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Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society

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White-faced Ibis

Photo by Evi Meyer

Reflections on an Ibis

By Evi Meyer

A recent encounter with an iridescent White-faced Ibis at Bolsa Chica stopped me in my tracks. What birder has not seen the glorious colors of a hummingbird's gorget or the gorgeous gloss of a scaup's head? These are stunning examples of dynamic coloration best seen during daytime hours, when the color of iridescence can change dramatically depending on the light source and viewing angle. The Ibis I saw was bathed by early evening light and its appearance was unlike any I have seen before. This needed some more reflections on my part.

My interest in bird coloration was definitely piqued and in reading up on it

I learned some amazing stuff. Until the late 17th century it was generally believed that the color of an object is one of its inherent properties. In 1672 Sir Isaac Newton challenged this belief by conducting a series of clever experiments, leading him to declare that color is not an inherent property of an object at all, but rather a consequence of reflected ambient light. When the illuminating light changes, so does the color of the object. So let's call this object a bird feather.

Coloration in bird feathers is achieved in two different ways. Pigmentary coloration is due to pigments that are either synthesized in the bird (e.g., melanins) or ingested in food (e.g.,

President Yarnold Presents State of Our Audubon Union

Please join our Annual Dinner with the Sea and Sage Audubon Society, presenting speaker David Yarnold, National Audubon President, coming from his home in New York. Listen to his State of Our Audubon Union at 6 p.m., Friday, March 17, in the Mile Square Park Banquet Center, Fountain Valley, Calif.

Yarnold is an outspoken and eloquent advocate for birds and the environment. He became Audubon's 10th president in 2010, and he was charged with leading a turnaround that would expand Audubon's effectiveness while building on the organization's strong conservation legacy. With 463 local Chapters, 22 state offices and 44 Audubon Centers across the country, Audubon connects nearly four million people using science, advocacy and education.

"We are all Audubon," Yarnold says. "No other organization has our wingspan when it comes to being able to drive conservation action, whether in individual backyards or in Congress."

Please check our website www.seaandsageaudubon.org for information about reservations and pricing. We will also have a great silent auction. See you there!

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Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park Returns to Life



Story and Photo by Jess Morton

Ken Malloy would be thrilled! Twenty-six years after his death in 1991, and 13 since the passage of Proposition O by Los Angeles voters made sufficient funds available, his park is about to reopen to the public looking very much as he had dreamed it might: a large clean lake surrounded by new amenities and a lot of great wildlife habitat. It is all of our dreams come true.

On a recent visit to meet the people who have put so

much work into the restoration, I was astonished to see a half dozen white pelicans out on the lake, along with the expected gulls, cormorants, grebes and ducks. I won't go into any detail here on what has been happening at the lake. That is for the next issue of *Hummin'*, in which the grand reopening will be announced and the improvements properly catalogued and celebrated. But what I saw and heard leads me to believe all of the work so many of us in Audubon have put in over the years at the park has really paid off. Harbor Park has turned into the gem we had always believed it could be!

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carotenoids). Structural coloration results from the interplay between light and the fine microscopic structures of a feather. Various wavelengths of light are reflected, amplified, scattered or absorbed to differing degrees. It is within this structural coloration where iridescence can occur. It is produced by thin layers of light-transmitting substances within the barbules, which are the small side-branches extending from the barbs of a feather.

As daylight reaches these barbules, some light is reflected from the surface, some passes into the barbules, where it will be slowed down by the higher refractive index of the thin layers. Ultimately, when the light that passed through the barbule will reach a layer of melanin at its base, it will get reflected as well. When the light reflected from

the surface and the light that bounced off of the melanin meet again at the surface they can amplify each other and create iridescence. Fascinating!

Last December I visited Bolsa Chica in the afternoon. As I walked along the channel, the afternoon light was fading and the sun was beginning to set in its deep orange glory. Just as I was ready to cross the first bridge and head back before darkness fell, I noticed a large bronze-colored bird on the dark rocks bordering the channel. I froze in place and quickly realized that this was a bird I knew well from its shape, but not from its color.

The bird I saw was a White-faced Ibis foraging along the banks of the channel. While the iridescence of this species in the daylight can display anything from dark chestnut-maroon to metallic green and purple with hints of bronze, this bird was all bronze. The last

orange rays of the sun were shining onto its feathers, and no matter what the viewing angle, the color of the iridescence did not change. This was a perfect example demonstrating the influence of the light source on the iridescence of bird feathers. When the wavelengths of the incoming light are restricted, so is the spectrum of iridescence. What increased the dramatic visual effect of this particular bird was the fact that it stood on very dark rocks, virtually igniting the bronze color of the feathers.

This all seems simple and logical, but that does not mean that one cannot be surprised and thrown off track. In fact, for me it is often the simple things in the bird world that surprise and delight. That is why I will continue to forego having a bird list amassing number of species, yet rather savor the caliber of observation that even ordinary birds can offer. Quality over quantity, always!

SCOOPING THE BLUES

By Jess Morton

The sun had set long since on that March evening 23 years ago when the phone rang. “Hello,” I answered, shuffling aside the draft of *Hummin’* that was due at the printers in a couple of days. “This is Jess, can I help you?” With that rather ordinary greeting, anything like ordinary conversation ended, replaced by a fragmentary but loaded dialogue. The voice on the other end of the line was instantly recognizable, and I can still hear that drawled, gravelly, almost gleefully mocking, “Guess what I saw today?” coming over the phone.

“You didn’t?!” I exclaimed, half disbelieving. Only half disbelieving, mind you. Maybe not even that much.

Again that gravel: “Oh, yes I did!”

And of course, he had. On the phone was Rudi Mattoni, an internationally recognized expert on blue butterflies who had worked with me and our Audubon chapter in 1982 and 1983 to run the first thorough surveys of the Peninsula for the endangered Palos Verdes blue. We had found them in 1982 at six sites, four of them previously unknown, and lost them again in 1983, when none were found anywhere on the February survey, although I did find three (possibly six) butterflies at a new site in early March that year. Those were the last ones, though, and both Rudi’s and my subsequent searches had been abandoned as hopeless a few years later. Over the course of the searches, though, we had become good friends.

While it had been some time since we had seen one another, I knew Rudi was doing insect surveys for the Navy on property in North San Pedro used for fuel storage (DFSP). It contained a lot of open space that Jon Atwood had surveyed for California gnatcatchers and cactus wrens a year before. During his survey in the summer of 1993, he had discovered not only a gnatcatcher, but also some rattleweed, the sole plant the Palos Verdes blue butterflies had depended on for a living on the south side of the PV Peninsula. Thus, DFSP was a site I had intended to visit on the off chance the blues might have hung on there, even though extirpated from the seaward side of the hill. Rudi got there first, although the blue was not what he was looking for. The story of the rediscovery is a good one, and worth repeating here.

Rudi’s survey team included biologists Tim Dahlum and Rick Rogers. Rick was (and still is) an astounding artist and field entomologist, able to identify on the wing and chase



Captive reared male Palos Verdes blue flies free after release at the Chandler Preserve.

Photo by Jess Morton

down just about any insect found in the field, and then produce incredibly detailed drawings and paintings of them. He had moved to L.A. in the late eighties and one of the first things he did here was a series of illustrated entomological articles for *Hummin’*, including a field guide to local bee flies, still a one-of-a-kind production.

When Rudi’s team headed up the central road from the main DFSP buildings, they passed a work area in which Chevron was digging up and replacing some of the fuel lines that were part of the extensive underground infrastructure required to support the 32 underground, two-million gallon storage tanks on the property. There may be a lot of open space showing above ground at DFSP, but below the surface is a vastly complex network of lines connecting it to L.A. Harbor. Maintenance at the facility is ongoing.

As Rudi, Rick and Tim headed up hill, Rick glanced over at the workers and noticed a small butterfly take off from some deerweed that the workers had just disturbed. “That’s a Palos Verdes blue!” Rick shouted. Rudi thought so, too, and they followed the butterfly with their eyes until it landed. Sure enough, Rick’s call was right once they had netted it to check. Though an endangered species, Rudi’s permit for the PV blue was still good, allowing them to do what might land ordinary

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folks in jail, capture one. They had in their hands one of the rarest creatures on earth—so rare that until that moment, it had been believed extinct!

Now mind you, Rick had never seen one of these butterflies before. But he was able to identify it at a distance. And on the wing. I think, butterfly blood must run through his veins. He is that good.



A shot of the rediscovered Palos Verdes blue butterfly, 1994.

Photos by Jess Morton

After that, the search for PV blues at DFSP was on in earnest. Rudi persuaded the Chevron workers to suspend what they were doing, then got the colonel in charge of the base to make blue-finding a top priority. Several more were found in a couple of spots during the day, and the wheels were set in motion that over the next few years saw a major project develop around this small, rare insect. That, of course was later, but one of the first things Rudi did when he got home was call me to give me the news.

Next morning, camera in hand, I met Rudi at DFSP. The day was gorgeous and the blues were out. I looked over the site with Rudi, got my photos and then went home to finish *Hummin'*, complete with news and photos of the rediscovery. Off I went with the proofs to the printers, and Ramon, who ran

the print shop, said he could get this issue out immediately—and he did. The next day I was able to deliver the scoop issue of *Hummin'* to a few locations. The mailing to Audubon members followed shortly after, but we beat the *Los Angeles Times*, TV news and the AP wire on the story! And it was big news, at least for a little while.

Since then, a lot of time, money and effort has been expended on the butterfly. Habitat restoration at DFSP eventually became a big volunteer effort for Audubon YES students. Tons of ice plant were pulled out and replaced with native vegetation. There were a few bee stings along the way, but even more end-of-the-work-day pizzas to offset them.

There were many educational programs and an eventual native plant nursery. A program led by Rudi's protégé Jana Johnson showed that the butterflies could be successfully reared in the laboratory. These were then released into suitable habitat — or, I should say, what appeared to be suitable habitat. For while the bugs thrived in the lab, the wild DFSP population got thinner and thinner despite the releases. If it is not gone now, it soon will be. So it's time to try something different, and that's where a new joint venture between Audubon and Rolling Hills Prep School comes into play.

In the next issue of *Hummin'*, David Quadhamer will describe the project he has been leading and that has been dear to his heart for the last two years. It's another chance for the blues.



Male Palos Verdes blue on rattleweed, sole food plant of the extirpated population on the ocean side of the Peninsula.

Your Backyard Habitat



By Dr. Constance M. Vadheim
CSU Dominguez Hills

Evergreen current
(Catalina perfume)
Ribes viburnifolium

release an enchanting fragrance after a rain or when leaves are rubbed. The fragrance is hard to describe, but most find it refreshing and pleasant.

Evergreen currant blooms winter to early spring — usually January through March in our area. The flowers are maroon red or magenta, but so small you might miss them. Not so for the hummingbirds! In fact, hummingbird visits are often the first sign this plant is in bloom. The flowers also attract butterflies and native bees at a time when little else is blooming.

Ribes viburnifolium grows well in sandy or clay soils, but not in very alkali soils. It needs at least afternoon shade, and grows fine in the bright shade under trees. While drought tolerant once established, Catalina perfume looks best with monthly summer water. Other than that, it needs little attention. It's a great choice for shady slopes, under oaks, etc.

Evergreen currant is an attractive, non-invasive groundcover that does well in local gardens. It's a rare native that provides food and cover for ground dwellers. It might be just the thing for shady areas of your garden.

For more on this plant, see: <http://mother-natures-backyard.blogspot.com/2017/01/plant-of-month-january-catalina-perfume.html>. For information on growing and purchasing this plant, visit the Madrona Marsh Nature Center. learn about local native plants at the "Out of the Wilds and Into Your Garden" series on the first Saturday of each month at the center.



Choosing the right groundcover can be a challenge — particularly if you want one that's native, non-invasive and good habitat for birds and pollinators. If you're considering shady groundcovers, the native Evergreen currant may be just what you've been searching for.

Catalina perfume hails from Catalina Island and a small area on the border between California and Baja California. It grows on shady slopes and in the shade of other shrubs in the Chaparral. In nature — and in the garden — it serves as an evergreen groundcover.

Ribes viburnifolium is an unusual member of the Gooseberry family. It has simple, rounded, shiny leaves and red-brown bark on slender stems. It usually grows 1 to 3 feet tall with a mounding/spreading habit that can reach a diameter of 8 to 12 feet in shady locations. It can also be pruned into a small shrub.

The leaves have many tiny glands that



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Birds and Beginnings



By David Quadhamer

Do you remember how you started birding? Do you watch birds mainly at your backyard feeder or do you always go in search of the latest rarity that has been reported? Do you keep a life list? Do you report all of your findings on eBird? Perhaps you focus on

conservation issues related to birds. Birding means different things to different people and that's okay. You don't have to always go in search of the latest rarity to be a birder. All you need is an interest in watching birds. How far you want to pursue that interest is up to you!

I took a roundabout path to getting into birding. It started when I volunteered for the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy's KEEPERS (Keeping an Extra Eye on the Preserve for Environmental Review and Stewardship) program. I was assigned a section of the Portuguese Bend Reserve. Once each month I would hike the trails in my section and fill out a report. The report consisted of items such as how many people were there, what the trail conditions were, if there were any new spur trails and wildlife that I could identify. There was a box to check if there were birds present. After awhile, I decided that instead of just checking the box next to birds each month, I would try and learn what birds were actually out in the Reserve and list them in my reports.

This led me to another PVPLC volunteer program: the Three Sisters Reserve Bird Survey. Participants in this program did a bird survey twice a month to evaluate how the restoration at Three Sisters Reserve affected birds. No experience was necessary, and that seemed like a good place to start to learn to identify birds. It was cold and drizzly my first day out, but that didn't stop me from coming back! I learned a lot about birds and birding by volunteering for the survey.

Yet I wanted to learn more. Fortunately, I discovered a bird class at the South Coast Botanic Garden taught by Ann and Eric Brooks. Ann and Eric are great teachers, and I learned even more about birds. They also lead field trips around the South Bay and weekend trips to farther birding destinations. I started going on bird walks with Ann and Eric and monthly PV/South Bay Audubon bird walks. The bird walks and field trips nicely complemented the bird classes. Another benefit of

all of the bird walks is that they have taken me places I wouldn't necessarily have gone if it weren't for birding. I've also met a lot of new friends through birding.

I began attending PV/South Bay Audubon meetings at Madrona Marsh. These meetings were a great place to learn about conservation issues and birding in other parts of the world. It has been a wonderful experience learning about birds, how to identify them and the issues that affect birds. As far as my own birding goes, I have chased a few rarities, but I don't try and find every rarity that is reported. I do keep a life list and report most of my findings on eBird.

Where am I going with all of this? We would like to start a Young Birders Group. There has been some interest in getting a group started, and it would be great to get the next generation out birding and hopefully discover an interest in birds and the issues facing them. You never know where that interest may lead! Participation in a Young Birders Group may spark a lifelong passion for birds. If you would like to get involved or know of any young people who might be interested, please let me know and we will get the Young Birders Group started.

Perhaps they can start by attending one of our upcoming presentations at Madrona Marsh. In February, Bob and Anita Caplan will present a high-adventure photomontage film and present recent research breakthroughs. At our March meeting, Tom Ryan will talk about Snowy Plover surveys in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. In April, Dave Weeshoff will talk about the work International Bird Rescue does caring for sick, injured or oiled birds. Bernardo Alps will give a presentation in May. In June, Bob Shanman, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited and former president of PV/South Bay Audubon, will talk about the joy of bird feeding. Our July presentation will feature Bob Carr and Tracy Drake talking about the latest discoveries about birds, dinosaurs and feathered dinosaurs. Emile Feisler will give a presentation in November.

As always, you're welcome to attend any of our monthly presentations, bird walks and field trips. The calendar in this issue has a list of our bird walks. The field trip schedule can be found on our website. They are great for beginners and experienced birders alike and for those with an interest in nature. They are a great way to learn about birds, how to identify them and to learn about some of the issues facing birds and their habitats.

'International Bird Rescue'

Presented by Dave Weeshoff, San Fernando Valley Audubon Society Conservation Chair
Tuesday, April 18, 7 p.m.
Madrona Marsh Nature Center, Torrance

The PV/South Bay Audubon Chapter meeting on April 18 welcomes guest speaker Dave Weeshoff, who will discuss how International Bird Rescue rehabilitates sick, injured, orphaned and oiled aquatic birds in their facilities in San Pedro and Fairfield, Calif.

The rescue organization also responds to oil spills anywhere on the planet — and has done so for 45 years. Visit <https://www.bird-rescue.org/>.



The dedicated staff and volunteers at Bird Rescue care for over 5,000 birds annually, including Great Egrets, above.

Photos by Dave Weeshoff

'The Curious Connection'

Presented by Bob Caplan
Wherehouse of Dreams Studios
Tuesday, Feb. 21, 7 p.m.
Madrona Marsh Nature Center, Torrance



Bob Caplan

Photo provided by Caplan

Award-winning director Bob Caplan, presents "The Curious Connection." The program pairs two high-adventure films about the role of inquisitiveness in protecting our environment.

Bob Caplan and his wife, Anita Caplan, have been shooting adventure documentaries since the early 1970s. Their work has been previously shown at the Photographic Society of America, the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, and elsewhere. Bob currently focuses on wilderness-based fiction about dealing with the environment.

One of the Caplan's greatest birding moments was the up-close sighting of Sri Lanka's Serendip Owl, a bird few people have seen. The owl was on an eye-level branch. Before leaving the bird, they watched it for more than 20 minutes, all the while, flicking leeches off their skin.

In the film "Secrets," a young girl discovers a map she probably wasn't meant to see. In this allegorical tale of the earth's preservation, she becomes caught in a suspenseful search for a sacred and enchanted wilderness. To gain access, she must prove herself worthy of its secrets. With an original score by Ken Kozora, this documentary was filmed in the spectacular Southwest.

In "Curious Dogs," a handful of dogs discover a world beyond their village in the Himalayas that is far more interesting and a little more dangerous than they expected. It is lauded as a children's story for adults of all ages.

MEET, LEARN, RESTORE, ENJOY

Chapter Calendar

Events

Tuesday, Feb. 21, 5:30 p.m.: PV/South Bay Audubon board meeting at Madrona Marsh. All Audubon members and friends are welcome.

Tuesday, Feb. 21, 7 p.m.: Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers. Our speaker for the night will be Bob Caplan from Warehouse of Dreams Studios. Bob will present "The Curious Connection," two high-adventure films about the role of inquisitiveness in protecting our environment. Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and to enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Tuesday, March 21, 7 p.m.: Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers. Our speaker for the night will be Tom Ryan, primary biologist for Snowy Plover Surveys in LA and Orange Counties. Tom will present on the status of Snowy Plovers. Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize and to enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Field Trips

Please Note: Due to construction at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park, all second Sunday bird walks to this area are cancelled indefinitely.

Wednesday, Feb. 1: Birding with Bob. Bob Shanman leads bird walks to different destinations every first Wednesday of the month. For details, visit www.torrance.wbu.com and click on "Birding with Bob."

Sunday, Feb. 5, 8:30 a.m.: PVPLC First Sunday Bird Walk at George F Canyon Nature Preserve. This is a naturalist guided nature walk for beginners. Free binoculars are provided. For details, visit pvplc.org.

Sunday, Feb. 5, 8:30 a.m.: Fieldtrip to Veterans Park in Sylmar with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, call 323-295-6688 or e-mail motmots@aol.com.

Tuesday, Feb. 7, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." Join Audubon leader Ron Melin and friends on a ramble around a great local birding area. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Wednesday, Feb. 8, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh with Audubon leader Bob Shanman. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.



Green-winged Teal

Photo by Evi Meyer

Saturday, Feb. 11, 3 p.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to Sacred Cove. Situated between Portuguese Point and Inspiration Point, this small cove features wonderful rock formations edged with tide pools and a channel into a sea cave. Strenuous. For details, visit www.pvplc.org.

Sunday, Feb. 12, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. Audubon leaders Steve Dexter, Manuel Duran and Ed Griffin will lead this walk through the garden, located at 26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes. There is a minimal charge for nonmembers of the SCBG Foundation, or you can join there.

Sunday, Feb. 12, 12 p.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente Natural History Walk to Ocean Trails. Walk through coastal sage habitat along the eastern bluff of the Reserve. Enjoy coastal views, see World War II sites and watch for possible gray whale sightings. Moderate. Visit www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm

Wednesday, Feb. 15, 8:30 a.m.: PVPLC Third Wednesday Bird Walk at White Point Nature Preserve. For details, visit pvplc.org.

Sunday, Feb. 19, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at the Ballona Wetlands in Playa del Rey with Bob Shanman. For details, visit www.torrance.wbu.com.

Tuesday, Feb. 21, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See Feb. 7 for details.

Wednesday, Feb. 22, 8:30 a.m.: PVPLC Fourth Wednesday Bird Walk at George F Canyon. Wild Birds Unlimited leads this walk. For details, visit pvplc.org.

Saturday, Feb. 25, 8:30–10:30 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh with Audubon leaders Tracy Drake and Dinuk Magamma. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Saturday, Feb. 25, 1:30 p.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente Natural History Walk to Abalone Cove Shoreline Park. Tour the tide pools teeming with fascinating marine life. Moderate. Visit www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm

Wednesday, March 1: Birding with Bob. Bob Shanman leads bird walks to different destinations every first Wednesday of the month. For details, visit www.torrance.wbu.com and click on “Birding with Bob.”

Sunday, March 5, 8:30 a.m.: PVPLC First Sunday Bird Walk at George F Canyon Nature Preserve. See Feb. 5 for details.

Sunday, March 5, 8 a.m.: Fieldtrip to San Jacinto Wildlife Refuge, Riverside with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, e-mail motmots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.

Tuesday, March 7, 8:30 a.m.: “Tour de Torrance.” See Feb. 7 for details.

Wednesday, March 8, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh. See Feb. 8 for details.

Saturday, March 11, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente’s Whale of a Day. Find fun, food, entertainment and education on the grounds of PVIC. Visit www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm.

Saturday, March 11, 2 p.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to White Point/Royal Palms. Explore the preserve and demonstration garden followed by a visit to the tide pools at Royal Palms State Beach. See unusual geologic formations and the coastal bluffs walking down to the shoreline while also learning more about the cultural history of the area from the abalone fishing industry of the late 1800s to the recent landslide. Easy to moderate. For details, visit www.pvplc.org.

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Sunday, March 19, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at Ballona Wetlands with Bob Shanman. Visit www.torrance.wbu.com.

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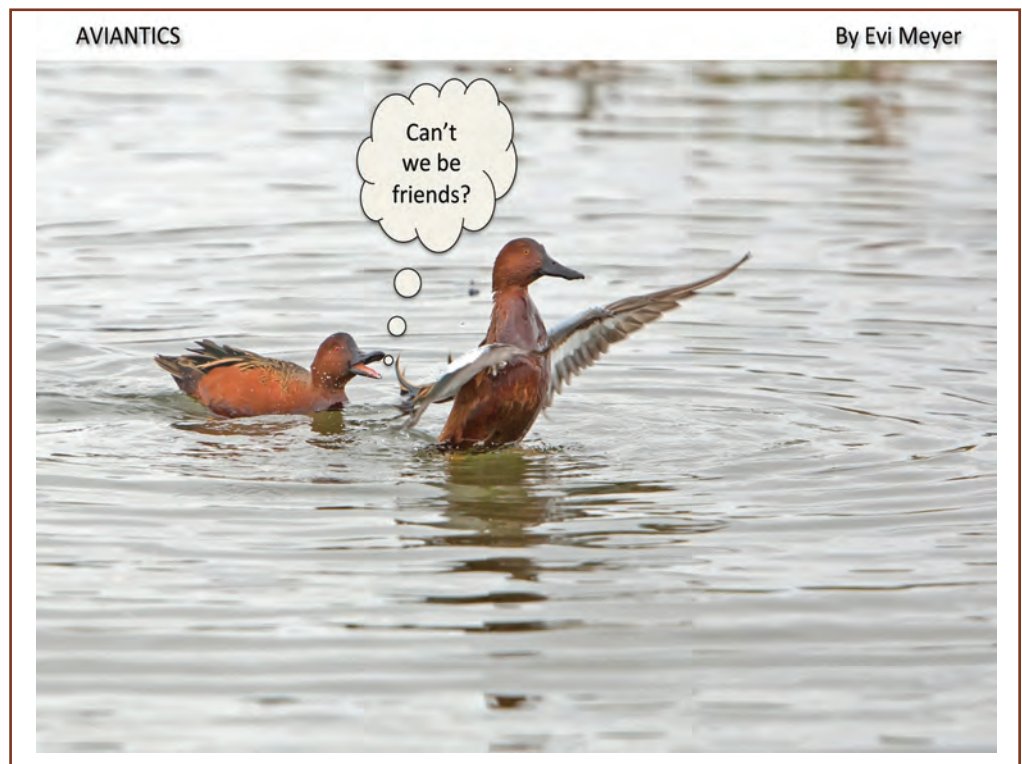
Wednesday, March 22, 8:30 a.m.: PVPLC Fourth Wednesday Bird Walk at George F Canyon. See Feb. 22 for details.

Saturday, March 25, 8:30–10:30 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh with Audubon leaders Tracy Drake and Dinuk Magamma. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Saturday to Sunday, March 25–26, 8:30 a.m.: Fieldtrip to Carrizo Plain for birds and spring wildflowers with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, e-mail motmots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.



NOTE: PV/South Bay Audubon field trips are generally free, but donations are much appreciated to support programs. Please visit the Chapter website at www.pvsb-audubon.org or www.southbaycalendar.org. Area youth and their families may visit www.pvsb-audubon.org/AudubonYES.html.



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NOTE: Send corrections to David Quadhamer at the above email address.

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