 18 million individual birds counted. Please resolve to join them this year and make this big event even bigger. For more information, go to gbbc.birdcount.org.

We Did It Again

PAS (particularly Lance Benner, logistics, and Jon Feenstra and John Garrett, guides) organized another Ten Dollar Pelagic out of Redondo Beach on January 17, transforming a purported whale-watching trip into a search for birds. That was just as well, since nary a whale was seen that day. But the weather was great, we got long, close looks at a pair of basking mola molas (ocean sunfish), and we repeatedly saw a leucistic Black-vented Shearwater with a splashy paint job.



Photo by Bernardo Alps

120 people (birders, plus a few befuddled civilians) were on board, recording a couple of dozen species of pelagic and coastal birds.



Photo by Mark Hunter

We're Doing It Again

Last year's **Bird LA** event was a big success, with many hundreds of people visiting dozens of bird-related events across Greater Los Angeles, all on the same day. Save the date: this year's event is May 7. (The regular Hahamongna bird walk will be unusually well-attended!) Many activities are still in the planning stages but you can visit the web site, www.birdla.org, to watch the event take shape.

Mark Hunter

Dessi Sieburth in the News

The December issue of the American Birding Association's *Birding Magazine* features interviews with the two winners of the Young Birder of the Year award in 2015: Marky Mutchler and PAS' Dessi Sieburth. Congratulations again to Dessi on this honor, and we've heard that he has his sights set on the photography contest this year.

Page 1 Bird, continued

lighter head. All adults of both species have a small grey-blue bill with a black nail and edges. Eurasian Wigeons are grazing ducks, almost completely vegetarian. They are relatively rare, but it's becoming increasingly common that they winter on the West Coast. One may be found at Bette Davis Picnic Area (northern rim of Griffith Park), there's one this winter in Bonelli Regional Park, and they have been found at Lake Elizabeth and Madrona Marsh. And if you come by Thousand Oaks, set some time aside to visit the beautiful library by the park; if you don't see the duck, you can certainly read some books on it!



Teodelina Martelli is a fourteen year-old birder from Thousand Oaks. Her main interests are bird ethology and evolution. Photo by Susan Gilliland.

President's Perch, continued

Our monthly board meetings are open to anyone. I encourage you to drop in to see how we work together, and how you can become more involved. (Board meetings are the first Wednesdays of the month at 7:30 pm at Eaton Canyon.)

Happy Birding,
Deni Sinnott

More on AC-4

In addition to Dessi Sieburth's account of the stirring release of a captive condor on page 2, check out Diego Blanco's writeup of the event at:

www.fws.gov/ventura/newsroom/release.cfm?item=354

Announcements

DONATIONS TO PAS

These PAS members and friends have recently made donations to our chapter: Margaret Adams & Joel Edstrom, Susan Kosar Beery, Karen Brumer, Hannah Carbone, Bill Cullen, Sydney & Ray Feeney, Wendy Gordon & Michael Gottlieb, Don & Scarlett Hibner, Mark Hunter, Elizabeth Jordan, Ninarose Mayer, Beverley McKenzie, Philip & Penny Moynihan, Hendrika Namikas, Diana Neder, Jean O'Hagan, Lori Paul & Robert Staehle, Christine Reynolds & Nancy Warner, Elena Seto, Deni Sinnott, Amy Williamson, Daniel & Grace Wu, Linda Zinn. Thank you all!

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, February 16, 2016
Bonelli Park
Meet in first parking lot, first left after you enter the park.

Tuesday, March 15, 2016
San Dimas County Park
Meet in parking lot on Sycamore Cyn near San Dimas Canyon

Tuesday, April 19, 2016
Rancho Santa Ana
Admission policy: www.rsabg.org/visit
Trip leaders: Julia Ray, Sid Heyman

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 pm to 8:00 pm, the second Wednesday of each month, at Lucky Baldwin's at 1770 E. Colorado Blvd. in Pasadena.

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 Wrenit*, 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:

Name Phone
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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| | | |
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**Fri-Sun, April 29-May 1,
2016**

All day

Much more information
will be forthcoming in
the April issue of *The Wrentit*,
but save the date! Pasadena
Audubon's biggest events are
scheduled for the end of April.

Meet Kym

Pasadena Audubon hires its
first employee to rev up
our outreach, conservation, and
education programs! Check out
page 4.

New Members

ALHAMBRA: Karen Carrillo, Yvonne Tsai; **ALTADENA:** Grace Andres, Genora Crozier, Dr. & Mrs. David Jones, Alice Knell, Bas Schooten, Abram Steyn, Debra & Javier Vazquez; **ARCADIA:** Michael Allee, Yolanda Beasley, Suzanne Cardiff, F. Grayson, Stephen Klause, Jerry Miller, Marcia Morrison, David Siegrist, Roy Steed, Catherine To, Nina Tortomasi, Diane Wendt, M. Wilander; **CALIFORNIA CITY:** Alexia Svejda; **DUARTE:** Olivia Brys, Kathryn Novak, Mary Wallace; **LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE:** Barbara Arnold, Mack Dowdy, Mary Eckerle, Barbara Krystich, Donna Shepherd, Lawrence Stoliker; **LONG BEACH:** Merryl Edelstein; **LOS ANGELES:** Jessica Blickley, Jennifer Mongolo, Jane Tsong; **MONROVIA:** Veronica Harrell, Mark Howard, Frances Johnson, D. Lumarda, Machael Sheriff; **MONTEREY PARK:** Maria Schlegel; **MONTROSE:** Eva Jeffers, Mary Yablonsky; **PASADENA:** Regina Abell, Sally Barngrove, Louise Bhang, Allison Brown, Linda Dame, Eiko DeQuattro, Mae Gautier, Patrick Gomez, Nadia Grochowski, John Hallstrom, Berta Hees, Donna Heinze, Frank Huttering, Mary Lewis, Carl Matthies, Loree McIntire, Diana Raney, Margo Reid, Jennifer Rocca, Janet Rose, Naresh Satyer, Margaret Sedenquist, Helena Singer, Glo Williams, Eric Wood; **SAN GABRIEL:** Marilyn Ehlig, Shelley Machock; **SAN MARINO:** Deanna Eaton; **SIERRA MADRE:** Carolyn Eberhard, Patricia Karamitros, Karen Seabrook, Keith Wheldon; **SOUTH PASADENA:** Melinda Bird, Felicitas Cruz, Sarah Miggins, Sue Morris, James Riley, Christian Spicer; **VAN NUYS:** Jim Hanlon